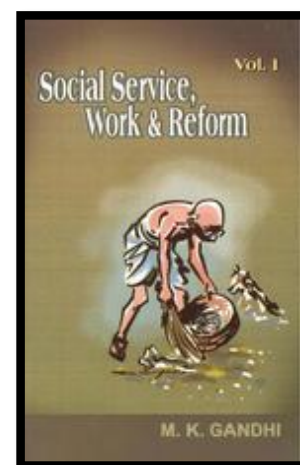


# Social Service, Work and Reform Vol-I

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

"To me political power is not an end but one of the means of enabling people to better their condition in every department of life."

*Young India, 2-7-1931*

"Mere withdrawal of English is not independence. It means the consciousness in the average villager that he is the maker of his own destiny, he is his own legislator through his chosen representatives."

*Young India, 13-2-1930*

When peaceful transfer of power to India was effected in a unique way, hopes were universally aroused that the non-violent revolution initiated by Gandhiji would be carried to its fruition in post-independent India. Three decades is comparatively a short span in a nation's life, but it is sufficiently indicative of the lines on which the country is proceeding. Seen in this light, it is undeniable that the revolution has soured on the way.

In independent India the humble villager in the 7,00,000 villages dotting the map of the country was to come into his own. He was to be the maker of his destiny and, in effect, the future of the country. The dung heap in the village was to be transformed into a green common ensuring adequate food, clothing and shelter for its inhabitants. The rule was to subserve his interests and not to lord it over him. The flow of men and commodities from the village to the city was to be reversed. With the village as the centre of planning, the village economy was to be enriched and only the surpluses generated, were to find their way to the city markets with profit both to the villager and the city dweller. The weaker sections of the society exploited for centuries, such as the depressed classes, the aborigines, the women, the landless labourers etc. were to assume their due place in the society. In effect, all energies and attention of the society were to be absorbed in the uphill but the

glorious task of ushering in justice –social, economic, and political—by non-violent means, for therein lies the secret of non-violent freedom.

However, the rulers chose to turn their backs to nonviolent revolution for whatever reasons, maybe, their lack of faith in basic Gandhian tenets, their blind admiration and adoration and slavish imitation of foreign- models of planning, their failure to involve the masses in nation- building and last but not the least their incapacity for innovation. The results are there for all to see: the villages by and large steadily becoming penurious and the consequent exodus of the inhabitants thereof to the cities where they eke out a degrading and miserable sub-human existence in slums; the cities bursting at their seams under chaotic conditions with haphazard unplanned growth and polluted atmosphere; proliferation of bureaucracy corroded by corruption etc., --one can go on and on with the narration of the disastrous consequences produced by the betrayal of the non-violent revolution. This is not to say that there has been no material progress but even that has been lop-sided and uneven. It is not the purpose of this Note to condemn or censure anybody but the facts must be stated without any gloss, so that we can at least begin to think where we have gone wrong and take corrective measures to save the nation from the impending ruin. As foreseen by Gandhiji, we have become "a fifth rate carbon copy of the West" without any worthwhile contribution to make to the world. Must this state of affairs continue? Renowned thinkers and social scientists like Gunnar Myrdal, Colin Clark, and others have also opined that the ills from which we are suffering are due essentially to our straying away from Gandhian thought and principles.

What does Gandhiji have to say on the economic, political, moral and ethical, and social challenges facing the country? A study in depth of Gandhiji's writings reveals the unique combination of a visionary and a practical reformer that he was, with an indissoluble bond of love and sympathy for the masses. Twenty-five years ago the Editor started with the thought of studying Gandhiji's ideas on various facets of life, but the study proved so absorbing and fascinating that he soon decided to

share the fruits of his studies with his fellow citizens. As a result, the compilation in three volumes on economic, industrial and labour problems saw the light of the day under the title "Economic and Industrial life and Relations". This was followed by publication of the collection in three volumes of Gandhiji's Odyssey under the title "In Search of the Supreme". Next came the compilation, again in three volumes, on matters political, entitled "National and Political Life and Affairs". The last but not the least in the series is the present collection in three volumes on social questions, which is being published under the title "Social Service, Work and Reform".

The response and appreciation of the public to the series has justified the faith of the Editor in the task which he undertook years ago with much reverence. The prize, however, is in the process as declared by the Bhagwad Gita.

"You cannot have a good social system when you find yourself low in the scale of political rights, nor can you be fit to exercise political rights and privileges unless your social system is based on reason and justice. You cannot have a good economic system when your social arrangements are imperfect. If your religious ideas are low and grovelling, you cannot succeed in social, economic or political spheres. This interdependence is not an accident, but is the law of our nature".\*

—M. G. RANADE

\* From the address to the first Provincial Social Conference held in Satara

## TO THE READER

I would like to say to the 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.

M. K. GANDHI

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

## SECTION ONE: SOCIAL SERVICE, WORK AND REFORM

### 1. SOCIAL SERVICE

At the anniversary celebration of the Social Service League held in Madras on February 10, 1916, Mr. Gandhi delivered an address on "Social Service". Mrs. Whitehead presided. He said:

I have been asked this evening to speak to you about social service. If this evening you find that I am not able to do sufficient justice to this great audience you will ascribe it to so many engagements that I hastily and unthinkingly accepted. It was my desire that I should have at least a few moments to think out what I shall have to say to you but it was not to be so. However, as our Chair Lady has said, it was work we want and not speeches. I am aware that you will have lost very little, if anything at all, if you find at the end of this evening's talk that you have listened to very little.

Friends, for social service as for any other service on the face of the earth, there is one condition indispensable namely, qualifications, and proper qualifications, on the part of those who want to render social service or any other service. So we shall ask ourselves this evening whether those of us who are already engaged in this kind of service and others who have aspired to render the service possess these necessary qualifications. Because you will agree with me that in social service if they can mend matters they can also spoil matters and in trying to do service however well-intentioned that service might be, if they are not qualified for that service they will be rendering not service but disservice. What are these qualifications?

Imagine why I must repeat to you almost the qualifications that I described this morning to the students in the Young Men's Christian Association Hall. Because they are of universal application and they are necessary for any class of work,

much more so in social service at this time of the day in our national life in our dear country. It seems to me that we require truth in one hand and fearlessness in the other hand. Unless we carry the torch-light we shall not see the step in front of us and unless we carry the quality of fearlessness we shall not be able to give the message that we might want to give. Unless we have this fearlessness I feel sure that when that supreme final test comes we shall be found wanting. Then I ask you to ask yourselves whether those of you who are engaged in this service and those of you who want hereafter to be engaged in this service have these two qualities. Let me remind you also that these qualities may be trained in us in a manner detrimental to ourselves and in a manner detrimental to those with whom we may come in contact. This is a dangerous statement almost to make, as if truth could be ever so handled, and in making that statement I would like you also to consider that truth comes not as truth but only as truth so-called. To the inimitable book *Ramayana* we find that Indrajit and Lakshman, his opponent, possessed the same qualities. But Lakshman's life was guided by principle, based upon religion while Indrajit's principle was based upon irreligion, and we find what Indrajit possessed was mere dross and what Lakshman possessed was of great assistance not only to the side on whose behalf he was fighting but he has left a treasure for us to value. What was that additional quality he possessed? So I hold, that life without religion is life without principle, that life without principle is like a ship without a rudder. Just as our ship without rudder, the helmsman plying at it, is tossed about from place to place and never reaches its destination, so will a man without the heart-grasp of religion whirl without ever reaching his destined goal. So I suggest to every social servant that he must not run away with the idea that he will serve his whole countrymen unless he has got these two qualities duly sanctified by religion and by a life divinely guided.

After paying a glowing tribute to the Madras Social Service League for its work in certain Pariah villages in the city he went on to say:



It is no use white-washing those needs which we know everyday stare us in the face. It is not enough that we clear out the villages which are occupied by our Pariah brethren. They are amenable to reason and persuasion. Shall we have to say that the so-called higher classes are not equally amenable to reason and to persuasion and to hygienic laws which are indispensable in order to live a city life? We may do many things with immunity but when we immediately transfer ourselves to crowded streets where we have hardly air to breathe, the life becomes changed, and we have to obey another set of laws which immediately come into being. Do we do that? It is no use saddling the municipality with the responsibilities for the condition in which we find not only the central parts of Madras but the central parts of every city of importance in India, and I feel no municipality in the world will be able to override the habits of a class of people handed to them from generation to generation. It can be done only by such bodies as Social Service Leagues. If we pulsate with a new life, a new vision shall open before us in the near future. I think that these are the signs which will be an indication to show that we are pulsating with a new life, which is going to be a proper life, which will add dignity to our nationality and which will carry the banner of progress forward. I, therefore, suggest that it is a question of sanitary reform in these big cities, which will be a hopeless task if we expect our municipalities to do this unaided by this voluntary work. Far be it from me to absolve the municipalities from their own responsibilities. I think there is a great deal yet to be done in the municipalities. Only the other day I read with a great degree of pain a report about the proceedings of the Bombay Municipality, and the deplorable fact in it is that a large part of the time of the Municipality was devoted to talking over trifles while they neglected matters of great moment. After all, I shall say that they will be able to do very little inasmuch as there is a demand for their work on the people themselves.

[Here Mr. Gandhi instanced two cases where the Social Service League had been of immense help to the Municipality in improving the sanitary condition of the town,

by changing the habits of the people, which had become a part of their being. He observed that some officials might consider that they could force an unwilling people to do many things, but he held to that celebrated saying that it was far better that people should often remain drunkards than that they should become sober at the point of the sword.

Mr. Gandhi then recounted some of his experiences in a temple at Kasi (Benares)—the wretched lanes surrounding it, the dirt to be witnessed near the sanctuary, the disorderly crowd and the avaricious priest. These evils in the temples, he said had to be removed by Social Service Leagues. For making it possible for students to fight these conditions, the educational system had to be revolutionized. Nowadays they were going out of their schools as utter strangers to their ancestral traditions and with fatigued brains, able to work no longer. They had to revolutionize that system.

Finally, he referred to the railway services and the conditions under which third class passengers travelled. To do social service among the passengers and instil better habits of sanitation among them, the social servants must not go to them in a foreign costume, speaking a foreign tongue. They might issue pamphlets to them or give instructive lessons, and so on.]

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, (3rd Edn.), p. 309

## 2. ADDRESS TO SOCIAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

Mr. Gandhi delivered the following address as President of the First All-India Social Service Conference held at Calcutta on December 27, 1917:

Friends, I thank you for the honour you have conferred upon me. I was totally unprepared for the invitation to preside over the deliberations of this assembly. I do not know that I am fitted for the task. Having fixed views about the use of Hindi at national gatherings, I am always disinclined to speak in English. And I felt that the time was not ripe for me to ask to be allowed to deliver the Presidential Speech in Hindi. Moreover I have not much faith in conferences. Social Service to be effective has to be rendered without noise. It is best performed when the left hand knoweth not what the right is doing. Sir Gibbie's work told because nobody knew it. He could not be spoiled by praise or held back by blame. Would that our service were of this nature. Holding such views it was not without considerable hesitation and mis- ' givings that I obeyed the summons of the Reception Committee. You will, therefore, pardon me if you find in me a candid critic rather than an enthusiast carrying the conference to its goal with confidence and assurance.

It seems to me then that I cannot do better than draw attention to some branches of social service which we have hitherto more or less ignored.

The greatest service we can render society is to free ourselves and it from the superstitious regard we have learnt to pay to the learning of the English language. It is the medium of instruction in our schools and colleges. It is becoming the *lingua franca* of the country. Our best thoughts are expressed in it. Lord Chelmsford hopes that it will soon take the place of the mother tongue in high families. This belief in the necessity of English training has enslaved us. It has unfitted us for true national service. Were it not for force of habit, we could not fail to see that, by reason of English being the medium of instruction, our intellect

has been segregated, we have been isolated from the masses, the best mind of the nation has become gagged and the masses have not received the benefit of the new ideas we have received. We have been engaged these past sixty years in memorizing strange words and their pronunciation instead of assimilating facts. In the place of building upon the foundation, the training received from our parents, we have almost unlearned it. There is no parallel to this in history. It is a national tragedy. The first and the greatest social service we can render is to revert to our vernaculars, to restore Hindi to its natural place as the National Language and begin carrying on all our provincial proceedings in our respective vernaculars and national proceedings in Hindi. We ought not to rest till our schools and colleges give us instruction through the vernaculars. It ought not to be necessary even for the sake of our English friends to have to speak in English. Every English Civil and Military Officer has to know Hindi. Most English merchants learn it because they need it for their business. The day must soon come when our legislatures will debate national affairs in the vernaculars or Hindi as the case may be. Hitherto the masses have been strangers to their proceedings. The vernacular papers have tried to undo the mischief a little. But the task was beyond them. The *Patrika* reserves its biting sarcasm, the *Bengalee* its learning for ears tuned to English. In this ancient land of cultured thinkers the presence in our midst of a Tagore or a Bose or a Ray ought not to excite wonder. Yet the painful fact is that there are so few of them. You will forgive me if I have carried too long on a subject which, in your opinion, may hardly be treated as an item of social service. I have, however, taken the liberty of mentioning the matter prominently as it is my conviction that all national activity suffers materially owing to this radical defect in our system of education.

Coming to more familiar items of social service, the list is appalling. I shall select only those of which I have any knowledge.

Work in times of sporadic distress such as famine and floods-is no doubt necessary and most praiseworthy. But it produces no permanent results. There are fields of

social service in which there may be no renown but which may yield lasting results.

In 1914 cholera, fevers and plague together claimed 4,649,663 victims. If so many had died fighting on the battlefield during the war that is at present devastating Europe, we would have covered ourselves with glory and lovers of Swaraj would need no further argument in support of their cause. As it is, 4,649,633 have died a lingering death unmourned and their dying has brought us nothing but discredit. A distinguished Englishman said the other day that Englishmen did all the thinking for us whilst we sat supine. He added that most Englishmen basing their opinions on English experience presented impossible or costly remedies for the evils they investigated. There is much truth in the above statement. In other countries reformers have successfully grappled with epidemics. Here Englishmen have tried and failed. They have thought along Western lines ignoring the vast differences, climatic and other, between Europe and India. Our doctors and physicians have practically done nothing. I am sure that half-a-dozen medical men of the front rank dedicating their lives to the work of eradicating the triple curse would succeed where Englishmen have failed. I venture to suggest that the way lies not through finding out cures but through finding or rather applying preventive methods. I refer to use the participle 'applying' for I have it on the aforementioned authority that to drive out plague (and I add cholera and malaria) is absurdly simple. There is no conflict of opinion as to the preventive methods. We simply do not apply them. We have made up our minds that the masses will not adopt them. There could be no greater calumny uttered against them. If we would but stoop to conquer, they can be easily conquered. The truth is that we expect the Government to do the work. In my opinion, in this matter, the Government cannot lead; they can follow and help if we could lead. Here, then, there is work enough for our doctors and an army of workers to help them. I note that you in Bengal are working somewhat in this direction. I may state that a small but earnest band of volunteers are at the present moment engaged in doing such work in Champa- ran.

They are posted in different villages. There they teach the village children, they give medical aid to the sick and they give practical lessons in hygiene to the villagefolk by cleaning their wells and roads and showing them how to treat human excreta. Nothing can yet be predicted as to results as the experiment is in its infancy. This conference may usefully appoint a committee of doctors who would study rural conditions on the spot and draw up a course of instructions for the guidance of workers and of the people at large.

Nothing perhaps affords such splendid facility to every worker, wholetime or otherwise, for effective service as the relief of agony through which the 3rd class railway passengers are passing. I feel keenly about this grievance not because I am in it but I have gone to it as I have felt keenly about it. This matter affects millions of our poor and middle-class countrymen. This helpless toleration of every inconvenience and insult is visibly deteriorating the nation even as the cruel treatment to which we have subjected the so-called depressed classes has made them indifferent to the laws of personal cleanliness and the very idea of self-respect. What else but downright degradation can await those who have to make a scramble always like mad animals for seats in a miserable compartment, who have to swear and curse before they can speak through the window in order to get standing room, who have to wallow in dirt during their journey, who are served their food like dogs and eat it like them, who have ever to bend before those who are physically stronger than they and who being packed like sardines in compartments have to get such sleep as they can in a sitting posture for nights together. Railway servants swear at them, cheat them. On the Howrah-Lahore service our friends from Kabul fill to the brim the cup of the misery of the third-class travellers. They become lords of the compartments they enter. It is not possible for any one to resist them. They swear at you on the slightest pretext, exhaust the whole of the obscene vocabulary of the Hindi language. They do not hesitate to belabour you if you retort or in any way oppose them. They usurp the best seats and insist on stretching themselves full length even in crowded

compartment. No compartment is deemed too crowded for them to enter. The travellers patiently bear all their awful impertinence out of sheer helplessness. They would, if they could, knock down the man who dared to swear at them as do these Kabulis. But they are physically no match for the Kabulis and every Kabuli considers himself more than a match for any number of travellers from the plains. This is not right. The effect of this terrorizing on the national character cannot but be debasing. We the educated few ought to deliver the travelling public from this scourge or for ever renounce our claim to speak on its behalf or to guide it. I believe the Kabulis to be amenable to reason. They are a God-fearing people. If you know their language, you can successfully appeal to their good sense. But they are spoilt children of nature. Cowards among us have used their undoubted physical strength for our nefarious purposes. And they have now come to think that they can treat poor people as they choose and consider themselves above the law of the land. Here is work enough for social service volunteers; for this class of work they can board trains and educate the people to a sense of their duty, call in guards and other officials in order to remove overcrowding, see that passengers leave and board trains without a scramble. It is clear that until the Kabulis can be patiently taught to behave themselves, they ought to have a compartment all to themselves and they ought not to be permitted to enter any other compartment. With the exception of providing additional plant, every one of the other evils attendant on railway travelling ought to be immediately redressed. It is no answer that we have suffered the wrong so long. Prescriptive rights cannot accrue to wrongs.

No less important is the problem of depressed classes. To lift them from the position to which Hindu society has reduced them is to remove a big blot on Hinduism.

The present treatment of these classes is a sin against religion and humanity.

But the work requires service of the highest order. We shall make little headway by merely throwing schools at them. We must change the attitude of the masses

and orthodoxy, I have already shown that we have cut ourselves adrift from both. We do not react on them. We can do so only if we speak to them in their own language. An anglicised India cannot speak to them with effect. If we believe in Hinduism we must approach them in the Hindu fashion. We must do *tapasya* and keep our Hinduism undefiled. Pure and enlightened orthodoxy must be matched against superstitious and ignorant orthodoxy. To restore to their proper status a fifth of our total population is a task worthy of any social service organization.

The *bustees* of Calcutta and the chawls of Bombay badly demand the devoted service of hundreds of social workers. They send our infants to an early grave and promote vice, degradation and filth.

Apart from the fundamental evil arising out of our defective system of education I have hitherto dealt with evils calling for service among the masses. The classes perhaps demand no less attention than the masses. It is my opinion that all evils like diseases are symptoms of the same evil or disease. They appear various by being refracted through different media. The root evil is loss of true spirituality brought about through causes, I cannot examine, from this platform. We have lost the robust faith of our forefathers in the absolute efficacy of Satya (truth), Ahimsa (love) and Brahmacharya (self-restraint). We certainly believe in them to an extent. They are the best policy but we may deviate from them if our untrained reason suggests deviation. We have not faith enough to feel that though the present outlook seems black, if we follow the dictates of truth or love or exercise self-restraint, the ultimate result must be sound. Men whose spiritual vision has become blurred mostly look to the present rather than conserve the future good. He will render the greatest social service who will reinstate us in our ancient spirituality. But humble men that we are, it is enough for us if we recognize the loss and by such ways as are open to us prepare the way for the man who will infect us with his power and enable us to feel clearly through the heart, things we are today unable to perceive through our reason.



Looking then at the classes I find that our Rajahs and Maharajahs squander their resources after so-called useless sport and drink. I was told the other day that the cocaine habit was sapping the nation's manhood and that like the drink habit it was on the increase and in its effect more deadly than drink. It is impossible for a social worker to blind himself to the evil. We dare not ape the West. We are a nation that has lost its prestige and its self-respect. Whilst a tenth of our population is living on the verge of starvation, we have no time for indulging ourselves. What the West may do with impunity is likely in our case to prove our ruin. The evils that are corroding the higher strata of society are difficult for an ordinary worker to tackle. They have acquired a certain degree of respectability. But they ought not to be beyond the reach of this Conference.

Equally important is the question of the status of women both Hindu and Mahomedan. Are they or are they not to play their full part in the plan of regeneration alongside of their husband? They must be enfranchised. They can no longer be treated either as dolls or slaves without the social body remaining in a condition of social paralysis. And here again I would venture to suggest to the reformer that the way to women's freedom is not through education but through the change of attitude on the part of men and corresponding action. Education is necessary but it must follow the freedom. We dare not wait for literary education to restore our womanhood to its proper state. Even without literary education our women are as cultured as any on the face of the earth. The remedy lies largely in the hands of husbands.

It makes my blood boil as I wander through the country and watch lifeless and fleshless oxen with their ribs sticking through their skins, carrying loads or ploughing our fields. To improve the breed of our cattle, to rescue them from the cruelty practised on them by their cow-worshipping masters and to save them from the slaughterhouse is to solve half the problem of our poverty... We have to educate the people to a humane use of their cattle and plead with the Government to conserve the pasture land of the country. Protection of the cow is

an economic necessity. It cannot be brought about by force. It can only be achieved by an appeal to the finer feelings of our English friends and our Mahomedan countrymen to save the cow from the slaughter-house. This question involves the overhauling of the management of our *Pinjrapoles* and cow-protection societies. A proper solution of this very difficult problem means establishment of perfect concord between Hindus and Mahomedans and an end of *Bakri-id* riots.

I have glanced at the literature kindly furnished at my request by the several Leagues who are rendering admirable social service. I note that some have included in their programme many of the items mentioned by me.

All the Leagues are non-sectarian and they have as their members the most distinguished men and women in the land. The possibilities for services of a far-reaching character are therefore great. But if the work is to leave its impress on the nation, we must have workers who are prepared, in Mr. Gokhale's words, to dedicate their lives to the cause. Give me such workers and I promise they will rid the land of all the evils that afflict it.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, (3rd Edn.), p, 397

### 3. THE LOT OF A REFORMER

(From "Not Quantity But Quality")

We therefore arrive at the astonishing conclusion, which is none the less true, that one true man is enough for any reform no matter how impossible it may appear in the beginning. Ridicule, contempt and death may be and often is the reward of such a man. But though he may die, the reforms survive and prosper. He ensures their stability with his blood.

*Young India, 29-4-'26, p. 157*

### 4. THE CODE THAT GUIDES A REFORMER

I

(The following letter to Gandhiji and Gandhiji's advice to the correspondent were published in "Notes" under the title "The Tragedy of a Young Couple".)

A young man writes:

I am fifteen years of age. My wife is seventeen. I am in a great fix. I was opposed to this ill-assorted union all along but my father and my uncle instead of paying heed to my protest only flew into a temper and began to scold me and call me names, and the father of the girl just for the personal satisfaction of securing a rich alliance married his child to me although I was at that time of tender age and younger than she. How stupid! And why could not my father leave me alone instead of forcing an incompatible match upon me and landing me into a pit? Could I have understood at that time the implications of the thing? I would never have suffered myself to be married. But that is now all over and done. What would you now advise me to do?

The correspondent has given his name and address in full but wants the reply to be given to him through *Navajivan* as he is afraid that my letter may not be permitted to reach him. This is a deplorable state of things. My advice to this young man is that if he has the courage he should repudiate the marriage. For neither he nor the girl in question could possibly have had any idea of the vows that were administered to them at the *Sapta Padi* ceremony when they were married. Since their marriage they have never lived together. It is up to the young man therefore to take his courage in both hands and brave the prospect of being driven out of his house as a result of his repudiation of the so-called marriage. And I would beseech the respective parents of the couple, if my words can reach them, to have pity on their innocent children and not to force a cruel tragedy upon them. A boy of fifteen is just a stripling. He should be going to school or attending a workshop, not be saddled with the duties of a householder. I hope the parents of the couple in question will wake up to a sense of their duty. If they do not it will be the clear duty of the boy and the girl respectfully to disregard parental authority and follow the light of reason and conscience.

*Young India*, 3-1-1929, p.7 at p. 8

## II

(A lawyer wrote to Gandhiji pointing out that his advice to the correspondent was illegal being against the provisions of the Penal Code. The lawyer's letter and Gandhiji's comment thereon which originally appeared under the title "The Terror of the Penal Code" are reproduced below.)

A lawyer friend writes:

I read *Young India* of 3-1-1929, p. 8. You write, "My advice to this young man is that if he has the courage he should repudiate the marriage, ... If they do not it will be the clear duty of the boy and the girl respectfully to disregard parental authority, and follow the light of reason and conscience."

The ties of Hindu marriage once performed are indissoluble. The boy may forsake his wife and marry another when he chooses later in life when he grows up. The girl can never remarry, the marriage once performed being indissoluble among the higher classes. If she does, she commits the offence of "bigamy". So please enlighten us as to what is the fate of the girl who is once married and who cannot remarry if the boy is allowed to repudiate the so-called marriage as you suggest. Gour's Penal Code p. 2019: "And since Hindu men are permitted polygamy while women are strictly confined to monogamy it follows that while women may be exposed to the risk of this offence, men are by their personal law exempt from its provisions" . . . Please now correct your advice in accordance with the Penal Code that now guides the couple you advise.

I do not need to correct my advice. The only code that guides a reformer is his own conscience in the last resort. The marriage I had in mind was in reality no marriage at all. But should it be held otherwise in a court of law, the law would be corrected through the righteous suffering of a few if public opinion had not already secured either correction or disuse. If Hindu society were to wait for statutory help in order to rid itself of its innumerable abuses, it would have to wait for aeons. The history of reforms shows that legal recognition has come after the fact, not before. We know too from experience that where law is imposed upon an unwilling people, it has failed in its purpose. Where the so-called husband who has never even seen the so-called child wife releases her from a supposed obligation, the sword of the Penal Code need not be hung over the devoted head of the poor girl, who probably does not even know that she was ever married.

Moreover let people like the lawyer correspondent read signs of the times. Society bids fair to be disrupted if much needed and overdue reform has to be infinitely delayed by legal pedantries and subtleties.

*Young India*, 7-2-1929, p. 48

## 5. TRUE AND LASTING SOCIAL SERVICE

(Originally appeared under the title "Social Service")

The following is the summary of Mr. Gandhi's speech delivered in the Connaught Hall, Rajkot under the Chairmanship of Major Moss, Political Agent, Halar, on the 24th September last.

Mr. Gandhi said he was pleased to find Major Moss in the chair. It was good for both that Englishmen and Indians should meet on a common platform on all non-contentious and non-political matters. Such meeting lessened the acerbities of political life and promoted harmony between the two races. The speaker congratulated the Sahayya Mandal for their splendid work during the influenza epidemic and the late famine. He however ventured to suggest that true and lasting social service lay in organizing preventive measures. Whilst it was good to relieve suffering in times of plague or famine, it was better to band together in order to prevent a recurrence of plague or famine. He is a wise and philanthropic doctor or lawyer who prevents diseases or quarrels. Social servants ought not to wait for influenza or famine for giving their service to the nation.

Truer service of the constructive and preventive type could be rendered in the villages. And if we succeeded in keeping our villages pure, clean, healthy and prosperous, the big cities would take care of themselves. He therefore suggested to Mr. Nanalal Kavi who was the head and the heart of the movement in Rajkot to go to some villages and by living among and like them to study their wants and their habits. Then he would discover the best method of rendering social service.

The speaker at one time thought the social service was best known and organized in Europe. Experience had taught him otherwise. He was of opinion that nowhere was social service treated so much a religious duty as in India. He instanced the marvellous manner in which the Kumbh at Hardwar was organized. The Himalayas were a standing testimony to our organizing ability and our instinct for social

service. Thousands of pilgrims who ascended the Himalayas upto Jamnotri were catered for without difficulty in a spirit of service and not of commercial gain. The matchless caste organization was an instance of vast social service organization. The late Sir. W. W. Hunter used to say that India was remarkable for the absence of any need of Poor Law. Castes regulated service in the event of disease, death and poverty. He did not wish to glorify caste. He recognized its defects and its excesses, as it at present existed. He merely mentioned it as an illustration to prove his proposition that social service was recognized in India as a duty. Unfortunately most of our old institutions had petrified. His point was that the old institutions and methods should be studied, revived and reorganized in so far as it may be necessary to suit new conditions. We were likely to go wrong if we rejected the old without due examination.

*Young India*, 8-10-1919, p. 4

## 6. SACRIFICE FOR PUBLIC CAUSE

I

(Originally appeared under the title "Sacrifice".)

I have before me several letters from young men complaining that they have so many family burdens that the poor salary they get from public work .is totally inadequate for their wants. One therefore says he must give up public work and go to Europe by raising a loan or securing a gift and increase his earning capacity; another is in search of a paying job; yet another wants a capital to start a paying business. Everyone of these young men is a sound, honest and self-sacrificing worker. But a reaction has set in. Family requirements have increased. Khadi or national education does not satisfy them. They do not desire to be a burden upon public service by asking for an increase. But the logical outcome of this attitude of mind must mean, if it becomes at all general, either stoppage of the public service which depends upon the labours of such men and women, or a general indefinite increase which in its turn must bring about the same undesirable result.

It was because this process of multiplication of wants out of proportion to our surroundings was discovered to be going on with increasing velocity that non-co-operation was conceived. And thus conceived it was not non-co-operation with persons, but with an attitude that was responsible for the system which had seized us in its serpentine coil and which was reducing us to dust. The system had raised the standard of living among us, its creatures, wholly unwarranted by the general condition of the country. And since India did not live upon exploitation of other peoples, the expansion of the middle class who were also the middle-men meant extinction of the lowest strata. Hence the smallest villages were dying out through sheer exhaustion. This was all plain to many of us in 1920. The arresting movement is yet in its infancy. Let us not hinder it by any hasty action.



This artificial increase in our wants has been felt more severely than it otherwise would have been, because of the persistence of the family system which the Western method is ill-designed to support. The joint system having become wooden, its evils have become accentuated, its sweet graces have disappeared. Thus evil has been added to evil.

Our self-sacrifice must therefore be in terms of the requirements of the country. The reforms required are more from within than from without. A perfect constitution superimposed upon a rotten internal condition will be like a whited sepulchre.

The process of self-purification must therefore be completed. The spirit of self-sacrifice must be extended. Great as the sacrifice has been, it is nothing compared to the demands made upon us by the country. We dare not support able bodied members of the family—men or women who will not work. We may not contribute a single piece towards the expenses of conforming to meaningless or superstitious customs, such as caste dinners or towards forming expensive marriage connections. Every marriage and every death brings an unnecessary cruel burden upon the head of the family. We must refuse to regard such acts of self-denial as self-sacrifice. They are evils to be counter-acted with courage and resolution.

There is too, for us, the inordinately expensive education. When it is difficult for millions even to make the two ends meet, when millions are dying of starvation, it is monstrous to think of giving our relatives a costly education. Expansion of the mind will come from hard experience, not necessarily in the college or the school-room. When some of us deny ourselves and ours the so-called higher education, we shall find the true means of giving and receiving a really high education. Is there not, may there not be, a way of each boy paying for his own education? There may be no such way. Whether there is or there is not such a way is irrelevant. But there is no doubt that when we deny ourselves the way of expensive education, seeing that aspiration after higher education is a laudable

end, we shall find out a way of fulfilling it more in accord with our surroundings. The golden rule to apply in all such cases is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot. This ability to refuse will not descend upon us all of a sudden. The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to rearrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality.

Without a large, very large, army of such self-sacrificing and determined workers, real progress of the masses, I hold, to be an impossibility. And without that progress, there is no such thing as Swaraj. Progress towards Swaraj will be in exact proportion to the increase in the number of workers who will dare to sacrifice their all for the cause of the poor.

*Young India, 24-6-1926, p. 226*

## II

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Limited Sacrifice".)

An ex-principal of a national college, a master of arts, writes:

Your article on sacrifice is nearly heart-rending. You seem to be expecting more sacrifice from those who are willing and have already done their best, and do not seem to take to task those pretending followers who have the effrontery of exploiting the national movement for their personal benefit. It would be doing greater service to the motherland if you try to get hold of rich people who will swear by you to maintain six good workers each who will take up village organization.

I have singled out the foregoing sentences from a longish letter. In the first instance there can be no limit to one's sacrifice. A sacrifice that calculates and bargains is hardly sacrifice. I have asked for no more than what has been given in other parts of the world where people have regained or retained their freedom; nor are instances of such uttermost sacrifice lacking even in our country. That

sacrifice comes from deep conviction and it is deep conviction that is just now wanted in the country.

In the second instance, one does not ask from or expect anything from pretended followers. The prevalent law throughout the world seems to be for those who give to give more and more. They do so, not under compulsion, but voluntarily and joyfully. And, at the end of the giving, they regret that they have not more to give.

In the third place, I do not know a single honest, industrious and intelligent worker who is starving for want of work. The difficulty occurs when the worker dictates terms or has requirements which, if he declined to be bound by custom or sentiment, would have no existence whatsoever. After all, it is the few patriotic rich men in the country who are financing several public movements. My own experience is that money enough has always been found wherever a just cause has been discovered to be backed by honest and able workers. Young workers are more and more devoting themselves daily to village work but ten times as many workers are required. There is no dearth of money or work. But there is dearth of men who are satisfied with a modest salary in keeping with the conditions of the country. To mention only those activities which come under my direct observation and general control, there are khadi work, untouchability, national education, dairy work, tannery etc.

*Young India, 8-7-1926, p. 243*

## 7. AN HONORARIUM TO A PUBLIC WORKER

(Following is a report of the speech of Gandhiji on the occasion of the second anniversary of Deshseva Mandal from the pen of M.D. in his "Weekly Letter".)

The history of the last Satyagraha struggle shows that the movement flourished or was possible only where there were institutions of this character. The late Gopal Krishna Gokhale said, when he founded the Servants of India Society, that our country was in need of those who gave all their twenty-four hours to the nation, even as the British Empire is run by those who think of nothing but the Empire all the twenty-four hours of the day. The more we have full-time workers of this type the better, especially when we are pledged to end the present system.

The question has been asked me whether the workers who join such institutions should receive some allowance for their livelihood or not. There are some who think it a humiliation to receive any allowance and would prefer to work without any. They do not seem to realize that if we act on that principle we shall have to search for millionaire workers. Millionaires are few and far between and it is very rarely that we get volunteer workers from that class. I must say that there is a subtle self-conceit in the insistence that we should work without drawing any allowance. There is not only no humiliation in receiving an allowance for one's livelihood but a clear duty. Gokhale began his life of service with an allowance of Rs. 40/- a month and never in his life drew more than Rs. 75/-monthly. He contented himself with that much all his life, and though as member of the Commissions and Committees he used to get fat honorariums or allowances he made them all over to the Servants of India Society. I may tell you that he did not feel it below his dignity to draw an humble allowance for his livelihood, but considered it an act of duty and of merit. Why then should we pretend to have a higher sense of self-respect than he? Even a millionaire's son if he becomes a member should, instead of depending on his millions, make a gift of his millions to such a society and draw his monthly allowance as others may be drawing.

There is one thing more which I should like to bring home to you. Bodies like these ought to be governed by strict rules and regulations. A man without a pledge or a code of conduct is like a ship without a rudder.

I am told that a worker in Sindh finds it difficult to live without less than a hundred rupees a month. I find it difficult to swallow this. It may be so in Sindh because we have artificially increased our wants. But my experience tells me that it is possible to do with very much less. Lalaji's Servants of the People Society and Gokhale's Servants of India Society we know because of the great names of their founders, but there are many other societies of volunteer workers where the individual allowance is not more than Rs. 25 to Rs. 30. In Utkal Rs.25 to 30 is an exception and Rs. 15 is the rule. We have therefore to cut our coat according to our cloth, and limit our needs in accordance with the conditions of our people.

We have until a little while ago concentrated our work in cities and we have arranged our plans according to the needs of cities. We have to reverse the process now. The cities are capable of taking care of themselves. It is the villages we have to turn to. We have to disabuse them of their prejudices, their superstitions, their narrow outlook and we can do so in no other manner than that of staying amongst them and sharing their joys and sorrows and spreading education and intelligent information amongst them. Let this institution draw a larger number of men to dedicate themselves to the service of their province.

*Young India*, 30-4-1931, p. 93 at p. 94

## 8. SOCIAL EXCOMMUNICATION

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Prejudice and Insolence".)

A correspondent from the Tanjore District writes saying that he and his brother though Brahmans felt that rather than lead a lazy life, they should do some work and they "turned their hands to the plough". So they began agriculture. Thereupon their fellow villagers became disgusted and excommunicated them. They however remained firm in their resolve. When the Shankaracharya of Kumbakonam visited their part of the districts, they went with their offering which was rejected, because they had committed the sin of labouring for their livelihood. My correspondent tells me he is not at all put out by the Shankaracharya's action. I congratulate the brothers on their public spirit. Excommunication from a tyrannical society is indeed a reward of merit and should be welcomed. To say that a Brahman should not touch the plough is a parody of *varnashram* and a prostitution of the meaning of that *Bhagavadgita*. Surely the qualities predominantly ascribed to the different divisions are not denied to the others. Is bravery to be the prerogative only of the Kshatriya and restraint only of the Brahman? Are Brahmans and Kshatriyas and Shudras not to protect the cow? Can anyone remain a Hindu without readiness to die for the cow? Yet strangely enough, I have a letter from the Madras Presidency seriously telling me, that cow protection has nothing to do with the Vaishyas. When there is so much ignorance, combined with insolence, the best thing to do is to incur all risks and pursue the path of reform expecting time to prove the truth of one's position. If we combine love with firmness, we shall disarm all opposition in the end. Reformers may neither relent nor become angry.

*Young India*, 17-11-1921, p. 367 at p. 375

## 9. SOCIAL BOYCOTT

Non-co-operation being a movement of purification is bringing to the surface all our weaknesses as also excesses of even our strong points. Social boycott is an age-old institution. It is coeval with caste. It is the one terrible sanction exercised with great effect. It is based upon the notion that a community is not bound to extend its hospitality or service to an excommunicate. It answered when every village was a self-contained unit, and the occasions of recalcitrancy were rare. But when opinion is divided, as it is today, on the merits of non-co-operation, when its new application is having a trial, a summary use of social boycott in order to bend a minority to the will of the majority is a species of unpardonable violence. If persisted in, such boycott is bound to destroy the movement. Social boycott is applicable and effective when it is not felt as a punishment and accepted by the object of boycott as a measure of discipline. Moreover, social boycott to be admissible in a campaign of non-violence must neVer savour of inhumanity. It must be civilised. It must cause pain to the party using it, if it causes inconvenience to its object. Thus, depriving a man of the services of a medical man, as is reported to have been done in Jhansi, is an act of inhumanity tantamount in the moral code to an attempt to murder. I see no difference in murdering a man and withdrawing medical aid from a man who is on the point of dying. Even the laws of war, I apprehend, require the giving of medical relief to the enemy in need of it. To deprive a man of the use of an only village-well is notice to him to quit that village. Surely, non-co-operators have acquired no right to use that extreme pressure against those who do not see eye to eye with them. Impatience and intolerance will surely kill this great religious movement. We may not make people pure by compulsion. Much less may we compel them by violence to respect our opinion. It is utterly against the spirit of democracy we want to cultivate.

There are no doubt serious difficulties in our way. The temptation to resort to social boycott is irresistible when a defendant, who submits to private arbitration,

refuses to abide by its award. Yet it is easy to see that the application of social boycott is more than likely to arrest the splendid movement to settle disputes by arbitration which, apart from its use as a weapon in the armoury of non-co-operation, is a movement fraught with great good to the country. People will take time before they accommodate themselves to private arbitration. Its very simplicity and inexpensiveness will repel many people even as palates jaded by spicy foods are repelled by simple combinations. All awards will not always be above suspicion. We must, therefore, rely upon the intrinsic merits of the movement and the correctness of awards to make itself felt.

It is much to be desired if we can bring about a complete *voluntary* boycott of law courts. That one event can bring about Swaraj. But it was never expected that we would reach completion in any single item of non-co-operation. Public opinion has been so far developed as to recognize the courts as signs not of our liberty but of our slavery. It has made it practically impossible for lawyers to practise their profession and be called popular leaders.

Non-co-operation has greatly demolished the prestige of law courts and to that extent of the Government. The disintegrating process is slowly but surely going on. Its velocity will suffer diminution if violent methods are adopted to hasten it. This Government of ours is armed to the teeth to meet and check forces of violence. It possesses nothing to check the mighty forces of non-violence. How can a handful of Englishmen resist a voluntary expression of opinion accompanied by the voluntary self-denial of thirty crores of people?

I hope, therefore, that non-co-operation workers will beware of the snares of social boycott. But the alternative to social boycott is certainly not social intercourse. A man who defies strong clear public opinion on vital matters is not entitled to social amenities and privileges. We may not take part in his social functions such as marriage feasts, we may not receive gifts from him. But we dare not deny social service. The latter is a duty. Attendance at dinner parties and the like is a privilege which it is optional to withhold or extend. But it would be



wisdom to err on the right side and to exercise tht weapon even in the limited sense described by me on rare and well-defined occasions. And in every case the user of the weapon will use it at his own risk. The use of it is not as yet in any form a duty. No one is entitled to its use if there is any danger of hurting the movement.

*Young India*, 16-2-1921, p. 53

## 10. INSTITUTIONS BEFORE PARENTS

(From "Notes")

During my Bengal tour I heard the astounding statement that the inmates of a public institution claimed to prefer the maintenance of their institution to that of their parents. This was said to command my approval. If anything I have written in these pages has given any such impression, I apologise to the readers. I am not conscious of any such guilt. I owe all I am to my parents. I felt towards them as Shravana is said to have done towards his parents. So when I heard the statement it was with greatest difficulty that I could curb the anger that was rising in me. The young man who took up the position was hardly serious about it. But nowadays it has become the fashion with some young men to adopt the superior attitude and pose as paragons of perfection. In my opinion the maintenance of one's aged and infirm parents is a first charge upon grown up sons. They may not marry if they are not in a position to support their parents. They may not take up public work till this primary condition is fulfilled. They must starve so that their parents may be fed and clothed. What, however, young men are not expected to do is to comply with the demand of thoughtless or ignorant parents. Parents have been known to demand money for things not required for sustenance but for false show or for uncalled for marriage expenses of daughters. In my opinion it is the duty of public workers respectfully to refuse to meet such demands. As a matter of fact I cannot remember having met a single deserving case of starvation of a public worker. I have found some living in want. I have found a few who should get more than they are able to give themselves. But as their work prospers and their worth is known they will not suffer from want. Difficulties and trials make a man. They are a sign of healthy growth. If every young man found himself in plenty and never knew what it was to go without anything necessary, he may be found wanting when the trial comes. Sacrifice is joy.

It is, therefore, not right to parade one's sacrifice before the public. I was told by several workers that they did not mind any sacrifice. On cross-questioning, I was told that the sacrifice consisted in living by begging, in other words on donations. I told them that there was no sacrifice in living on donations. Many public workers did so, but they did not on that account claim to have sacrificed anything. Many young men have sacrificed lucrative careers. That is certainly to their credit. But even there I should certainly respectfully suggest that praising can well be overdone. No sacrifice is worth the name unless it is a joy. Sacrifice and a long face go ill together. Sacrifice is "making sacred". He must be a poor specimen of humanity who is in need of sympathy for his sacrifice. Buddha renounced everything because he could not help it. To have anything was a torture to him. The Lokamanya remained poor because it was painful for him to possess riches. Andrews regards the possession of even a few rupees a burden, and continually contrives to lose them if he gets any. I have often told him that he is in need of a care-taker. He listens, he laughs and repeats the same performance without the slightest contrition. Madar-i-Hind is a terrible goddess. She will exact the willing, aye, even unwilling sacrifice of many a young man and young woman before she deigns to say, "Well done my children you are now free." We are as yet playing at sacrifice. The reality has still to come.

*Young India, 25-6-1925, p. 217*

## 11. SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

I have avoided mention of the tragedy that has overtaken Gokhale's greatest creation. Through the kindness of Pandit Kunzru I was kept informed of every happening while the Society was going through the agony. It was no small matter for the Society to have to expel members or to lose one of its oldest members by resignation. The trouble had been brewing for many months. But the chief members were putting off what to them was the evil day. They tried to bridge differences. They failed. They tried to evolve discipline, out of what had almost become a state of anarchy.

The Society has a high ideal. To serve India so as to purify politics and without a selfish motive or the desire to attain power for the sake of it, is itself a noble ideal. Gokhale created a certain standard of conduct and tradition for the Society. Those who could not carry it out obviously should not seek to enter the Society, or on having changed their viewpoint after entering it, should not remain in it. Such was the case with Shri Parulekar and Miss Gokhale. They subscribe to a philosophy which includes advocacy of violence for the redress of wrongs— economic, political and other. There was no questioning their ability or their sacrifice. Both are inestimable qualities no doubt. But they were irrelevant to a consideration of conformity to certain tradition or discipline. The quality of the tradition too would be irrelevant to such consideration. So when the Society could not induce these members to resign, it had to perform the very painful duty of expelling them, if the Society was to function as a properly organized body with one purpose and one policy. I know that the President and the other members left no stone unturned to avoid the crisis. They invited the associates to examine the whole situation. The President put himself at their disposal. And it was on their unanimous recommendation that the Society took the final step.

So far as Shri Joshi is concerned it is wrong to say, as has been said, that he was compelled to resign. For valid reasons the President and the Council thought that he should be transferred from Bombay. Shri Joshi, however, would not move from Bombay, and resigned. And the Society voted a pension and regretfully accepted the resignation. Such is the unvarnished version of the crisis through which the Society has passed. I have felt it a duty to take notice of the incident because there has been unkind criticism and because I consider myself an unofficial and sleeping member of the society. The reader may not know that immediately after the Chief's death I might have myself become a cause of a grave crisis. My name was suggested for membership. Some members were afraid of my entry as for them, and truly, I was an unknown quantity. As soon as I came to know of differences, I withdrew my name, and everything went off happily. We came closer to one another by this natural restraint. How nice it would have been if Shri Parulekar and Miss Gokhale had followed the example set before them in 1915! If they have the welfare of the Society at heart, they would serve it in a variety of ways in matters in which they have no differences of opinion.

Sevagram, 22-7-1940

*Harijan*, 28-7-1940, p. 217

## 12. HOW TO COLLECT FUNDS

(From "Notes")

Many workers of institutions think that they can get funds for their institutions for the mere issuing of appeals. But that is true only of very few well-known and tried workers. A Muller or a Ramakrishna has been known to get funds even for the silent praying. Mere mute wishes of such rare saints reach people like irresistible wireless messages. But the majority have to plod before they can get any response. And the best way of plodding is to pay house to house visits. When a cause is just, as ours undoubtedly is, and the worker is known for his or her integrity, response is assured. Such house to house begging is also the best propaganda. Donors are, and should be, always exacting. They want to know, or ought to want to know, all the needs of the institution they are called upon to support. Therefore, workers who go on begging expeditions have to be well armed with facts and figures. What is, however, most needed is patience. They must be prepared even to put up with insults. In the end they will find that funds cause the least delay when honesty and ability are assured. In the absence of these two qualities, funds are a burden as we find today regarding many so-called religious institutions which are decaying, though they have ample funds.

Unscrupulous and indolent trustees are ill able to discharge their trust, and the monies in their hands are either locked up profitlessly or wasted on irreligious orgies or other superstitious practices.

*Harijan, 7-10-1933, p. 2*

### 13. OVERHEAD EXPENSES OF CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

(From comments on "Notes" which appeared under the title "Harijan Representation".)

In the service of the poor and the down-trodden, limitation of overhead expenses to a minimum is absolutely necessary. For, the helpless can exercise no check on the extravagance, be it unconscious, of their helpers, no matter how benevolent, and the latter, unless they would put checks on their unconscious extravagance in the name of better management, are likely to spend more than they need. A critical examination of the administration of many charitable organizations would either reveal woeful extravagance or hopeless mismanagement and a criminal" neglect of their trust by the trustees. Harijan Boards have to escape both misfortunes, if they are to render a good account of themselves to the Harijans whom it is their sole aim to serve.

*Harijan*, 5-1-1935, p. 371

### 14. SEVEN SOCIAL SINS

(From "Notes")

The same fair friend wants readers of *Young India* to know if they do not already, the following seven social sins:

Politics without Principles Wealth without Work Pleasure without Conscience  
Knowledge without Character Commerce without Morality Science without  
Humanity Worship without Sacrifice

Naturally, the friend does not want the readers to know these things merely through the intellect but to know them through the heart so as to avoid them.

*Young India*, 22-10-1925, p.358 at p.360

## 15. PETROL AND THE BLACK MARKET

(From "Notes")

A correspondent writes as follows:

Owing to lack of time it is not always possible to do all the necessary touring by rail. Workers have, therefore, to travel long distances by car. As petrol is rationed and the required quantity is not available recourse is had to the black market. It is either brought through someone or the taxi-driver is commissioned to obtain it from the black market and payment per mile is given to him according to the price paid for the petrol.

Is it right for workers to use a car under these circumstances?

It is possible that if they do not, they will have to cut down their touring which will seemingly be harmful to the work. Am I right in believing that there is no alternative?

I am of opinion that the worker who believes in truth should not use a car under these conditions. Even if he is not a believer but tries to render service thoughtfully he should not do so. If he does, he knowingly encourages black marketing and nothing but harm can come of such action. I go further and say that to use a car at all times for service is wrong in itself.

New Delhi, 10-6-1946

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

*Harijan*, 16-6-1946, p. 180 at p. 181



## 16. SATYAGRAHA AGAINST BAD SOCIAL PRACTICE

(Originally appeared under the title "Students' Noble Satyagraha"—Translated from *Navajivan* by P.L.)

In referring to the universality of Satyagraha I have time and again observed in these columns that it is capable of application in the social no less than in the political field. It may equally be employed against Government, society or one's own family, father, mother, husband or wife, as the case may be. For it is the beauty of this spiritual weapon that when it is completely free from the taint of *kimsa* and its use is actuated purely and solely by love it may be used with absolute impunity in any connection and in any circumstances whatever. A concrete instance of its use against a social evil was furnished by the brave and spirited students of Dharmaj (in Kheda District) a few days back. The facts as gleaned from the various communications about the incident received by me were as follows:

A gentleman of Dharmaj, some days back, gave a caste dinner in connection with the twelfth-day ceremony of the death of his mother. It was preceded by a keen controversy about the subject among the young men of the place who shared with a number of other local inhabitants their strong dislike of his custom. They felt that on this occasion something must be done. Accordingly most of them took all or some of the following three vows:

1. Not to join their elders at the dinner or otherwise partake of the food served on that occasion.
2. To observe fast on the day of the dinner as an emphatic protest against this practice.
3. To bear patiently and cheerfully any harsh treatment accorded to them by their elders for taking this step.

In pursuance of this decision quite a large number of students, including some children of tender age, fasted on the day on which the dinner was given and took upon themselves the wrath of their so-called elders. Nor was the step free from the dangers of serious pecuniary consequences to the students. The "elders" threatened to stop the allowances of their boys and even to withdraw any financial aid that they were giving to local institutions, but the boys stood firm. As many as two hundred and eighty-five students thus refused to take part in the caste dinner and most of them fasted.

I tender my congratulations to these boys and hope that everywhere students will take a prominent part in effecting social reform. They hold in their pocket as it were the key to social reform and the protection of their religion just as they have in their possession the key to Swaraj—though they may not be aware of it owing to their negligence or carelessness. But I hope that the example set by the students of Dharmaj will awaken them to a sense of their power. In my opinion the true *shraddha* of the deceased lady was performed by these young men fasting on that day, while those who gave the dinner wasted good money and set a bad example to the poor. The rich, monied class ought to use their God-given wealth for philanthropic purposes. They should understand that the poor cannot afford to give caste dinners on wedding or on funeral ceremonies. These bad practices have proved to be the ruin of many a poor man. If the money that was spent in Dharmaj on the caste dinner had been used for helping poor students, or poor widows, or for kha- di or cow protection or the amelioration of the "untouchables" it would have borne fruit and brought peace to the departed soul. But as it is, the dinner has already been forgotten, it has profited nobody and it has caused pain to the students and the sensible section of the Dharmaj public.

Let no one imagine that the Satyagraha has gone in vain because it did not succeed in preventing the dinner in question from taking place. The students themselves knew that there was little possibility of their Satyagraha producing any immediate tangible result. For we may safely take it that if they do not let their

vigilance go to sleep no *shetkia* will again dare to give a post-mortem dinner. A chronic and long-standing social evil cannot be swept away at a stroke, it always requires patience and perseverance.

When will the "elders" of our society learn to recognize the signs of the times? How long will they be slaves to custom instead of using it as a means for the amelioration of society and the country? How long will they keep their children divorced from a practical application of the knowledge which they are helping them to acquire? When will they rescue their sense of right and wrong from its present state of trance and wake up and be *mahajans* in the true sense of the word?

*Young India*, 1-3-1928, p. 66

## 17. SATYAGRAHA A PRICELESS WEAPON FOR SOCIAL REFORM

### I

(From "Our Aim")

But the Satyagraha is not limited to the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. For social reform, too, it is a priceless weapon, one without a parallel. The condition of women, our many evil customs... the hardships of the "untouchables"—a great many of such problems can be solved in this way. *Navajivan* will therefore discuss these matters whenever occasion arises.

(From Gujarati: *Navajivan*, 7-9-1919)

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XVI, p. 92 at p. 93

### II

(From "Satyagraha")

When Satyagraha has become an accepted method in India, political and social reforms, which at present take such a long time to bring about, will be effected in a much shorter period; the distance between the rulers and the ruled and their distrust of each other will disappear and in their place will grow love and trust. It will be the same, we may be sure, as between the different sections of society.

(From Gujarati: *Navajivan*, 14-9-1919)

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XVI, p. 122 at p. 124

## 18. IS ANY GREAT REFORM POSSIBLE WITHOUT POLITICAL POWER?

(Originally appeared under the title "A Fatal Fallacy"—Translated from an article from *Harijanbandhu*, by M.D.)

Among the questions that a correspondent asked me for discussion in *Harijan*, there was one which I have kept on my file for sometime:

Don't you think that it is impossible to achieve any great reform without winning political power? The present economic structure has also got to be tackled. No reconstruction is possible without a political reconstruction and I am afraid all this talk of polished and unpolished rice, balanced diet and so on and so forth is mere moonshine.

I have often heard this argument advanced as an excuse for failure to do many things. I admit that there are certain things which cannot be done without political power, but there are numerous other things which do not at all depend upon political power. That is why a thinker like Thoreau said that "that government is the best which governs the least." This means that when people come into possession of political power, the interference with the freedom of people is reduced to a minimum. In other words a nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much State interference is truly democratic. Where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic in name.

There is certainly no limit or restraint on the freedom of thought. It may be remembered that many reformers are nowadays laying the greatest emphasis on a new ideology. How few of us are going in for any reform in our opinions? Modern scientists recognize the potency of thought and that is why it is said that as a man thinks so does he become. One who always thinks of murder will turn a murderer and one who thinks of incest will be incestuous. On the contrary he who always thinks of truth and non-violence will be truthful and non-violent, and he whose thoughts are fixed on God will be godly. In this realm of thought political power

does not come into play at all. Even so it must be obvious that political power or want of it is of no consequence in many of our activities. I would make a humble suggestion to the correspondent. Let him make a detailed note of all his activities and he is sure to find that many of them are performed independently of any political power. Man has to thank himself for his dependence. He can be independent as soon as he wills it.

The correspondent has raised the bugbear of "great reform" and then fought shy of it. He who is not ready for small reforms will never be ready for great reforms. He who makes the best of his faculties will go on augmenting them, and he will find that what once seemed to him a great reform was really a small one. He who orders his life in this way will lead a truly natural life. One must forget the political goal in order to realize it. To think in terms of the political goal in every matter and at every step is to raise unnecessary dust. Why worry one's head over a thing that is inevitable? Why die before one's death?

That is why I can take the keenest interest in discussing vitamins and leafy vegetables and unpolished rice. That is why it has become a matter of absorbing interest to me to find out how best to clean our latrines, how best to save our people from the heinous sin of fouling Mother Earth every morning. I do not quite see how thinking of these necessary problems and finding a solution for them has no political significance and how an examination of the financial policy of Government has necessarily a political bearing. What I am clear about is that the work I am doing and asking the masses to do is such as can be done by millions of people whereas the work of examining the policy of our rulers will be beyond them. That it is a few people's business I will not dispute. Let those who are qualified to do so do it as best as they can. But until these leaders can bring great changes into being, why should not millions like me use the gift that God has given them to the best advantage? Why should they not make their bodies fitter instruments of service? Why should not they clear their own doors and

environments of dirt and filth? Why should they be always in the grip of disease and incapable of helping themselves or anyone else?

No, I am afraid the correspondent's question betrays his laziness and despair and the depression that has overtaken many of us. I can confidently claim that I yield to none in my passion for freedom. No fatigue or depression has seized me. Many years' experience has convinced me that the activities that absorb my energies and attention are calculated to achieve the nation's freedom, that therein lies the secret of non-violent freedom. That is why I invite everyone, men, women, young and old, to contribute his or her share to the great sacrifice.

*Harijan*, 11-1-1936, p. 380

## SECTION TWO: CIVIC MATTERS

### 1. MUNICIPAL ADDRESSES

#### 19. MUNICIPAL LIFE

The fashion that seems now to have become permanent of presenting prominent Congressmen with addresses by municipalities and local boards has resulted in my coming in touch with the working of municipalities almost all over India. I have come to the conclusion from my observation of so many municipalities that the greatest problem they have to tackle is sanitation. I am aware that it is a stupendous problem. Some of the national habits are bad beyond description, and yet so ingrained as to defy all human effort. Wherever I go this insanitation obtrudes itself upon my gaze in some shape or another. In the Punjab and Sindh in total disregard of the elementary laws of health we dirty our terraces and roofs breeding billions of disease-producing microbes and founding colonies of flies. Down South we do not hesitate to dirty our streets, and early in the morning it is impossible for any one in whom the sense of decency is developed to walk through the streets which are lined with people performing functions of nature which are meant to be performed in seclusion and in spots which human beings need not ordinarily tread. In Bengal the same tale in varying form has to be told; the same pool in which people have washed their dirt, their pots, and in which cattle have drunk, supplies drinking water. And here in Cutch men and women think nothing of repeating the performance I have seen in Madras. These are not ignorant people; they are not illiterate; many have travelled even beyond the borders of India. They ought to know better but they do not. And nobody worries about giving them an education in the elements of sanitation. It is, or should be, one of the privileges of municipalities and local boards to make it their chief concern to eradicate insanitation within their limits. If we are to live in cities, if we are to



live an organized life, if we are to grow in health and wisdom—we shall have to get rid of insanitation some day or other. The sooner we do so the better. Let us not postpone everything till Swaraj is attained. Some things no doubt will only be done when that much-wished for event has happened. But it will never happen if we do not do the many things which can be done today as easily as under Swaraj, and which are signs of corporate and civilized national life. No institution can handle this problem better and more speedily than our municipalities. They have, so far as I am aware, all the powers they need in this direction; and they can get more, if necessary. Only the will is often wanting. It is not recognized that a municipality does not deserve to exist which does not possess model closets and where streets and lanes are not scrupulously clean all the hours of the day and the night. But the reform cannot be brought about without infinite application on the part of members of municipalities and local boards. To think of all the municipalities in the aggregate and to wait till every one has begun the work is indefinitely to postpone the reform. Let those who have got the will and the ability commence the reform in right earnest now, and the rest will follow.

it is with this end in view that I reproduce elsewhere a translation of a humorously written letter by Dr. Hari- prasad Desai of Ahmedabad and published recently in *Navajivan*. The Municipality of Ahmedabad has taken up the problem seriously. Ahmedabad is an exceptionally difficult town to deal with from the sanitary standpoint. It is unclean. I have not seen a more unclean city. Its *pols* are seething with stench and dirt. The superstitions and prejudices to be overcome are immense. Insanitation has acquired an almost religious sanction. Even the doctrine of Ahimsa is invoked in favour of dirty habits! I invite the reader to carefully peruse the translation. He will then appreciate the difficulties that face the reformer in Ahmedabad. Not many volunteers are to be had for this thankless and difficult work. The reader will note too that it is being done by the commissioners who are interested in making Ahmedabad a model city in point of sanitation. They are doing their work outside office hours and partly as a labour of love. No munic-

pality need expect any brilliant result, if it is to be satisfied with mere routine work issuing instructions to its executive officer. Every Municipal Commissioner will have to become a self-constituted scavenger in the city under his care if the cities of India are to become fit to live in for the poorest people in a decent sanitary condition.

*Young India*, 29-10-1925, p. 371

#### SANITATION IN AHMEDABAD

(The following is the letter by Dr. Hariprasad Desai, one of the members of the Sanitary Committee, Ahmedabad Municipal Board, referred to in the above article :)

One-tenth of the city of Ahmedabad has been swept up, 155 out of the 1500 *pols*<sup>1</sup> in the city having been swept clean. At this rate we hope to finish the whole city in ten to twelve months.

The Municipality has placed entirely at my disposal all the paraphernalia of the Sanitary Department. The municipal sweepers sweep every little corner clean of all refuse and rubbish of on an average ten *pols* daily. The number of these sweepers is five hundred. But there is a daily average of about a hundred absentees, on account of illness or other work, and about a hundred are engaged in the disposal of refuse. Thus three hundred sweepers have to tackle the dirt and rubbish of three hundred thousand people, i.e. one per thousand.

There are 14 sanitary inspectors in charge of the city sanitation, with 28 sub-inspectors and 39 *mukadams* under them.

I called, at the outset, a conference, of the inspectors. The Chairman of the Sanitary Committee is Mr. G. V. Mavlankar, the members being Mr. Purushottam Gajjar who was in charge of the construction of the Congress *Mandap* in 1921, Mr. Kalidas Jhaveri and others—all Gandhi-cap-wallahs.

I gave them a picture of the wretched sanitation of the city, and placed before them an outline of the *modus operandi*. I reminded them of your expectations from us as expressed in your reply to the municipal address presented to you last

year, and told them how, if you were not occupied with political work in the country, you would have taken up the work of cleaning the streets of Ahmedabad. I also said: "It is but an accident that I happen to be in the Municipality. Had I not been there, even then I should have done this work from outside, and asked for co-operation of all of you as citizens of this city. You are not only citizens, you are officers of the Municipality and it is your duty to maintain the sanitation of Ahmedabad. But it is not as officers that I seek your co-operation, I seek *it* from you as experts, and want you to take it up in a spirit of service." I was genuinely moved as I spoke, and it had its effect. After some discussion every one agreed to join hands in the work, which was begun on the 7th ultimo.

Meetings are held at night in a prominent part of the *pols* which are swept up. Notices of the meeting and leaflets containing directions to be observed by the residents are distributed to every house. 12,000 such leaflets have been distributed up to now and the *mukadams* see that they are carefully read. 17,000 such notices of meetings have been distributed, and 13 meetings in all have been held between the hours of 9-30 and 11 p.m. About seven to eight thousand men, women and children have attended these meetings and listened to lectures on sanitation. Mr. Vallabhbhai Patel (President), Mr. Ballubhai Thakore (Vice-President), Mr. Jivanlal Diwan, Mr. Hariprasad Mehta and two or three other friends make it a point to attend these meetings regularly. Mr. Vallabhbhai of course addresses every one of the meetings, the subject being sanitation, other municipal work and co-operation of the people. His speeches are always telling. He invites people to put forward their complaints and his questions at times draw amusing answers. Some do not even hesitate to introduce heat in the discussion, but the President's Socratic manner disarms all.

As soon as the inspector brings me information that the *pols* in his beat are swept up, I proceed there, and remain watching the operations or inspecting from 4 to 7 p.m. Before I put in my appearance about 50 to 60 maunds of refuse would be removed from each *pol*, every latrine scrubbed and washed clean, little by-ways

and nooks and corners hardly ever touched would be cleaned, and disinfectants would be sprinkled everywhere, and good tidings of the cleaning up would have reached every house.

But there should be some refuse there to greet me. And I hardly ever fail to find fresh refuse thrown there immediately after the operations. I get it removed, inspect the latrines, and the parts hidden by the huge doors of the *pols*, urinals, verandahs etc. and get even trifling things as bits of paper, brickbats or rags lying in the way removed. Men and women would flock to see me. I would engage them in conversation and try to induce the children to join as volunteers.

And this filth contains a veritable museum of curios—bricks and stones and clay, tiles and rags and broken buckets, earth crusts; dust and remains of food and scourings of utensils and stinking rubbish accumulating for ages.

There would be found in many places huge waste-bins to be cleared, pits to be filled in, dirty water to be removed, mud to be dredged, dank and wet places to be made dry, and colonies of mosquitoes in drains waiting to be destroyed.

And no house but has its museum of curios collected pell- mell out of doors : broken jars, tattered shoes, useless oil pumps and broken fire stoves, lanterns and bottles, hair and rags and nails, and broken earthen pots and tinpots, rotten sacks, etc. etc.

And everyone would be loathe to part with these treasures. We would not unoften find broken tiles and brickbats accumulated in heaps near walls and verandahs to serve as a safe habitation for little insects, lest they should be destroyed for want of a home! We would get these removed, and find them teeming with innumerable marshy insects and centipedes!

At every corner and in every little lane you would find bins for remains of food etc. Dogs and stray cows and bulls would be running about from place to place to empty the contents of these bins. The cows and bulls often hurt the children and

the dogs, when they do not bark all day, get rabid, with serious consequences to people.

Those who keep cattle keep them in the *pols* and give them nothing but grass to eat, sure in the knowledge that they get enough out of these bins! How can you expect strong cattle and uncontaminated milk in these circumstances? Everywhere you would find excreta of these dumb animals, and the bins when they are removed reveal a bottom teeming with worms! And all this in places where Jains live. We have made it a rule to clean the bins and remove them to cleaner places.

Every place is deemed to be fit enough for a urinal, and a withdrawal of this ancient privilege, after swaraj, might provoke a rebellion! Mothers seem to have "all rights reserved" about getting their children to answer their calls of nature wherever they like. No amount of cleaning is a warning to them, nuisance being committed almost by way of protest against these warnings! Members from our audience get up to perform minor functions of nature in front of our place of meeting, just whilst we are lecturing on sanitation! We have noticed in one or two places leaf-plates thrown away after dinner in the very *pols* which were cleaned that evening and where we were holding forth a minute ago.

The Jains live by a law of their own: Urine-pots are emptied anywhere and everywhere, and even when there are drains they insist on having sand-latrines and cesspools. And some of these latrines are used by a number of families. No medical knowledge is necessary to explain the growth of disease in a city like Ahmedabad. These latrines are speaking commentaries. I met learned Jain Sadhus and authors. "Do declare on our behalf," I said to them, "that all this is a travesty of *religion*." But they refuse to make any such declaration. "How can we say any such thing, when our *shastras* plainly say that drains and gutters contain numerous insects?" they ask. "How can you apply the rules and laws of an age when we used to live in fields and when we had no *pucca* drainage to an age of cities with numerous houses and *pucca* drainage?" I pleaded with them. But they were adamant. I left them at that, and have decided to have recourse only to the

common-sense argument. People do not argue against what is obvious to common sense.

We have been near Vaishnav temples too. In Asarva there is the *Gadi* of *Gosainji Maharaj*. Near the well there are heaps of stinking rubbish. I have thought that he deserves to be served with a notice under the Municipal Act and prosecuted. His chawls too were excessively unclean. The precincts of Nilkantha Mahadev are unclean, and the vast compound is disfigured with dust bins, heaps of wood and rubbish. Near the Maharaj Haveli every day there would be two roomfuls of castaway leaf-plates. These rooms stink terribly and are an unbearable nuisance to people in the vicinity. This is the result of leaf-plates of food being sold everyday at the door of the temple! We have decided to serve the temple authorities with a notice to burn these daily. Near the Jain temples there are beautiful cemented *chowks*—all full of dust and dirt Whilst removing the rubbish near these temples we found there scorpions from under a stone slab. But no one would trust us with a pair of tongs to handle those creatures. *Himsa* in a Jain locality! Who dare do it?

But would anyone permit us to throw them alive in gutters? No fear. We had to leave the blessed things undisturbed in their settlement, and have left word with the numerous children playing there and numerous people going to the temple to take good care of them and to keep them from harm. A Jain doctor's doorsteps were dilapidated. Under one of the steps was found a little serpent and two centipedes. Woe betide him who disturbs these. There are millions and billions of little insects and animalcules swarming in these Jain and Vaishnav localities immune from the invasion of intruders like us.

Ahmedshah's mosque is famous for its beautiful carving. Next to it is the Jumma Masjid. The mosque of the King after whose name the city was named is considered to be sacred by the Musalmans. Ahmedshah himself was very saintly, and was God's own man. But just near this mosque is a running open gutter awfully

dirty and stinking. A very ancient Musalman family owns it, but no one seems to be concerned to get it connected with the main drain.

And behind the doors of the Parsis' Place of Worship too we found rubbish lying. "Shall I get this removed, Sir?" I asked the Dastur Saheb. He stopped the sweeper from touching it, but promised to get it removed immediately. I said: "The temples of us Hindus are dirty of course. But I had not expected this here!"

Well, one day we happened to be near the house of Swami Anand, the Manager of your Press. It is in this house that Mrs. Mahadev Desai was recently operated upon, and it is a place often visited by men from the Ashram and the Vidyapith. And yet I got three basketfuls of broken tiles removed from the little compound in front of the house. There was dank and putrid vegetation under this rubbish, and a little scorpion. Devdas Gandhi was witnessing our operations. The disease of uncleanness is thus not endemic but epidemic. It affects the learned and the unlearned, the educated and uneducated, the wise man and the fool, alike.

From near the dispensaries of learned doctors cartloads of rubbish has had to be removed, stinking gutters have had to be cleaned, requests and entreaties have had to be repeated to burn up the bandages etc. Otherwise these things full of contagion-spreading germs are thrown about in the streets by these doctors learned in bacteriology. And I have noticed food-plates and utensils of well-known surgeons being cleaned with the dirty dust of these *pols*.

From the vegetable market heaps and heaps of rotten vegetable, mud, rags, etc. have had to be removed. Age-old rubbish from under the boards of vegetable stalls has had to be cleared.

Very much more than this pioneer experiment will need to be done to ensure for a considerable time after this thorough cleansing the cleanliness of the *pols*. Age-old habits have to be fought, and we will have to organize a strenuous crusade. For these the volunteers are not yet forthcoming.

On the 12th instant we had a meeting of the sweepers where Sir Chinubhai presented 48 *mukadams* with a pair of *dhoHs* each by way of encouragement in their work. If we can enlist their active sympathy in the cause, their help would be invaluable.

We shall now have meetings of sweepers, gutter cleaners and others. These poor folk slave away for us the whole day, and live a life of poverty, drink and indebtedness, and Lee Commissions go on making recommendations for improvements in the pay and prospects of civilians! But these unfortunate servants have only a few advocates like you. For them also we will therefore strive to get as much improvement in pay and prospects as possible. Hercules is said to have cleansed the stables of Augeas where three thousand oxen used to be kept, and where filth had accumulated for thirty years.

But Hercules was a god. He had the energy of Hanuman and the fire of Surya. He could clean the stables in a day by turning the river Alpheus through them.

But Ahmedabad? It contains not 3,000 oxen but more beasts—horses, asses, cows, buffaloes, goats, and dogs. It is inhabited by three hundred thousand people, and the filth has been accumulating not for 30 years but for ages. Could we turn through these Augean stables an Alpheus—the river of the knowledge of sanitation—(but we are men, not gods!) even then a Hercules would not be able to cleanse them in a day. It is a Herculean job but with your blessings, we hope to cope with it to some extent at least.

PS.

The city was not originally ill-constructed. Ahmedshah built it in 1415 A.D. according to the Aryan system of town planning, *Swastika* was its shape—we are worshippers of *swastika* and it symbolizes the worship of Humanity. The *pols* are divided according to professions and castes. People live a harmonious life of mutual helpfulness. There are open squares in houses and open square yards in the



centre of *pols* which are in many cases wide enough and beautiful. But our unclean habits have been our curse.

These dirty *pols* and filthy atmosphere notwithstanding, we come across bonny children and women of angelic beauty in the *pols*. What would they be in an atmosphere of cleanliness and beauty!

Malaria, consumption and countless other devils have got in. The average life of our inhabitants is 23 years. 40 per mile is our yearly death rate. Three die every day of consumption. Scarcely half of the babies born live to grow up. But I must close.

This letter was begun on the 2nd October and finished on the 4th. The P.S. was appended thereafter, probably on the same date. This is not a letter. It is a little pamphlet. But it is brimming over with so much humour and urbane persiflage, and so much art that I am sure the reader will read it with the same interest as I have done. Dr. Hariprasad has succeeded in giving not only an intensely interesting, but a perfectly vivid picture of filth and squalor. I wish him complete success in his endeavour.

But this is only paying compliments. My innermost desire would be to join him with a spade, a broom, a *chunam* bucket and a brush. But I know that I can have little to do in a city where Vallabhbai is the Master Sweeper. I am, therefore, watching what is going on in Ahmedabad as an interested spectator, and wishing that the Ahmedabad Municipality may win the first place in India in point of cleanliness, cohesion, primary education and in the supply of clean and cheap milk. I am sure that if it succeeds in achieving this, Ahmedabad will have given a considerable share in the movement for Swaraj.

But this is a Himalayan task. It is not the work of one or two men. Every one must put his or her shoulder to the wheel – men and women, boys and girls, Swarajists and No-changers, titled men and commoners, rich and poor. Only then could Ahmedabad be made an ideal city. If every one of us holds himself severally

responsible for removing the dirt and filth in any part of the city and if we strive to keep all parts as clean as we keep our seats, only then would it be an ideal city.

The wealthy must help with money, sanitarians with their knowledge, and every one with voluntary service. Today the work is being done in the teeth of ignorance, indifference and opposition. Why should volunteers be not forthcoming to keep the city clean? Why should not the boys of schools and colleges have a training in sanitation and offer themselves as volunteers?

Dr. Hariprasad's letter suggests many another thought. But I shall not cap a pamphlet with another. Let us all understand and help in this work of humanitarian service. If his letter bears that much fruit, it will not have been written by him and published by me in vain.

*Young India*, 29-10-1925, p. 371 and 5-11-1925, p. 374

## 20. SOME CIVIC POSERS

(Originally appeared under the title "Starving Municipal Boards")

The brief address, that Sjt. Vallabhbhai Patel delivered before the First Conference held in Gujarat of its municipalities and local boards, is worthy of study by every one interested in the efficient working of municipalities, local boards and district boards. It is packed with facts as startling as they are disturbing. On the one hand, he says, the responsibilities of these bodies have been increased by conferring on them larger rights and on the other, the means of discharging those responsibilities have been somehow or other curtailed. Himself being President of one of the first class municipalities of India he has a long record of municipal service behind him. Even the Government have been obliged to give his administration of Ahmedabad Municipality unstinted and unmixed praise. He has slaved for his municipality as few persons have done. Like Phiro-zeshah Mehta, having accepted the chair, he has held the work of his office to be far more important for him than any other national work, no matter how urgent or greater in extent it might be. Having made the choice of his *dharma*, he has preferred it, even though a superior has often called for the exercise of his singular abilities and powers of application. His address, therefore, needs to be studied carefully by every one concerned. He backs his assertion with concrete facts which anybody may challenge. He thinks that the 157 municipalities of the Bombay Presidency are economically in straitened circumstances. In some cases, he says, the salaries of municipal teachers are in arrears. Their incomes are really inadequate for the work before them. Their sanitary measures have to be held in abeyance for want of funds. Compulsory education schemes are shelved for similar reasons. He adduces in support of many of his statements his own painful experience, and he severely criticizes the Government's niggardly policy in connection with municipalities.

The President is as unsparing of the citizens as he is of the Government. He exclaims: "Citizens of our cities regulate their lives as if they were living not in cities but in villages, and therefore, many houses have no sanitary accommodation or receptacle reserved for collection of rubbish. They do not hesitate to keep their cattle any how, though living in crowded quarters. Shepherds bring their droves of cattle and plant them in the midst of cities with the greatest unconcern. Generally speaking, people are indifferent about observing simple rules of health and sanitation. They neither know how to observe them for themselves or for the sake of their neighbours. It is common experience to see them shoving rubbish on to their neighbour's yards. They do not hesitate to throw from their heights rubbish or water on to the streets heedless of passers-by. They would spit anywhere, they would perform their natural functions anywhere. The condition of villages is no better. Rubbish heaps meet your gaze on approaching them. Village ponds become stinking cesspools, and soaking dirt near village wells is a common feature." Sjt. Vallabhbai Patel says, and most people would agree with him, "that it would be criminal to look to the government for help in such matters".

I suppose, that he has purposely refrained from touching his address upon the petty intrigues that go on in municipalities, and make the work of the real worker and reformer almost an impossibility. Some of the foremost workers tried, but to meet severe disappointment. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in Allahabad, Babu Rajendra Prasad in Patna found intrigues to be too trying for them. De-shabandhu Chittaranjan Das strove manfully against heavy odds, and the responsibility nearly crushed him. The fact is, that the municipal voter has not yet become alive to a sense of his civic responsibility. He does not regard himself as in any way responsible for the well-being of all the citizens. Our educational system is not designed to give an object-lesson in corporate responsibility. Municipal councillors therefore need feel responsible to no one.

In the heyday of non-co-operation, I ventured to suggest that if the people had really developed a sense of civic responsibility, three-fourths of the municipal

work could be done without Government's assistance or patronage. I showed by taking facts and figures of municipal work in Mehmabad, that the citizens could manage their municipal work with half the cost without having a statutory municipality. And I showed too that a statutory municipality became a necessity only when the councillor had no co-operation from the people, or when wished to force their reform schemes down the throats of unwilling citizens. They needed in a small place like Mehmabad no elaborate machinery to light their streets, to clear their latrines and their roads and to manage their schools, and there could be no question of police, if the citizens were all good and pure, or if they had a citizen guard for guarding peaceful citizens against thieves, loafers or hooligans. Those men, who are real servants of the people, would become municipal councillors for the sake of service and not for the sake of gaining fame or engaging in intrigues and finding employment for their needy friends or relatives. What is wanted, therefore, is zealous education of the people on the part of workers, not merely by means of speeches, but through silent social service rendered without the slightest expectation of reward, even in the shape of thanks, but on the contrary, with every expectation of receiving the execration and worse of a public enraged over any attempt to make it give up its superstitious or insanitary habits. I know of a poor sanitary inspector, who was very nearly lynched for his zeal in impartially getting hold of all the culprits, who with criminal indifference dirtied the streets of the town, whose sanitation the poor man was paid to guard.

*Young India*, 21-7-27, p. 236

## 21. A LESSON IN CIVICS

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

In an exhaustive speech at Tumkur Gandhiji dwelt on the duties of municipal bodies, the speech at Bangalore was as telling as it was brief, and the one at Mysore was perhaps the most striking because of the striking environments which formed as it were the background of the picture. But all alike contained a message for the 'city fathers' not only of the places concerned but of all places which have a municipality.

The Tumkur municipal address mentioned with pride a budget of three lakhs for water works and the prospect of electrifying the town in six months. "Whilst I congratulate you," said Gandhiji, "on this, I may tell you that I expected you to give me assurances in other matters. Can you assure me that the children in the town will be ensured a liberal supply of clean and cheap milk? You have not told me that you have done all you can for cow protection, short of legislation prohibiting it. You have told me that you have a population of 15,000 but you have omitted to give me the strength of your livestock. There was a time in our land, when the wealth and prosperity of the people were measured by the number of children in the family and the head of cattle that it possessed. I assure you that you could have an ideal dairy here for much less than 3 lakhs you will spend on waterworks or even than Rs. 50,000 that you will invest in electricity. For much less money you can have a dairy so as to make it possible for people to have milk as easily as water. Have you persuaded your Panchamas to give up beef and liquor? And what have you done for hygiene and sanitation? The West has come in for much blame from me, but its hygiene and sanitation are object-lessons for us. To me, the test of a people's knowledge of sanitation is the condition of their latrines, and I am told that the state of things here is scandalous. The most orthodox and learned amongst us do not scruple to infringe the laws of sanitation, though all scriptures say that every infringement of a law of health or hygiene or

sanitation is a sin. I ask you to study this question deeply and to aim at being ideal scavengers. So long as you do not take the broom and the bucket in your hands, you cannot make your towns and cities clean. Lastly, I have been told that people in Mysore are lazy, that they do not leave their beds until 6 or 7 o'clock. Well, I tell you that the spinning wheel I am placing before you is a symbol of industry, and lazy people cannot work it. Time is wealth, and the *Gita* says the Great Annihilator annihilates those who waste time."

The tax-payers who gathered in their thousands in the Bangalore municipal square must have felt thankful for having been told what they should expect from their elected councillors. "I am glad that you have introduced compulsory primary education, and I congratulate you on your spacious roads, your splendid lighting and your beautiful parks. But while I can infer from your address that the middle and the upper classes must be happy here, I wonder if you have a poor class at all, and if you have, what you are doing to keep them clean and healthy. Have you ever shared in their hardships and their sorrows? Have you ever helped them to keep their latrines clean? Have you ever thought of the conditions in which your sweepers and scavengers live? Have you ensured a cheap milk supply for the infants, the aged and the infirm of the poorer classes? Are you sure that the food-stuffs that your provision-dealers sell are clean and unadulterated? Are you sure that the dealers cater for the rich and the poor fairly and squarely? Have you ever thought of the poor villagers who provide you daily with green vegetables and grain? Have you any gambling dens and liquor booths, and if you have, what have you been doing to protect people from them? What is the condition of your draught and milch cattle? I can ask you many more questions. If you have a satisfactory reply to each I can congratulate you, but if you have none, then I beseech you to give them your most earnest consideration."

*Young India*, 4-8-1927, p. 242

## 22. EFFICIENT MUNICIPAL WORKING

(From "Weekly Letter—In Sindh – II" by P.)

The municipal function at Sukkur was very interesting. The address was in Sindhi, Gandhiji's reply was a dissertation on the functions and limitations of our existing municipalities. Whilst he agreed with what they had observed in their address that they could win Swaraj through the municipalities, he cautioned them that the statement held good in respect of free and independent municipalities only, not municipalities that were dominated by the Government, as was largely the case in India at present. But though the existing municipalities might not by themselves enable them to wrest Swaraj from the Government, efficient working would certainly be a great step towards Swaraj. The first condition of municipal efficiency was that those who entered municipalities should be actuated by a spirit of service, not by considerations of personal gain. Secondly, it was necessary that the municipal commissioners should qualify themselves for their work by themselves becoming sweepers first and by learning to distinguish pure milk and *ghee* from impure. It would be their duty to see that there was not a dirty street or an unswept lane within municipal limits.

*Young India*, 21-2-1929, p. 57 at p. 59

\* Pyarelal



### 23. RANGOON CIVIC ADDRESS

(From "With Gandhiji in Burma" by M.D. and P.)

We propose to note here a few of the many functions that more than filled Gandhiji's all too brief a stay in Rangoon. The first chronologically and perhaps the first in importance from the citizens' point of view was the civic address. For the first time in the history of Rangoon the Corporation voted, after much heated debate, an address to a public man. The address itself was felicitously phrased and reminded Gandhiji of his pleasant experiences in Ceylon. "Many Buddhists in Ceylon, as if by instinct, claimed me as their own, and in spite of my protestations that I was a Hindu of Hindus, they claimed me and I felt it an honour that they claimed me as one of their own. Undoubtedly if the Buddhists of Ceylon, Burma, China and Japan would claim 'me as their' own, I should appropriate that honour readily, because I know that Buddhism is to Hinduism what Protestantism is to Roman Catholicism, only in a much stronger light, in a much greater degree."

The Corporation address referred with pride to the rapid progress made by the city of Rangoon during the past 15 years. Gandhiji did not cite facts and figures to show how obviously Rangoon was as much a "foreigner's" town as for instance Shanghai or Hongkong, but sounded a note of warning and asked them not to be deluded by the painted veil of apparent progress. "I only hope," he said, "that this great progress of your metropolis is a true reflection of the progress of the Burmese peasantry in the interior. It is sad for me to have to confess to you that the vast progress, which to an onlooker the great cities of India seem to have made is, by no means a true indication, or any indication of, the progress of the peasantry of India."

As regards the functions of an ideal municipality he has spoken over and over again during his tours in South India and Ceylon, and for the matter of that throughout India, but so few municipalities seem to fulfil them that the words

addressed to the City Fathers of Rangoon may be reproduced, without incurring the charge of repetition:

"I consider myself a lover of municipal life. I think that it is a rare privilege for a person to find himself in the position of a Municipal Councillor, but let me note down for you as a man of some experience in public life that one indispensable condition of that privilege is that Municipal Councillors dare not approach their office from interested or selfish motives. They must approach their sacred task in a spirit of service. They should pride themselves as I reminded the members of the Municipality of Karachi upon calling themselves scavengers. There is a significant expression for municipal corporation in my mother tongue—*Kachrapatti*, which means literally 'scavenging department'<sup>5</sup>, and a municipality is nothing if it is not a premier scavenging department embracing all spheres of public and social life of a city and if it is not saturated with the spirit of scavenging, scavenging not merely by way of looking after the physical sanitation of city, but also the internal sanitation of its citizens.

"I have pointed out in my wanderings throughout India and in reply to numerous corporation addresses that no corporation deserves the name unless it has provided for the primary education of all its children irrespective of caste, creed or colour, irrespective of status; secondly unless it provides cheap and pure milk for every citizen of the place even as the post office provides postage stamps to everybody who may require them, *it* must not be beyond the ability of a cosmopolitan and a progressive city like Rangoon to meet these primary wants of its citizens on which must largely depend the health of the aged and the children if not of all its citizens. May it fall to your lot to claim the honour of having been the first city in India, or if you like in the East, that has provided cheap, unadulterated milk for its citizens."

*Young India*, 28-3-1929, p. 97 at p. 99

## 24. SOCIAL LOCAL SERVICE FIRST CHARGE ON LOCAL BOARD'S ATTENTION

(From "Elected Boards")

It is the duty of the members to take notice of every high-handed and anti-national action by chairmen or departmental heads. And it is equally the duty of electors to keep a strict watch over the misdeeds of the boards for whose existence they are responsible and who are their mouthpieces. Indeed if the electors only knew their rights and realized their duty, they would make any irregular or unpatriotic action by their boards utterly impossible. It is the apathy of the general public which renders these elective boards often instruments of oppression rather than of service. There is nothing to prevent the boards from becoming powerful political bodies so long as they do not neglect or damage the social local service which is a first charge on their attention. It is possible even to demonstrate that it is necessary, in order to ensure social efficiency, for them to take part to a discriminating extent in the national movement for political emancipation.

*Young India*, 24-10-1929, p. 348

## 25. LOCAL BOARDS

Sjt. Sasadhar Ganguly, a member of the Manbhum District Board and Purulia Municipality, writes:

Many of us who are still members of local boards have been seriously thinking if we cannot help, so long as we are there, at least in the creation of an atmosphere for civil disobedience through these bodies. I solicit your advice if what I suggest below has your approval. You may not be aware perhaps that some of the local bodies of this province including ours, viz. the Manbhum District Board and the Purulia Municipality, have passed resolutions for closing their offices and institutions in commemoration of the death anniversaries of such great patriots as Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das. The Government however now directs that we are not to do so hence forth. Should we obey this order of the bureaucracy which, in my humble opinion, is insolent and insulting – insulting not only to our manhood and national self-respect but to the memory of the departed great? A nation which has not learnt "hero- worship" can never be great, and if it fails to do so even in the year of grace 1930, it is doomed. My humble suggestion will be that it is up to all local bodies which have passed such resolutions to disobey the order and to stick to them and also to request other bodies, which have not yet done so, to follow suit at once and to take all the consequences. At the worst, the Government may suppress or supersede them. This will rather prove a great boon in that, by creating an atmosphere of resistance, we may begin civil disobedience in all such towns and boards.

I would request you to give us a lead in this matter as early as possible, as persons, who were hitherto known as staunch Congressmen, have been trying to please both masters –the people and the Government by arranging the primary school holidays in such a way as to merge therein these so long separately observed. I would say this is compromising with evil. There can be no half-way

house between truth and untruth. Either we must obey this insulting circular and abolish the holidays, or we must speak out boldly.

I heartily endorse the suggestion made in this letter. No municipality represented by nationalists can accept dictation as to the holidays to be observed. And it would be an insult to the memory of departed patriots if members stole in the observance of their memory under cover of another holiday. It is the right of every nationalist municipality and local or district board to maintain its own holidays.

*Young India*, 30-1-1930, p. 38

## 26. DISTRICT BOARDS

It has often been borne in upon me that district boards and municipal councils are excrescences involving a useless task upon the people's purses. This became patent to me during the non-co-operation days in Mehmabad. I had then advised the people that, if they boycotted their council or whatever it was called, they could do their sweeping and lighting and conduct their schools without fuss and without much expense and avoid wrangling into the bargain.

The truth of my remark became clear to me a few days ago when a member of the Surat District Board came to me, showed me a circular issued by the Board, and asked me for my blessing on their scheme. The scheme was extra-official. There are about forty members of the Board. I write from memory. They have really no work except to meet at stated intervals and hold debates on certain items of expenditure. As the Board has a sweeping Congress majority and as some of the members are conscientious, they do not know how to use their time for the service of the people. The Board has an income altogether inadequate for the expenditure required to keep all its departments in good order and condition, especially the roads. The circular, therefore, contained a pompous advertisement that the members and the officials would work during the National Week in April at road repairs, etc. On the strength of the proverb that something is better than nothing, certainly the National Week idea was commendable. But it was not good enough for me. I said, "If you want my blessing, you must begin work now and not merely for one week as a holiday, but for the whole term of your office and regularly as if you were members of the paid staff—no doubt consistently with your domestic and other obligations. In other words, you should constitute yourselves into a national service. You will meet officially only to vote items you must, but never to hold long debates or wrangle over petty appointments and the like. But your real and solid work would be extra-official. You would take pride in having first class roads which you will have built yourselves. You will run your

schools efficiently. You will see that your district has its proper supply of water, and your fields are well manured and grow crops that are useful from the national standpoint. You will teach the people proper methods of sanitation and ensure voluntary prohibition by weaning the people from drink habit. You will run night schools for adults. If you are in earnest about your duty, you will be too few for the task. You will set an example to the other boards and you will justify the choice of the electors. The result will be that the electors themselves and the others will become a voluntary brigade of workers who will revolutionize the life of the people around you. If you take to heart what I am telling you, you will find at once that you cannot do without hand-ginning, hand-carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving. This will give full occupation during leisure hours to every boy, girl, man and woman who is not disabled for light labour, and you will immediately add a good few lacs of rupees to your income as a district. When you have achieved this programme you will have my blessings. I shall become your advertising agent. If you cannot do this, do not play with your work by having a spectacular demonstration of your holiday patriotism."

I fear, however, that the district boards in India will not quite approve of the programme of voluntary service I have sketched above. I, therefore, suggest that at least the Congress provinces have a model and novel legislation constituting municipal, local and district boards on the basis of efficiency. I would have them elected, but there would be very few men and women capable of doing administrative, plodding work. Each one of the members will have his work cut out for him. I should impress the services of the paid officials side by side with the elected members who will be at once their masters and coworkers. This is but the barest outline of boards of my notion. The Congress is a revolutionary body in the widest and the wisest sense. It must be original. All its activities must be derived from its creed of non-violence. There must be perfect chain linking the smallest to the biggest unit after the same pattern, so that he who runs may see that it is an artistic whole designed to answer the main purpose. This presupposes one united

mind and will in the Congress – not the mind and will of one man but the minds and wills of many men and women acting as one mind and one will.

Segaon, 19-12-1938

*'Harijan*, 24-12-1938, p. 396



## 27. SOME MUNICIPAL PROBLEMS

(Originally appeared under the title of "Municipal Service and Non-violence" by P.)

A wave of municipal-mindedness is just now sweeping over Gujarat as a result of which the entire face of the countryside in certain parts of that province is fast being transformed. A noteworthy feature of this movement is "voluntary conscription" of labour for purposes of road construction, cleaning up and such other necessary service. Nor is the ferment confined to the villages. Of late the cities no less than the villages in Gujarat have started the practice of observing the National Week by mass performance of some kind of civic service. It was in order to discuss with Gandhiji various knotty problems relating to their day-to-day work that about 200 representatives of municipalities and local boards from all over Gujarat met Gandhiji in an informal conference on the 28th ultimo at Bardoli. The first question they asked related to the question of taxation: "The Congress is pledged to the policy of reducing the burden of taxation. Yet when Congressmen enter the local boards and municipalities, they require more money for carrying out their programme of beneficent municipal activity. How can this be done without fresh taxation which the people naturally dislike? How is the dilemma to be solved?" asked one representative."<sup>1</sup>

"If I were a tax-payer," replied Gandhiji, "within the jurisdiction of a local board or a municipality, I would refuse to pay a single pie by way of additional taxation and advise others to do likewise unless the money we pay is returned fourfold. Those who enter local boards and municipalities as people's representatives go there not to seek honour or to indulge in mutual rivalries, but to render a service of love, and that does not depend upon money. Ours is a pauper country. If our municipal councillors are imbued with a real spirit of service, they will convert themselves into unpaid sweepers, *bhangis* and road-makers, and take pride in doing so. They will invite their fellow councillors, who may not have come on the Congress ticket to join them, and if they have faith in themselves and their mission, their example

will not fail to evoke response. This means that a municipal councillor has to be a whole-timer. He should have no axe of his own to grind. The next step would be to map out the entire adult population within the jurisdiction of the municipality or the local board. All should be asked to make their contribution to municipal activity. A regular register should be maintained. Those who are too poor to make any money contribution but are able-bodied and physically fit, can be asked to give their free labour. Real India consists not of a few big cities and our Presidency towns, but of seven lakhs of villages. It is there that the real problems of India have to be faced and solved. We require better roads, better sanitation, better drinking water supply for our villages. We shall never be able to get through even a fraction of this stupendous work if we proceed on a money basis. But India has an inexhaustible reserve of man-power. If we can mobilize that, we can transform the entire look of the country in an incredibly short time.

"And the Charkha is a means *par excellence* for effecting this mobilization of our labour resources. It is a natural symbol of non-violence too, which is the soul of all voluntary life-giving corporate activity. The popularization of the Charkha thus has a definite place in any scheme of municipal work, whether it relates to the liquidation of rural unemployment and the consequent penury and appalling conditions of existence under which vast sections of our rural population live, or whether it refers to the amelioration of slum life that is the shame of our big cities.

"But this presupposes a living faith in the Charkha, a faith that should lead to an intelligent study and mastering of the science of spinning and its allied processes. As it is, we today love to kill our time by going to cinemas and picture houses or even in idle talk. Pursuits of making money without work interest us, but not the Charkha. Yet it is my faith that we shall advance towards our goal of non-violence to the extent we succeed in universalizing the Charkha.

"By following the plan of work outlined above, we shall be able to return to the rate-payers whatever taxes they may have paid, multiplied manifold, in the form

of vastly improved services and municipal amenities, and they will not grudge the levying of additional taxes, too, should that become necessary."

A member of the Jambusar Municipality asked: "In our municipality there are 17 members, out of whom eight have been returned on the Congress ticket, the remaining nine are non-Congress. They can always outvote us and thwart our plans. What should we do?"

*Gandhiji:* "That should present no problem. If they want to proceed in the orthodox style and fill up their time with speechifying and so on and so forth, you need not imitate them, nor waste your time like them; you may just put in your appearance at these meetings, but need not waste your time by taking part in idle controversy. Instead, you should occupy all your time with useful service of the rate-payers, by yourself wielding the bucket and the broom, by working with the spade and the basket, by nursing and rendering medical aid to the sick and ailing, and by teaching the rate-payers who are illiterate and their children, to read and write. As a result, two things may happen. Either your opponents will be infected by your example and will align themselves with you and there will be an end to all controversy. Or the rate-payers will learn to know the sheep from the goats, and at the next elections all the seventeen seats will be filled by Congressmen. That is the non-violent way of liquidating opposition. It eliminates all conflict and clash and makes our way clear irrespective of what the other party may or may not do."

Q..." "Since in many places in Gujarat the National Week is being observed by inviting the people to take part in rural uplift or municipal service work, would it not be desirable to alter the dates of the celebration so that the week should fall within the bright phase of the moon? This will enable mass operations to continue even after nightfall and economize lighting."

*Gandhiji:* "A multitude of calendars are at present in vogue in different parts of the country. But for a national celebration it is desirable to follow a calendar which is universal. If your civic zeal is not a vain show, beginning and ending with

the National Week, you will have a series of municipal service weeks in addition to the National Week. The dates for these weeks in each place can be fixed according to the requirement of the activity suited to that particular place."

Q.: "Which form of taxation is better for municipal purposes, direct or indirect?" asked a city father from Surat.

*Gandhiji*: "Indirect taxation is found to be more popular with rate-payers, because its incidence is not directly felt. But the direct taxation has more educative value and will be found more handy when the object is to make the rate-payers municipal minded."

#### **MUNICIPALITIES AND PRIMARY EDUCATION**

The next batch of questions referred to the educational activity of municipal bodies. A friend from Kheda District complained: "We would like to introduce the Wardha Scheme of basic education in the primary schools run by local boards. The local bodies are willing, but the Inspectorate and the higher officials of the Education Department are still old-fashioned in their outlook. They have not developed faith in the Wardha principles. How shall we circumvent this handicap?"

*Gandhiji*: "That does not surprise me. I should be surprised if the higher educational authorities developed faith in the Wardha Scheme of education all at once. Faith will follow experience. In the meantime all I can say is that where there is a will there is a way. I do not think there is any legal difficulty in the way of the Education Minister instructing his Director of Public Instruction to help, in every possible way, those who might wish to give effect to the Wardha Scheme of education. The G. P. Ministry has not found any difficulty in making the Education Department to fall into line with them. But if a legal or technical difficulty is discovered, it can be removed in a legal way."

Q.: "In our schemes for adult education should the aid be to promote the spread of literacy or to impart 'useful knowledge'? What about the education of women?"

A.: "The primary need of those who are come of age and are following an avocation, is to know how to read and write. Mass illiteracy is India's sin and shame and must be liquidated. Of course, the literacy campaign must not begin and end with a knowledge of the alphabet. It must go hand in hand with the spread of useful knowledge. But municipal bodies should beware of trying to ride two horses at a time, or else they are sure to come a cropper.

"As for illiteracy among the women, its cause is not mere laziness and inertia as in the case of men. A more potent cause is the status of inferiority with which an immemorial tradition has unjustly branded her. Man has converted her into a domestic drudge and an instrument of his pleasure, instead of regarding her as his helpmate and 'better half! The result is a semi-paralysis of our society. Woman has rightly been called the mother of the race. We owe it to her and to ourselves to undo the great wrong that we have done her."

"You have expressed varying opinions on certain subjects at different times," asked a friend from

Kapadwanj, Kheda District. These are sometimes exploited by our opponents to oppose our current policies. What should we do under these circumstances?"

"The contradiction in these cases," replied Gandhiji, "is only in appearance and easily capable of being reconciled. A safe rule to follow would be that the latest utterance, in order of time, should be given precedence over all the previous ones. But no utterance of mine, whether late or early, need bind you, if it does not appeal to your heart and head. That would not mean that my standpoint was wrong. But it would be wrong to accept a standpoint which you cannot appreciate or assimilate."

#### **SOME CONUNDRUMS**

Gandhiji was presented with some posers in Ahimsa arising out of the day-to-day performance of municipal duties. "How to deal with people who commit nuisance by using any and every place for evacuations? They defend the practice on the

ground that it is enjoined by their religion. Again, how to cope with the nuisance of flies, mosquitoes, rabid dogs and monkeys, etc.? Their extermination is objected to by some on the ground of Ahimsa."

*Gandhiji*: "With regard to the first, there are two ways of dealing with the problem—the apparently violent and the non-violent. You can enforce the penalty of law against those who may infringe the laws of sanitation. I have used the word 'apparent' advisedly. Religious freedom, like liberty, becomes licence when it is indulged in at the expense of the health and safety of others, or in contravention of the principles of decency or morality. If you want to claim unrestricted and absolute liberty for yourselves, you must choose to retire from society and take to solitude. I call the practice of making evacuations anywhere and everywhere regardless of the health and convenience of others, a travesty of Ahimsa. Where there is filth, whether physical or moral, there is no Ahimsa.

"The other way is to seek out the religious heads of the sects that indulge in these insanitary practices and to try to touch their heart and reason by patient argument.

"As for the nuisance of flies, mosquitoes, street dogs and monkeys etc., I in my individual capacity may choose to put up with it, but society as a whole cannot afford to do so if it at all wants to exist. These pests are a result of our misdeeds. If I feed the monkeys in a public place and thereby make life impossible for others, it is I who commit *himsa*, and society will have no choice but to exterminate the pest that my *himsa* has created. The criterion of Ahi- msa is the mental attitude behind an act, not the mechanical act by itself. A citizen who lets loose pests on others by indulging in a mistaken humanitarian sentiment is guilty of *himsa*."<sup>1</sup>

*Harijan*, 18-2-1939, p. 22

## 2. SANITATION

### 28. CORPORATION INSANITATION

(Originally appeared in *Indian Opinion* dated 25-2-1905)

There was submitted, at the ordinary monthly meeting of the Durban Town Council, on the 7th inst. a Report by the Inspector of Nuisances relative to the Eastern and Western Vleis. It is noteworthy that this official makes reference to certain areas, the buildings on which are variously described as dilapidated and imperfect as to sanitation and building characteristics, whilst the ground itself is said to be undrained. These buildings, moreover, are declared to be "used for habitable purposes" and also "unfit for human habitation".

We are forcibly reminded of a meeting held, under the auspices of the Natal Indian Congress, in June of 1903, when emphasis was laid upon an allegation made in the Minute, submitted by the Mayor to the Town Council concerning the insanitary habits of the Indian population, and urging this as one of several reasons why Indians should be relegated to Locations, or, as they have been euphemistically designated, "Bazaars".

Lord Milner, it will be remembered, in his memorable Notice No. 356 of 1903, drew special attention to the exception that was to be made in respect of Asiatics whose habits of life and social qualities were not repugnant to European ideas or in conflict with sanitary laws. We venture to suggest that any doctor or hospital nurse will confirm our assertion that, even amongst higher-class Europeans, sanitation is not always favourably regarded. That, however, is by the way. The real point is that it is not always just that the *general opinion* of Europeans, who are often most ignorant of what they are most assured, and as often prejudiced against conditions and circumstances that are strange to them, should be taken as a reasonable criterion. The opinion of the man in the street is, notoriously, vastly different from, and often opposed to, the opinion of the man in the study, who

has greater and more frequent opportunity of collecting, sifting and judging the facts of which he speaks.

There are Indians and Indians; there are Indians who approach absolutely to the scientific European standard of sanitation, and there are Indians who have not yet adopted other modes of sanitation than those to which they have been accustomed, almost from time immemorial in the remote districts of India. Similar distinctions may, indeed, be made amongst the inhabitants of civilized nations the world over. There is always, and will be for long years to come, this difference between the educated and the ill-instructed.

When, then, we hear the charge so frequently levelled against the Indian that he is insanitary, we are impelled to ask: "Which Indians do you mean? And do you refer to personal cleanliness or domiciliary insanitation?" For nothing is more important than that those who bring a charge of this impalpable nature should be pinned down to something more definite and less dangerously vague. It is a common observation that a generalization is often a successful catchword to throw to an unthinking man, whereas a definite statement of fact would crush him.

It is our experience that, generally speaking, the Indian is not insanitary. It must be distinctly borne in mind that we do not assert that no Indians are insanitary. We argue from a knowledge of the national customs and traditions of the various Indian peoples, and can confidently say that, be these Hindus or Mohamedans, their faith, which is a living one to them, inculcates absolute principles of personal cleanliness and, as a corollary, domestic sanitation even amongst the lowest classes, and this may easily be confirmed by anyone who is at all conversant with the normal conditions of Indian life.

But what have we? We have the Eastern and Western Vleis! We have heard much hard talk of "Bazaars" and Locations, of disinfection and segregation. Somehow or other, the remaining terms of the proposition appear to have been very carefully— or, shall we say, carelessly—left out of consideration.



For the benefit of the public that takes an interest in sanitary matters and questions of hygiene, we propose to quote from the Report of the Sanitary Committee of the Town Council, published in *The Natal Mercury* so far back as 1899, and of which committee the Hon. R. Jameson was Chairman.

H2. We next inspected the compound on what is known as the Western Vlei. Here are two corrugated iron buildings accommodating 22 men and 33 women and children. These structures were found to be in fairly good condition, but to bring them within the terms of our sanitary bye-laws, they require to be provided with roof, guttering and down-pipes, more light and more ventilation, and another latrine, the existing one not being sufficient for decency. The fence requires repairs, the houses should be lime-washed internally. There being a water-supply adjacent, a small-iron structure should be provided for bathing and washing purposes. The open drains in the vicinity should be well opened up before the summer rain sets in, as otherwise this site is swampy."

This is a description of the condition no less than a "Bazaar" or Location, or Compound, or what you will, under the direct control of so authoritative a body as the Corporation itself! Who is responsible, we ask, if Indians domiciled in such buildings, placed in the very midst of insanitary conditions, are insanitary in their habits? The Indians? Surely not! And yet, to all intents and purposes, this unsavoury area remains in much the same condition at this date as at the time when this report was made, now some five-and-a-half years ago!

What is the Corporation doing to remedy such a disgusting condition of affairs? It can spare time and energy for licensing prosecutions; why can it not utilize some of that same energy to do away with this and other centres of disease and death?

We are told in *The Natal Mercury*:

The coolie is not a cleanly individual, and if left to himself he would soon make even a first class villa resemble a piggery more than anything else.

And it goes on to say:

But it is the business of his employer, and particularly of the Protector of Immigrants, to see that he is not left to himself in the matter of sanitation, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of the whole community. It is also a matter for the Medical Officer of Health for the Colony to see to, and if employers are found providing inadequate and filthy accommodation for their coolies, they ought to be made to mend their ways.

With the second of these statements we are in entire accord. Indeed it goes far to answer those who insist upon the alleged insanitary habits of the Indians as a whole. The first assertion requires to be examined before being accepted. It is disposed of in the following extract from the Report already quoted:

It was specially noted here (Queen Street Compound) that the compound being connected with the sewerage system, enabling as it does ample washing, bathing, and latrine needs, *was remarkably clean compared with any of the other places inspected.*

So we have it on record that the Corporation has had the evil pointed out to it; that such evils, being permitted to continue, cast a stigma upon the body that condones them; and last, but not least, that the Corporation has, in the cases of the Eastern and the Western Vleis, done practically nothing to remedy them. Who, then, has a right to add insult to injury by urging the insanitation of the Indian community as a reason why they should be wiped out of existence? The effect of the Corporation's policy of *laissez faire* is obvious. How long will the cause remain undealt with?

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. IV, p. 359*

## 29. SOME SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING SANITATION

(From "Some General Suggestions Concerning Plague")

The most important cause of illness in India is the defective and extremely harmful methods we follow for answering calls of nature. A large number of people do this in the open. The excreta are not covered over with earth or otherwise, and this leads to the breeding of millions of flies every day. They come into contact, first with excreta and then with our body, food and clothes. Several kinds of poisonous gases are generated by the excreta all the time and these pollute the air all round. It is obvious that when air, which is men's best food, is being thus continually polluted, they cannot maintain good health. The filth in our latrines is equally or even more harmful. For it is in our very homes. If, therefore, we go out into the open, after defecating we must cover the excreta with earth as people in other countries do. Latrines should have arrangements for dry dust to be sprinkled in sufficient quantity every time after use. The excreta should be collected in some sort of a bucket. The refuse-pit should be avoided altogether and all conduits should be closed up. Urine and water should also be collected in the bucket. If we did not cherish false notions in the name of religion, we would never tolerate such hellish filth. The latrine should be so constructed as to permit the scavenger access to every part of it. Unless these improvements are carried out, cities in India will never be free from infectious diseases.

The air gets polluted also by reason of people urinating or spitting or throwing litter and other rubbish anywhere on the roads. Doctors have discovered that germs spread even from the spittle of certain categories of patients, of tuberculous patients for instance, infect others. We must certainly consider what we do and where. Millions of people in this country walk bare-foot. It is a sorry state of affairs that they have to walk on filth.

Our roads, our streets or the verandahs of our houses should be so clean that one would not hesitate to sit down or even sleep on them.

We would do well to do some careful thinking why it is that, in cities with an English population, the English localities are unaffected even when an epidemic of the plague is raging. The reason is nothing else than the cleanliness of the place. Maintaining cleanliness requires no money but merely intelligent care.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XIV, p. 100 at p. 101*

### 30. A PROTEST

(To protest against insufficient and irregular supply of water, a meeting was called in Ahmedabad on 1st January, 1918: Gandhiji made a speech in Gujarati of which the following is a English translation.)

We meet here today on a matter which is important because it is but an aspect of Swaraj. In saying this, we are guilty of no exaggeration. Swaraj means rule over oneself. A meeting which asks whether the Ahmedabad Municipality is able to manage its affairs well is surely a meeting in the cause of Swaraj. The subject to be discussed at this meeting has a bearing on public health. Air, water and grains are the chief three kinds of food. Air is free to all, but, if it is polluted, it harms our health. Doctors say that bad air is more harmful than bad water. Inhalation of bad air is harmful by itself and this is the reason we (sometimes) need change of air. Next comes water. We are generally very careless about it. If we were to be sufficiently careful about air, water and food, the plague would never make its appearance among us. Some parts of Ahmedabad have been experiencing difficulties about water during the last eight years. For these three months, the whole city has been in difficulty, and we have assembled here to protest against this to the Collector of Ahmedabad, the Commissioner of the Northern Division and the Municipal Commissioner. From now on we must take up the effort to secure water. Councillors are servants of the people and we have a right to question them and, if they fail to discharge their responsibilities properly, even to ask them to resign. Under one of the sections of the (Municipal) Act, the Municipal Commissioner is appointed by the Government. We are also entitled to call the Municipal Commissioner and the Municipal Engineer to account; we have assembled here to take even further steps, if necessary. The larger the attendance at a meeting like this, discussing an issue of public importance, the weightier will be its protest. I should like to request you all not to rest till you have succeeded in this effort. If we approach every problem as seriously as we

would a task of the highest importance, we are bound to succeed. We have the right to demand our money back.

We must protest, for otherwise, the officials will never know what we suffer; nor need we wait till the new elections, as it is quite likely that they may be delayed by a year.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XIV, p. 143*

### 31. WHAT IS AN IDEAL CITY?

The following rendering of Mr. Gandhi's speech in reply to the address of the Ahmedabad Municipality is given here as being of general interest:

Whilst I thank you for the beautiful address you have presented to me, I am painfully conscious of the fact that as a citizen of Ahmedabad I am utterly undeserving of it. In saying so I am not using the language of false or undue modesty. A citizen to deserve an address from the Municipality of his city should have special citizen-service to his credit. And I have none. I do not think it was at all necessary for you to vote this address for the services you have had in mind. But I know that I owe the address to the fact of many of you being my co-workers in another field and to the proverbial generosity of the nation to which you and I are proud to belong.

When in response to the invitation of some friends I fixed my abode in this city some years ago I thought I should contribute my share in the service of this city, and be worthy of calling myself its citizen. I had not then the privilege of knowing many of you, but I shared my dreams and visions with Dr. Hariprasad whom I often met. I used to tell him of the citizen-service I had done in South Africa—service which I am thankful was true service inasmuch as it was silent and of which most of you know nothing—and I concerted measures for improving the sanitation and health of the city. We had intended to form a committee of servants who would visit every nook and corner of the city in order to give the citizens object-lessons in cleaning closets and streets and in general conservancy by doing the work ourselves. We had also intended to plan and suggest measures for the expansion of the city by opening suburbs and inviting citizens to go and settle there rather than live in congested areas. Such things we knew could not be satisfactorily done by fresh taxation. We therefore thought of going with the beggar's bowl to the rich citizens and ask them to donate land in the heart of the city for opening little gardens for the children to play in. We had intended too to think out schemes so

as to afford the fullest facility for education of every child of Ahmedabad. It was also our intention to ensure a supply of pure and cheap milk by municipalizing all the city dairies. Mr. Jivanlal Desai even suggested that I should enter the Municipality myself and endeavour to carry out the plans above adumbrated. But the fates willed it otherwise. A huge hurricane blew over the country in the shape of the Rowlatt Bills taking us all within its sweep. It took some lives both innocent and guilty. I had to do penance for my Himalayan miscalculation. The hurricane still persists though in another shape. We are all trying, however inadequately, to stop it. And I at least feel I have not the leisure to work out my schemes. But why should I pretend that I would have succeeded in carrying them out had I entered the Municipality? Why may I assume that none of your previous presidents or none of you thought or are thinking the same things as I? How dare I say that no efforts have been made in this direction? I may only say that my heart weeps to see the misery, the squalor, and the dirt in the streets of Ahmedabad as I pass through them. How can starvation and dirt be allowed to exist in a city of such riches and rich traditions?

But I may not pretend that I should have been able to remove all this, had I entered the Municipality. Possibly humiliation would have been in store for me in that field as it has been in others. It was perhaps well that Providence ordered things otherwise. As it is, however, even today I stand in the humiliating position of having no citizen-service to my credit, and yet stealing an address I do not deserve. I pray that the Almighty may have consideration for my good intentions and forgive my failings. I ask you also to forgive me, and request you to have in mind the dream of an ideal city I have revealed to you. I thank you once again.

*Young India*, 28-8-1924, p. 283



### 32. OLD HABITS DIE-HARD

(An excerpt from an article published under the title "Hook-Worm and Charkha".)

I am not blind to the necessity of sanitation. I became a sanitary reformer long before I discovered the Charkha. I was myself carrying on at the farm in Phoenix, Natal experiments in burying night-soil and converting it into rich manure. We had there no scavenger; we were our own scavengers, and as Mr. Andrews himself knows one could walk about the settlement in Phoenix barefooted without the danger of treading upon any dirt. The same treatment of night-soil is being continued at the Satyagraha Ashram on the banks of the Sabarmati. But I do not carry on any propaganda about it for the simple reason that it cannot solve the problem of the daily growing poverty immediately and directly. Moreover, in dealing with this question of insanitation, one has to fight against old prejudices and old habits. It is a matter of sustained education and one that cannot be dealt with without State aid. I regret to have to confess that ingrained bad habits handed down from generation to generation do not yield to persuasion. Legislation seems to me to be the only effective remedy.

*Young India, 27-8-1925, p. 299*

### 33. OUR INSANITATION

During my wanderings nothing has been so painful to me as to observe our insanitation throughout the length and breadth of the land. I do not believe in the use of force for carrying out reforms, but when I think of the time that must elapse before the ingrained habits of millions of people can be changed, I almost reconcile myself to compulsion in this the most important matter of insanitation. Several diseases can be directly traced to insanitation. Hook-worm for instance is such a direct result. Not a single human being who observes the elementary principles of sanitation need suffer from hook-worm. The disease is not even due to poverty. The only reason is gross ignorance of the first principles of sanitation.

These reflections arise from the abominations I saw in Mandvi. The people of Mandvi are not poor. They cannot be classed as ignorant. And yet their habits are dirty beyond description. Men and women dirty the streets that they walk on with bare feet. They do this every morning. There is practically no such thing as a closet in that port. It was with the greatest difficulty that I was able to pass through the streets.

Let me not be hard on the poor inhabitants of Mandvi. I know that I saw nothing better in many streets of Madras. The sight of grown-up people lining the river banks and after the performance proceeding with criminal thoughtlessness to the river and cleaning themselves in it and injecting into its sacred water typhoid, cholera and dysentery germs has not yet faded from memory. This is the water that is used also for drinking. In the Punjab we violate God's laws by dirtying our roofs and breeding millions of flies. In Bengal the same tank quenches the thirst of man and beast and cleanses him and his pots. But I must not continue this description of our shame. Seeing that it is there, it would be sinful to hide it. But I dare not carry it any further. I know I have underdrawn the picture.

I would urge the enterprising people of Mandvi to lead the way in model sanitation. Let them, whether the State help them or not, call in a specialist and spend money in improving their sanitation so as to make it perfect. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness." We can no more gain God's blessings with an unclean body than with an unclean mind. A clean body cannot reside in an unclean city.

Let us not put off everything till Swaraj is attained and thus put off Swaraj itself. Swaraj can be had only by brave and clean people. Whilst the Government has to answer for a lot, I know that the British officers are not responsible for our insanitation. Indeed if we gave them free scope in this matter, they would improve our habits at the point of the sword. They do not do so, because it does not pay. But they would gladly welcome and encourage any effort towards improved sanitation. In this matter Europe has much to teach us. We quote with pride a few texts from Manu or if we are Musalmans from the Kuran. We do not carry even these into practice. Europeans have deduced an elaborate code of sanitation from the principles laid down in these books. Let us learn these from them and adapt them to our needs and habits. How I would love to see not ornamental but useful sanitary associations whose members will deem it a privilege to take up the broom, the shovel and the bucket. Here is great national work for school boys, school girls and collegiates all over India.

*Young India*, 19-11-1925, p. 399

### 34. SANITATION IN AHMEDABAD

Dr. Hariprasad contributes another interesting letter on the subject to *Navajivan* which is summarized below:

The number of *pols* cleaned is now 370 in which were included those without underground sewers. These revealed the same woeful neglect of the elementary rules of sanitation and about enjoyment of property. The individual refuses to think and act in the interest of the community as a whole and infringes every moment the sage legal maxim (*Sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas*), i.e. enjoy your own property so as not to injure another's. Unmitigated selfishness rules his actions, and he co-operates with his dirty habits, but refuses to co-operate with his neighbour.

And yet the work already done has begun to tell. People in *pols* already cleaned have begun to respect the sanitation rules and where they do not, a corps of sixty sweepers has been set apart to visit those localities again and clear the refuse and remind the delinquents. There were found at least four localities where there is some sort of social cooperation among the residents. Sheth Chinaiwalla gets his *pol* properly swept and watered every day at his own expense. Sheth Jivanlal has at his expense destroyed the dirty common latrines in his locality and built flush latrines. The old Sir Chinubhai had acquired houses surrounding his own in order to create a big open space in the *pol*. The present baronet has now destroyed the houses and provided the *pol* with a spacious lung.

Dr. Hariprasad deals in the present letter with various artisan communities and communities known for their tastes and aesthetic sense.

These are the *chhipas* (cloth printers) who were one day the pride of Ahmedabad, who made their own dyes out of indigenous herbs, and made dies of various designs. The Germans and the English merchants have destroyed their occupation and they have now fallen back on foreign dyes. But their sense of art has not yet

gone. Having to do manual labour they have strongly built physiques and muscular limbs.

They have open spaces before their houses on which they spread dyed cloths to dry. These spaces which should be the lungs of their *pol*s are shamelessly used during the night by men and women, young and old alike, for performing natural functions.

The Borahs, an exceptionally wealthy community with palatial houses and magnificent mosques, leave their drains open, and the open spaces about their houses are huge refuse- bins.

The Maharashtris who are a few and concentrated in Bhadra are known for their cleanly habits. They are mostly members of the sanitary committee, doctors, professors, vakils, and judges and yet they live amid scenes of squalor and filth. There are stagnant pools even in their localities, and even their children are allowed to perform natural functions wherever they like. Malaria thus rages in Bhadra, a comparatively less congested locality. Dr. Hariprasad has begun operations here with a copious use of phenyle and other disinfectants.

The Nagars, the elite of the Gujarat community, known for their love of letters and literary gifts, fare no better.

There is a place in *Panchpatti* where the wood-carvers are concentrated. They are adepts at reproducing beautiful nature in wood, but their *pol* and even the temple in it are reeking with filth.

It is said that Ahmedabad is a city mainly of shopkeepers and merchants and cannot be expected to be a model of cleanliness. But so also was Florence of the Medici. It was the centre of art and letters and yet no less a centre of industries. But the people knew how to keep it a model of cleanliness and beauty and it was dear to them as life itself. Will the people of Ahmedabad also love and beautify their city like the Florentines?

[Condensed by M. D.]

I offer no apology for presenting the reader with the foregoing condensation from Dr. Hariprasad's letter in Gujarati. Those who are interested in sanitary matters will do well to follow the labours of reformers in Ahmedabad. The instances quoted by Dr. Hariprasad of wealthy men devoting their riches to remove insanitation and benefit their neighbours are worthy of emulation all over India. No municipality can cope with insanitation and congestion by the simple process of taxation and paid services. This vital reform is possible only by wholesale and voluntary co-operation of the people both rich and poor.

– M. K. G.

*Young India*, 26-11-1925, p. 415

### 35. A NATIONAL DEFECT

Although we have the credit for being a personally clean people, we have little reason to be satisfied with that certificate. Our cleanliness, i.e. cleanliness compared to that of other nations is based upon the almost universal habit of taking the daily bath and of keeping our cottage clean and tidy. But I fear that it ends there. We purchase that cleanliness at the expense of our neighbours. Hence our villages are a dungheap and streets not walkable in spite of the fact that millions go bare foot. We do believe in removing dirt from our rooms but we also believe in throwing it in the street without regard to well being of society. We are clean as individuals but not as members of the society or the nation of which the individual is but a tiny part.

Whenever I travel in the South this serious shortcoming obtrudes itself on my attention and makes me feel most uncomfortable and sad. The evil is by no means peculiar to the South but it is in my opinion accentuated in the South. One does not see the defilement of rivers to the same extent in the other parts of India as in the South.

On 17th instant at 6 a.m. we left Bezwada for Gantur by motor. We had to cross the great Krishna river. The scene I have often painfully witnessed from the trains in the South now met my gaze at closer quarters. The car practically passed by hundreds of men and women evacuating themselves not many yards from the river bank. It is the stream in which people bathe and from which they drink. Here there was a breach of the code of decency and a criminal disregard of the most elementary laws of health. Add to this the economic waste of the precious manure, which they would be if these evacuations were made in a field and buried in the living surface of the earth and well mixed with loosened soil, instead of being filth and a danger to the health of the citizens, as they are when they are deposited on the river banks.

Here is work for the municipalities, if they will but do their primary duty of conserving the health of the citizens under their care. There is, I know, the custom of saying that these reforms must not be permitted to take the nation's attention away from the work of Swaraj. I venture to submit that conservation of national sanitation is Swaraj work and may not be postponed for a single day on any consideration whatsoever. Indeed if Swaraj is to be had by peaceful methods it will only be attained by attention to every little detail of national life. Such work will promote cohesion among workers and create an indissoluble bond between them and the people—a bond necessary for the final overthrow of the existing system of Government. The system depends for its existence upon the weaknesses of the nation. If there are no weaknesses to exploit, it will automatically cease to exist. A foreign Government is like a foreign body in a diseased system. And even as for eradication of a foreign body the system has to be made healthy from within, so also for the removal of a foreign Government, it is necessary to remove all the internal causes of disease. Corporate insanitation is not the least of such diseases.

Any municipality tackling the evil of insanitation will have tough work before it, not by way of finding money for carrying out the reform but in the way of fighting colossal national prejudices and habits that have become second nature. It will, therefore, be good training in Swaraj.

So far as any finance is concerned, the reform will not only cost little but it will ultimately be a source of wealth. I suggest that in this country it can be carried out only if the councillors will themselves take up the broom and the basket and not otherwise. The remedy is no doubt heroic, but it is cheap, efficient and capable of being immediately put into effect. When the city fathers are in earnest about the reform, they will be able to command the willing service of numberless volunteers.

*Young India*, 25-4-1929, p. 132



### 36. INSANITATION IN HARDVAR

(Originally appeared under the title "Physical and Moral Insanitation".)

There can be no doubt that at one time Hardvar and the other celebrated places of pilgrimage were really holy. Their natural beauty, their ancient popularity would seem to show that at one time they were sanctuaries for the preservation and purification of Hinduism. In spite of my innate love of Hinduism, in spite of my conservatism that ever seeks to respect and justify ancient institutions, these holy places have few man-made attractions for me.

It was in 1915 that I first visited Hardvar as a volunteer working under Pandit Hridaynath Kunzru who was in charge of the Seva Samiti organized by the Servants of India Society. I was therefore able to come in intimate touch with many men and things which otherwise I would not have done. I had gone there full of hope and reverence. But whilst I realised the grandeur of the holy Gan- ga and the holier Himalayas, I saw little to inspire me in what man was doing in this holy place. To my great grief I discovered insanitation both moral and physical. I found during the recent visit not much change for the better. There is the same defilement of the mighty stream even in the name of religion. Thoughtless ignorant men and women use for natural functions the sacred banks of the river where they are supposed to sit in quiet contemplation and find God. They violate religion, science and laws of sanitation. All the religions in the world prohibit the pollution of streams, their banks, public roads and all thoroughfares. Science teaches us that human evacuations, whether liquid or solid, make most valuable manure if they are properly conserved. Hygienists regard it as a crime against humanity for any person to perform natural functions in the places enumerated by me. This pollution is a sin born of ignorance or laziness. But there goes on deliberate pollution too in the name of religion. I was taken to the river to perform the usual ceremony. Flowers, yarn, curds, coloured starch, rice and the like were thrown into the river whose waters millions drink in the faith that they

are doing a meritorious act. I protested that it was harmful to throw these things into the waters. "It is a tradition handed down from ages", was the priestly reply. Add to this the reported criminal emptying of the drain pipes into the sacred waters.

Although the passenger traffic is very heavy the station is as primitive as it could be made. There are very few conveniences for the passengers. The streets are narrow and unkempt. The roads are indifferently kept. Thus the authorities have conspired with the people to render Hardvar as little attractive as possible.

So much for the physical insanitation of Hardvar. I was reliably informed that moral insanitation was far worse. I have not the heart to narrate here the stories I was told of the horrible vice that went on in Hardvar. There was a naive admission in an address presented to me by the Pandas. They said that in Hardvar perfect sexual restraint was obligatory. They therefore left Hardvar to the pilgrims and not being celibates, were living outside the prohibited boundary. Needless to say there is not the least sign of this form of self-denial in Hardvar.

And yet there is no reason why Hardvar should not become an ideal place of pilgrimage. There are three educational institutions designed to revive the best of ancient tradition. There are rich Mahants living in and near Hardvar. If any or all of these institutions will it, they can transform insanitary Hardvar within a measurable distance of time into a model sacred place. Acharya Ram- deva, who presided at the public meeting where I disburdened myself of my grief over the physical and moral insanitation of Hardvar, promised to work whole-heartedly through the Kangdi Gurukul which has been shifted to Hardvar to bring about the desired reform. There are too some silent workers doing their best to make things look better. Hardvar uses only Swadeshi sugar but imports annually seven lakhs of rupees worth of foreign cloth. There is a drink shop and a butcher's shop in Jvalapur. There is no reason why Hardvar should not stop all drink. A butcher's shop in a Hindu place of pilgrimage is an anomaly. The optimistic Acharya hopes to make Hardvar sanitary and to banish foreign cloth, liquor and butcher's meat from

Hardvar. It is a worthy ambition. May it be fulfilled. It will be the truest education for the boys of the Gurukul if to their studies they add this service of the country and religion.

*Young India*, 31-10-1929, p. 356

### 37 INSANITARY GAYA

I have no desire to advertize the insanitation of Gaya, a prince among the holy places of Hinduism. It was because my Hindu soul rebelled against the stinking cesspools I saw in a principal street of Gaya that I was obliged to draw pointed attention to it in my reply to the address of the Gaya Municipality. I am aware that there are many holy places which are insanitary enough. But I do not remember having seen anything like what I saw in Gaya. It is possible that I have not been taken to the dirty places in other sacred places. But insanitation need not be weighed in golden scales. Gaya I am using merely as an example in order to draw the attention of all municipalities that sanitation of their cities must be their first care. This one thing must be above municipal politics, parties and intrigues. Just as it must be the care of every party in a municipality to keep its finance pure and above suspicion, so must it be the sacred duty of every party in a municipality to keep the sanitation of its city in perfect order and above suspicion. Every municipality should constitute itself a model school for teaching the science of sanitation. Of city sanitation we have not yet much knowledge. We do not mind what happens to our neighbours, so long as our own houses are in fair order. We do not know the use of city latrines. We do not know how to use our drains. It has to be admitted therefore that our municipalities have an arduous task before them in handling this great and important problem. But handled it must be whatever the difficulties. It becomes much more important in sacred cities which are visited by lakhs of people from year to year. There was no reason for the foul cesspools I noticed in Gaya. There is no reason why people should be allowed to dirty river banks. There are many things which municipalities can, if they will only treat the cities under their care as if they were their own houses, remedy without much difficulty or hindrance from the citizens.

But the difficulty comes from within. Municipal councillors are often indifferent and some times obstruct their own elected chairman. Sometimes they are

absorbed in internal quarrels and neglect sanitation. It is high time that we developed a healthy sense of civic duty. In this matter we have much to learn from the West. People of the West are builders of big cities. They know the value of fresh air, clean water and clean surroundings. Any city that would attend to its sanitation in a proper spirit will add both to its health and wealth. Sacred cities ought to lead the way in the matter. They have opportunities which other cities do not possess. There is a great deal of wisdom in the English proverb "Cleanliness is next to godliness." Manu, Moses and Mahomed have laid down laws of sanitation suited to their times. These have to be elaborated in keeping with the modern requirements. It is enough to know from these ancient law givers that they held cleanliness to be part of a truly religious life.

*Young India*, 3-2-1927, p. 36

### 38. DUTY OF DRAIN GLEANING

(From "Weekly Letter—No. 18" by V. G. D.)

At Hubli,... in his reply to the municipal address, Gandhiji alluded to the condition of the drains in the Harijan quarters. He suggested that it was the primary duty of every municipality to have its drains kept in a clean condition, and as one experienced in such matters, he submitted that, if the municipality went about it in the right way, the drains in the Harijan quarters would be cleaned in a day and without much, if any, cost. Volunteers should be called for and they could, under due supervision, clean up the drains. But the councillors would have to take the lead in volunteering. What was true of the human body was equally true of a village or city. And just as it was easy and also obligatory to keep the body clean, so also was it easy and necessary to keep the village or city drains in a clean condition. Reverting to the same subject in his speech at the public meeting, Gandhiji said that the neglect by the municipality, or the public of this primary duty of keeping their city or village clean like their own bodies must result in diseases including the plague. Therefore, neglect of Harijan quarters could not but recoil upon the health of the city-dwellers or villagers, as the case might be.

*Harijan*, 23-3-1934, p. 44 at p. 45

### 39. MUNICIPAL INSANITATION

(From "Weekly Letter" by Pyarelal. The following is a part of the report of Gandhiji's speech on 21st July 1946 while declaring open a *dharmashala* for the poor.)

The sanitary conditions in Panchgani were awful. In a climate like theirs there should never be any epidemics. Yet they had the plague only the year before and had to vacate the bazaar which was indescribably dirty. There was water shortage in spite of a plentiful rainfall. Why could not the rain water be captured and utilized for water supply? In South Africa, where rainfall was scarce and there was a dearth of underground water supply, they had a reservoir in every house for storing rain water. It was the duty of all of them, most of all the Municipality and the Public Health Department to remedy these defects. The Prime Minister Shri Balasaheb Kher was there and was prepared to render them whatever help was necessary. If he were the Health Officer or the Chairman of the Panchgani Municipality, said Gandhiji, he would make the place so clean and neat that anybody might be able to lie down and sleep on the hillside in the open without any compunction. Today that was not possible, because of the municipal insanitation. People spat and made nuisance here, there and everywhere indiscriminately. He spoke from knowledge, he said. Before he came under the Mahatmaic handicap and was free to go into *dharmashalas* and other places of public utility without attracting crowds, he had occasion to study the conditions prevailing in those places. The insanitation, the filth and the stench of the public latrines and urinals of the railway stations and in the *dharmashalas* were simply awful. They could make Panchgani into a jewel among the hill stations, if only they did their duty.

He then proceeded to make some concrete suggestions. The first and foremost of course was sanitation and night-soil disposal. Having become a *bhangi* himself, he thought of it first. He had done a *bhangi's* job right from South Africa. He knew how to do it without becoming filthy himself. The sight of a *bhangi* carrying the

night-soil basket on his head made him sick. Scavenging is a fine art. Not only must the cleaning be perfect, but the manner of doing it and the instruments used, must be clean and not revolting to one's sanitary sense. "You have only to see the privy I use. It is spotlessly clean without a trace of smell. That is so because I clean it myself. The municipal *bhangi* pours out the contents of the night-soil waggons over a cliff converting a beauty spot into a plague spot. If you become your own *bhangis*, not only will you insure perfect sanitation for yourself, but you will make your surroundings clean and relieve the *bhangis* of the weight of oppression which today crushes them. Do not imagine that thereby you would deprive them of their living. Today we have reduced them to the level of the beast. They earn a few coppers but only at the expense of their human dignity. The same *bhangi* serves in the municipality as well as in your bungalow, with the result that he can do justice to neither. Look at him as he eats his food, cowering under the shadow of the latrine wall, surrounded by filth. It is enough to break one's heart. It should not be difficult for you to find a more decent avocation for him to follow.

*Harijan*, 11-8-1946, p. 253 at p. 254



#### 40. THE LIMIT OF INSANITATION

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

Panchgani is a fine hill resort. The air itself is like medicine. Rajas and Maharajas do not frequent it like they do Mussooree and yet there has been no place where the poor could stay. Now at last if there is going to be a small haven for them, it would only be a tardy reparation. But if the present insanitary conditions continue, Panchgani will cease to exist as a health resort. I believe, the same is true of Mahabaleshwar too. I am of opinion that such conditions are due to our own fault, rather than to that of Government. I have heard doctors say that everyone knows how to observe personal cleanliness up to a point, but our people do not seem to know the ABC of hygiene and sanitation. The truth of this has to be admitted with sorrow. The following is a vivid account of Dr. Dinshah Mehta's observations regarding the lack of proper sanitary arrangements in Panchgani. I give it in the fervent hope that this disgraceful state of affairs will be remedied without undue delay.

Dr. Savant accompanied me on the 19th July to the place, where the refuse of Panchgani is deposited. It is behind Sydney Point, about half a mile off the main road and one and a half miles from Panchgani Bazaar. The main road passes in front of the Parsi Boys' School and because the wind happened to be blowing strongly in that direction, the smell was wafted right up to that spot. Sydney Point itself is a beautiful situation and if there were no nasty odours, the air would be health-giving. But no one goes there nowadays, even though a small motor road has been built. Only the grass blows in the wind. There are two houses just below the Point, but I was told that they remain vacant because of the stench, mosquitoes and flies.

The garbage of Panchgani is all thrown by the side of the road and was lying there in large open heaps. It would be strange, if it were not full of germs and covered with flies.

A little further on, I saw night-soil in trenches. Four of these, each 10\* x 5\* x 3\* were full. Some were empty. It appears that sweepers are too lazy and careless even to see that the night-soil is actually thrown into the trenches. Much was lying outside. And I was told that if anyone remonstrates with them about this or any other matter, they go on strike. The Municipality and residents of Panchgani have, therefore, meekly to submit. Local sweepers refuse to allow outside scavengers to enter Panchgani.

I have not yet been able to rid my nose and eyes of the smell and the nauseating sight. Anyone who goes there to inspect, must train these organs to stand the trial. On return he should take a bath and then go to sleep, in order to rest both mind and stomach or else he will have to send for a doctor!

In order to improve the dreadful conditions, I submit the following suggestions:

1. All garbage and night-soil should be properly thrown into trenches and covered over with at least double the quantity of clean earth;
2. Or all should be burnt in an incinerator;
3. Or septic tanks should be constructed and the overflow of water from these, should be used for the cultivation of a public vegetable garden;
4. Or it should be made compulsory for every house- owner to build a septic tank in this domain. Used bath water can be employed for flushing these tanks. Standard plans for the construction of such tanks can be had from military contractors;
5. Or a scheme for drainage and a pumping station should be undertaken. But for this, sufficient water is essential. The water works scheme which the Panchgani Municipality has under consideration, would have first to come into being.

The last is the most important and best suggestion but it requires both money and time. Meanwhile the least that can be done is to act forthwith on my first and second proposals.

Poona, 1-8-1946

*Harijan*, 18-8-1946, p. 275

## 41. VILLAGE SANITATION

(From "A Talk with Village Workers")

Some of the workers tell me that scavenging or street cleaning done by themselves has failed to prove infectious and that somehow the villagers will not take kindly to it. I should warn you against any pessimism in this matter, and even if your example is not followed, what then? The sun shines in his solitary glory and goes on with his task of purifying and cleansing, whether others will do it or no. The thought whether others will take it up or not should not worry a village worker. Let him do as much as he can, doing the work for others also, for the other's work is in this case his work too, because bad sanitation, wherever it may be, is sure to affect his own as much as the general health.

*Harijan*, 4-1-1935, p. 373 at p. 374

## 42. VILLAGE INSANITATION

(From "Implications of Constructive Programme")

If rural reconstruction were not to include rural sanitation, our villages would remain the muck-heaps that they are today. Village sanitation is a vital part of village life and is as difficult as it is important. It needs a heroic effort to eradicate age-long insanitation. The village worker who is ignorant of the science of village sanitation, who is not a successful scavenger, cannot fit himself for village service.

*Harijan*, 18-8-1940, p. 252

### 43. ESSENTIALS OF CORPORATE LIFE

(M. D. published by stringing together extracts from Gandhiji's many speeches in Chettinad an article under the title "Message to Chettinad". The following excerpts are taken from there- in.)

I venture to suggest to you that you are not using your riches wisely though you seem to be using them profusely. You have erected huge palaces, but you have not given any attention to your surroundings. I would like you, therefore, to ensure the supply of the purest water not only for yourselves but all those who are living in your midst. Your roads must be perfectly good. And all your tanks should look and actually be sweet-smelling, containing nothing but good, clear, sparkling, pure water. Your drainage must be in a perfect state. All these things are really incredibly simple, and if you will set your heart upon it you will find that it won't cost you anything that you will feel. If you will do all these things well you must get expert advice for all these things. But this requires a little sacrifice of personal inclinations and personal ease. It requires also a desire to live a corporate life—a life not merely for self, but for one's own country. It requires also a fellow-feeling for all your neighbours including the poorest. And immediately you have given that bent to your inclinations you will find that it will cost little effort and still less money, and I assure you that you will be amply repaid for your pains.

I have been watching during my stay in Chettinad that so far as outward corporate cleanliness is concerned, it is really lacking. If you all adopt concerted measures you can make your streets, your tanks and your surroundings spotlessly clean... The outward uncleanliness and insanitation you can really set right in a few days' time if you organize yourselves, have a body of volunteers and workers and put your streets and tanks in a wonderful sanitary condition. The first essential condition of corporate life, that is city life, is that an absolutely clean supply of water is guaranteed to the dwellers of the city and its accommodation made perfectly clean and sweet. When I was on the Nandi Hills I saw that the tank from

which drinking water was drawn by the dwellers on those Hills was all day long well-guarded against pollution. Bathing tanks must be separate from the tanks that supply drinking water....

I do urge you to look after your sanitation and your water-supply. Your palaces do not look to advantage at all in the midst of insanitary streets and tanks full of not pure, sparkling water but foul water. I can show you how can you do these things at an incredibly small expense, not out of your capital but out of your savings. . . .You can have if you will without much effort public parks, recreation grounds, waterworks and profitable dairies that will give a supply of cheap and pure milk to the poor people living in your midst. And I tell you as a man of experience and as a fellow Chetti that you treble your earning resources if you conserve your health by wise sanitation, by an absolutely pure supply of water and by ensuring pure milk for the rich and the poor.

*Young India*, 6-10-1927, p. 334

#### 44. POPULAR INDIFFERENCE TO SANITATION

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

"These two questions—that of ...and insanitation— have continued to be a terrible oppression, and in speaking to you as I have done this evening, I have endeavoured somewhat to lighten this grief by inviting you to be sharers of it," were words Gandhiji uttered at the public meeting in Mayavaram. Not that Mayavaram itself was particularly at fault for making the two days of Gandhiji's stay sad for him. It was the discovery of the sad state of sanitation,... that made the days sad. The whole speech was a scattering attack on the popular indifference to municipal and moral sanitation. "I felt deeply hurt" (by the filth and the stench and the horrid way in which the river water was fouled), "I felt as if I was wounded," he said. "It requires a vivid sense of one's municipal duties. No man dare enter a municipality, except in the spirit of a scavenger".

*Young India*, 22-9-1927, p. 321 at p. 322

#### 45. AN OVERDUE CIVIC REFORM

Sjt. Hiralal A. Shah writes :

The rules and regulations found in our *Shastras* regarding the routine of daily observances are evidence of the stress that has always been laid on personal cleanliness for individuals as well as in home life, and there is no doubt that great progress had been attained in these directions. But similar care has evidently not been paid to cleanliness in corporate life, with the result that street hygiene has not received the attention it deserves. In villages as well as in cities, refuse, garbage, dirt and filth are thrown anyhow and all over, and street sanitation is nobody's concern.

This neglect has affected the class of workers who have to do the street cleaning. Nobody has a thought for the worker's condition. In the course of his work, he naturally becomes dirty. He is very poorly paid and, in many ways, if not most, cases, he cannot obtain enough water for washing purposes. The result of all this is that, even when he returns home after work, he remains dirty and, as no one takes the trouble of coming to his help, he is content to remain in that unclean state day after day. As this has gone on generation after generation, there is a distinct class of workers kept practically out of the social pale, with little or no scope for selection of any other vocation in life and left severely alone in poverty, bad habits and disease.

As this class exists, however, only because the other classes of society are not prepared to do the work themselves, it is but fair that society should recognize its obligation to the former by providing facilities for becoming clean after work, so as to be indistinguishable from, and to be fit for mixing with, the rest. In the first place, then, society should ensure to these workers a supply of washing water adequate to their needs near the centres of their work. Secondly, arrangements should be made for the provision in the same localities, of places in which they



can change their clean clothes for their working suits and in which they can deposit the latter and their implements of work when their work for the day is over. If this is done and the workers are thus helped to keep themselves clean, they will go on improving | till cleanliness becomes a matter of habit with them.

This is a much-needed reform in which all classes should interest themselves; and, as the work is done for all sections of society, the burden of the reform should be borne by the society as a whole, that is to say, by municipalities, local boards and other representative bodies, and, where these do not exist or function, by the Government. That this duty towards the worker has been neglected so long is only an argument for its being taken up without further loss of time.

The expenses required for the reform can only be small and, if it was held indispensable for the well being of society, must be found by the bodies concerned. The suggestion made by Sjt. Shah is certainly worthy of consideration as well by municipalities and local bodies as by individuals, but particularly by the former. Corporate cleanliness can only be ensured, if there is a corporate conscience and a corporate insistence on cleanliness in public places. Untouchability has a great deal to answer for the insanitation of our streets and our latrines, whether private or public. In its inception, untouchability was a rule of sanitation, and still is in all parts of the world outside India. That is to say, an unclean person or thing is untouchable, but immediately his or its unclean- liness is shed, he or it is no longer untouchable. Therefore, a person who is to attend to scavenging, whether it is a paid *bhangi* or an unpaid mother, they are unclean until they have washed themselves clean of their unclean work. If, instead of being regarded as untouchable for ever, the *bhangi* was treated as a brother, and was given an opportunity and even made to become clean after performing an unclean service for society, he should be as acceptable as any other member of that society. Corporations can, therefore, lead the way in this matter, but they will not, unless the citizens insist. It is truly said that corporations have no souls, that is, apart from the souls of the citizens. Whilst, therefore, commending Sjt.

Shah's suggestion to all concerned, I would advise him to concentrate his energy upon one single spot and there agitate both amongst the public and their corporation, for the much needed reform. Let him, therefore, devote every ounce of his spare energy to educating public opinion in Bombay, where he has his habitation, evolve concrete suggestions and get them accepted by the people in the different wards, and he will soon find that his labours are crowned with success.

*Harijan, 11-2-1933, p. 7*

#### 46. EVEN UNTO THESE LAST

For the heading of this article I have dared to steal from Ruskin a classical phrase stolen by him in his turn from the Bible. I have added "even" to the original and changed "this" into "these" to bring out the whole sense of what I want to say. Among the Harijans the poor scavenger or the *bhangji* seems to stand last in the list, though he is perhaps the most important and indispensable member of society, as indispensable to it as a mother is to her children in one respect. The *bhangji* attends to the sanitation of society, as a mother to that of her children. If the castemen had to do the scavenging for themselves, some of the methods that the *bhangji* has to submit to for doing his work would have been swept away long ago. I copy the following from a letter of the Anti-Untouchability Board of Muttra to its Municipal Board:

We have no idea of the depths of degradation and misery to which we as a class have reduced our brethren of the depressed classes.

\* \* \*

He must be a heartless fellow who has remained unmoved at the pathetic sight of a slender, aged and emaciated woman carrying, and being crushed under, the weight of a basket full of night-soil over her head every morning from the city lanes to the trenching ground or the flushing pit. The practice, though old, is inhuman, cruel and a relic of barbaric days. It is most unhygienic. Very often it is noticed that out of the uncovered or partly covered basket the dirt is carried up by the air by a strong breeze and on to the passers-by, or shops displaying sweets or other edibles. The human head, the seat of reason and intelligence, the divine symbol, was never intended to be used for the dirty load. The human carrier loses all sense of self-respect and dignity; and yet for whom is this service meant? Ye! chosen representatives of the city, ponder over the matter and judge your responsibility for this inhumanity. The solution is simple. Just purchase hand-

driven trollies and let these speechless servants of yours use the trolley as a carrier rather than the head. Another matter for your consideration. Every privy should be provided with metal or earthen basins, so that the process of removal of night-soil may be rendered less uncleanly.

Let not the reader laugh at the somewhat high flown language of the writer. What he has said is God's truth. The *bhangis* have hitherto done their work uncomplainingly, and therefore the castemen have not cared to know how these have served society for centuries. If we had not regarded these servants of society as untouchables, we would not have shut our eyes upon them or their work. Having chosen to do so and having confined them to infernos, we ourselves daily descend to these infernos called privies and do not care to look at the dirt about us or to notice the stink that pervades these places. What is true of the *bhangis* and the Municipality of Muttra is true more or less of all the *bhangis* and all the municipalities of India. The reform suggested by the Anti-Untouchability Board of Muttra is most desirable and can be undertaken without much cost by every municipality.

I read the other day a notice in the *Leader* of Allahabad of the scavenging work, inaugurated by a Zamindar, in the Allahabad streets and hardly had the work gone on for two days, when the enthusiastic young men who had undertaken this glorious service thought of replacing the baskets by a better arrangement. Let me again quote, this time from the *Leader*, dated February 27:

An effort is being made by the anti-untouchability workers to replace the baskets at present in use by the sweepers for the disposal of rubbish from private latrines with light iron hand-carts fitted with detachable buckets. According to the proposed scheme, the cost of such carts would be borne by the employers of the sweepers. It is understood the Manager of the Allahabad Law Journal Co. has generously undertaken to have a model baby filth removal cart constructed at his own expenses for propaganda work. According to the scheme, every private latrine would have to be provided with two receptacles. An anonymous donation has been

received from a high caste Brahmin woman for the construction of a public bathroom at or near *Kalimai ka Asthan*. This work would be undertaken as soon as proper drainage and water supply arrangements are made by the municipal authorities in the locality in question.

I hope that the enthusiasm has not died down during the weeks that have intervened between the date of the report and now. Some earnest workers have simply to persist and the much-needed reform can be inaugurated in every town and city.

If the report that a Brahmin lady has generously come forward with her donation for the construction of a public bathroom is true, it would delight the heart of Sjt. Hiralal Shah, who has been energetically pursuing his proposal for bath and change of clothes for sweepers after they have performed their daily task.

There are thus three reforms which can be with a little forethought and very little extra cost inaugurated throughout India, resulting in comfort and cleanliness for Harijans and promotion of the health of society in general. All that is required is that we should behave "even unto these last" members of society as we would unto ourselves.

*Harijan*, 18-3-1933, p. 4

#### 47. SCAVENGING NOT A HEREDITARY OCCUPATION

(From "What of Sweepers If \_\_\_\_\_ ?")

Sanitary service is by no means a hereditary occupation of long standing. All the evidence hitherto collected by me goes to show that before the Mahomedan conquest there were no professional sweepers; the Hindu social system, being based on rural conditions, did not necessitate such sanitary service as is indispensable in these days of rapid urban growth. I do not, however, wish to convey the meaning that rural sanitation during the purely Hindu period was by any means perfect or even fairly satisfactory. On the contrary, it seems to have been very crude. The highly scientific methods evolved and still being developed in the West are undoubtedly a recent and very beneficial growth.

*Harijan*, 21-10-1933, p. 5

#### 48. SCAVENGERS ALL

Untouchability is responsible for more things than we know. Now that attention is being drawn to the village sanitation, it is becoming clear that the insanitation of villages and towns is chiefly due to the belief in untouchability, for fear of touching our own dirt and, therefore cleaning it. We wallow in dirt and have consigned our obvious duty to a portion of our kith and kin, and because they are rendering what is the most important service of all, we have made them lepers of society, untouchable and uncared for.

The only remedy for the removal of this social evil and curse is for every one of us to be our own scavengers. We would then soon learn the art of cleanliness. We would miss many of the most common diseases which are due to filth. And we should at the same time serve an economic end. G. I. Fowler states, in his *Wealth and Waste*, that a proper disposal of human excreta would realize Rs. 2 per head per year. In the vast majority of cases, all this rich manure is being wasted and disease invited. He quotes Prof. Bultini, from his volume *The Use of Waste Materials*, who says that. "nitrogen derived from the 282,000 residents of Delhi is sufficient to fertilize a minimum of 10,000 and maximum of 95,000 acres". Because we do not know how to treat our scavengers, Delhi of ancient fame has pestilential spots of which we have to feel ashamed. If we all become scavengers, we would know how to treat ourselves and how to turn what today is poison into rich food for plant life. 30 crores of the population of India should mean, according to Dr. Fowler, an annual gain of 60 crores of rupees to the country, if we would but make a wise use of human excreta.

Let no one be appalled by the magnitude of the problem. Those who have the conviction have to begin with themselves in the full faith that everybody else is bound to follow their example, if their faith outlasts the first flush of enthusiasm. The word "faith" is, perhaps, not the proper word. For, the proposition that human

excreta are as valuable as those of cattle is not a matter of faith but daily experience. What is required is eradication of age-long inertia. Sustained, intelligent application of a few today will be the common property of the many tomorrow.

*Harijan*, 15-3-1935, p. 36

#### 49. BHANGIS\* ELEMENTARY RIGHTS

(One of the questions put by Harijan Sevaks to Gandhiji and the answer thereto given by him which appeared in "Weekly Letter" by M. D. are reproduced below.)

*Q.:* The *bhangi's* lot is pitiable in many places. How can they secure their elementary rights from municipalities?

*A.:* They must know that they are not bound to serve under all conditions. They may leave the work if the municipality will not listen to them. But we have to settle down in their midst and educate them, and not make reckless attempts to drive them to strike work. They must be taught to know that they have friends. Whilst they, like others, have the right to go on strike, they should know its limitations. They should be taught to regard their work as equally dignified with all other social services. I have no doubt that they are the most neglected social servants and deserve every assistance we can render them.

*Harijan*, 28-11-1936, p. 329 at p. 331



## 50. THE IDEAL BHANGI

(Translated from Gujarati by Pyarelal)

The ideal *bhangi* of my conception would be a Brahmin *par excellence*, possibly even excel him. It is possible to envisage the existence of a *bhangi* without a Brahmin. But without the former the latter could not be. It is the *bhangi* who enables society to live. A *bhangi* does for society what a mother does for her baby. A mother washes her baby of the dirt and insures his health. Even so the *bhangi* protects and safeguards the health of the entire community by maintaining sanitation for it. The Brahmin's duty is to look after the sanitation of the soul, the *bhangi's* that of the body of society. But there is a difference in practice; the Brahmin does not generally live up to his duty, the *bhangi* does willy-nilly no doubt. Society is sustained by several services. The *bhangi* constitutes the foundation of all services.

And yet our woebegone Indian society has branded the *bhangi* as a social pariah, set him down at the bottom of the scale, held him fit only to receive kicks and abuse, a creature who must subsist on the leavings of the caste people and dwell on the dung heap. He is without friend, his very name has become a term of reproach. This is shocking. It is perhaps useless to seek the why and wherefore of it. I certainly am unaware of the origin of the inhuman conduct but I know this much that by looking down upon the *bhangi* we—Hindus, Musalmans, Christians and all—have deserved the contempt of the whole world. Our villages have today become seats of dirt and insanitation and the villagers come to an early and untimely death. If only we had given due recognition to the status of the *bhangi* as equal to that of a Brahmin as in fact and justice he deserves, our villages today no less than their inhabitants would have looked a picture of cleanliness and order. We would have to a large extent been free from the ravages of a host of diseases which directly spring from our uncleanness and lack of sanitary habits.

I, therefore, make bold to state without any manner of hesitation or doubt that not till the invidious distinction between the Brahmin and the *bhangi* is removed, will our society enjoy health, prosperity and peace, and be happy.

What qualities should such an honoured servant of society exemplify in his person? In my opinion an ideal *bhangi* should have a thorough knowledge of the principles of sanitation. He should know how a right kind of latrine is constructed, and the correct way of cleaning it. He should know how to overcome and destroy the odour of excreta and the various disinfectants to render them innocuous. He should likewise know the process of converting night-soil and urine into manure.

But that is not all. My ideal *bhangi* would know the quality of night-soil and urine. He would keep a close watch on these and give a timely warning to the individual concerned. Thus he will give a timely notice of the results of his examination of the excreta. That presupposes a scientific knowledge of the requirements of his profession. He would likewise be an authority on the subject of disposal of night-soil in small villages as well as big cities and his advice and guidance in the matter would be sought for and freely given to society. It goes without saying that he would have the usual learning necessary for reaching the standard here laid down for his profession. Such an ideal *bhangi*, while deriving his livelihood from his occupation, would approach it only as a sacred duty. In other words he would not dream of amassing wealth out of it. He would consider himself responsible for the proper removal and disposal of all the dirt and night-soil within the area which he serves and regard the maintenance of healthy and sanitary condition within the same as the *summum bonum* of his existence.

How may we have this ideal *bhangi*? Only when we have produced an army of Appa Patwardhans. To clothe the *bhangi* with the dignity and respect due to him is the especial task and privilege of the educated class. Some members of the class would first themselves master the science of sanitation to educate the *bhangis* round them in the same. They would carefully study their present condition and the causes underlying it and set themselves to the task of eradicating the same by

dint of inexhaustible perseverance and patience that never looks back and knows no defeat. They would teach them the laws of cleanliness. Our *bhangis* do not today possess even good brooms or other suitable means for the removal of night-soil. The latrines themselves are wretched. The site round the *bhangis'* quarters is no better than a cesspool of dirt. All this can only go if some of the educated class give themselves up to the task of redeeming the *bhangi* from his present plight and thus redeeming society from its terrible insanitation. Surely this is work enough to satisfy the highest ambition of one who has the spirit of service in him.

*Harijan*, 28-11-1936, p. 336

## 51. VOLUNTEER BHANGIS

Let not the word "*bhangi*" frighten any reader as it does many. *Bhangi* is probably the most useful member of society. Its health depends more upon proper sanitation than perhaps on proper food. Needless to say I am not thinking of the *bhangi* caste. I am thinking purely of the occupation that the word *bhangi* connotes. I regard the scavenger's or the cleaner's as a noble "profession", nobler than the professions known as "honourable". They may easily become dishonourable; this never can.

Well, Shri Appa Patwardhan who is an M.A. has become commander of corps of volunteer *bhangis* which he is trying to form for attending to the sanitation of the Congress camp at Faizpur. The issue before the Reception Committee was whether to employ professional *bhangis* or to have the sanitation attended to by volunteers. Some one pointed out that at the previous Congress the work was done by the town *bhangis*. But the volunteer scheme won the day. The task could not have been allotted to fitter hands. Appasaheb has qualified himself for it by long previous training and, what is more, by his love of the most despised members of society. His love has not been purely sentimental. He has done the work of sanitation side by side with *bhangis*, and he knows that proper scavenging is as much a science as any other. He has invited applications for the free services, of two hundred persons not under 18 years of age for the work. They must be willing and ready to attend to the cleaning of latrines and the whole camp while the Congress work lasts. They must be zealous youths who won't neglect the duty entrusted to them for the sake of seeing the *tamasha* or the Congress delegates at work. Theirs will be the privilege of making the work of the delegates possible by attending to their sanitary comforts.

Maharashtra is a bee-hive of good hardy workers. It should not be difficult for the province to supply two hundred good and true young men to do the work. Not that

young men from other provinces may not apply. But for the sake of economy, if nothing more, it is better to have young men from the province and, better still, the taluq or the district in which the Congress is held.

*Harijan*, 31-10-1936, p. 300

## 52. SCIENTIFIC SCAVENGING

(From "Harijan Sevak Sangh")

Q.: Is it not essential to reform the insanitary methods employed by sweepers for cleaning latrines and scavenging?

A.: It is most necessary. What is more, until this is done the condition of sweepers will remain pitiable. To this end it is the duty of Harijan workers and caste Hindus to do sweepers' work themselves. No caste Hindu will employ the methods used by sweepers. He will do the work scientifically. For example, he will never remove excreta in a basket or carry it on his head; he will avoid touching dirt with his hands as far as possible; he will cover excreta with dry earth and remove it in a metal vessel; he will clean the vessels with water and a rod; he will bathe immediately after doing the work; he will wear special clothes when scavenging. These reforms do not cost much. They require intelligence, hard work and love of an ideal. We may not relegate sweepers' work to one particular class. Therefore all should learn it in the same way as cooking. Each person should be his own sweeper. If this ideal were to be put into practice in society, the miserable condition of sweepers would at once be rectified.

*Harijan*, 10-5-1942, p. 151

### 53. THE FLUSH SYSTEM

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Untouchability and the Flush System")

Q.: Do you consider that the adoption of the flush system is one way of eradicating untouchability? If so, you would not presumably oppose its introduction on the basis of your dislike of machinery.

A.: Where there is ample supply of water and modern sanitation can be introduced without any hardship on the poor, I have no objection to it. In fact, it should be welcomed as a means of improving the health of the city concerned. At the moment, it can only be introduced in towns. My opposition to machinery is much misunderstood. I am not opposed to machinery as such. I am opposed to machinery which displaces labour and leaves it idle. Whether the flush system will remove the curse of untouchability is open to grave doubt. This latter has to go from our hearts. It will not disappear through such means as has been suggested. Not until we all become *bhangis* and realize the dignity of the labour of scavenging and latrine-cleaning, will untouchability really be exorcised.

New Delhi, 2-9-1946

*Harijan*, 15-9-1946, p. 310

#### 54. SCAVENGERS' LOT

Q.: You have doubtless written on this subject before but I would like you to say a word again in regard to the duty of municipal and other authority as well as private employers in the matter of providing *bhangis* with the proper means of scavenging. Unless water-tight iron pails are provided, for example, the drippings during the rainy season, through baskets or gunny bags, fall on the unfortunate workers. Ail scavenging should really be able to be done without soiling the hands or any part of the body. If this were so, the work would assume a dignity which it does not carry at the moment. Along with the supply of proper means of scavenging, sweeping, etc. the *bhangi* needs instruction. It is a matter which local and provincial authority should take up in the cause of cleanliness.

A.: I would advocate bye-laws requiring authorized receptacles, brooms, etc. which would avoid physical handling of dirt and would also prescribe simple working costume. Inspectors or overseers will be trained for this humane and sanitary work instead of being expected to exact work anyhow. The result of the present system is maximum of insanitation and minimum of work plus bribery, corruption and bad manners.

New Delhi, 30-9-1946

*Harijan*, 6-10-1946, p. 340

## 55. BOMBAY CORPORATION AND HARIJANS

(From "Notes")

The following important resolutions were carried by the Bombay Municipal Corporation on 17th and 18<sup>th</sup> August respectively:

\* \* \*

That the attention of the Commissioner be invited to the absence of bathing and washing facilities for the Municipal Labour Staff, particularly the Health Department sweepers and Drainage Department cleaners, after they finish their work on the streets, and he be requested to report as to whether it would not be desirable to construct a number of special bathrooms and washing places near their centre of work so that they can wash and clean themselves after finishing their day's duties and return home tidy and refreshed.

\* \* \*

That the attention of the Commissioner be invited to the fact that the dress used by the municipal sweepers and similar other menial staff gets extremely dirty as a result of their condition of work, and that the continuous use of such dress by this class of employees even during off-duty hours presents a very shabby appearance and is harmful to their health, and he be requested to report whether it would not be desirable to provide these employees with working suits which they may put on just before starting their work and take out at the end of their duty.

The resolutions should have been carried long ago. Both the points covered by the resolutions are important as well for the employees as the citizens. Sanitation of a big city like Bombay is dependent largely upon the efficiency of those who are employed to attend to it. And yet all over India they are the least looked after. It needed a Congress majority in the Corporation to pass these necessary resolutions. Let us hope that the Commissioner will report favourably without delay. There can be no objection to the reforms in principle. The objection so far as I can see can



only be on the score of finance. But in matters such as the sanitary welfare of the city financial objection can have little weight. Assuming that the report is favourable and not delayed, there will still be another stage to be gone through before the reforms become accomplished facts, for the necessary sanction of the Corporation will be required. I hope the mover and the seconder of the resolutions will, therefore, not rest till they see washing places and working dresses provided for the sweepers, cleaners and the other members of the labour staff.

Segaon, 27-8-1939

*Harijan*, 9-9-1939, p. 261

## 56. CHRONIC BREACH OF LAWS OF SANITATION

(From "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary")

Gandhiji referred to a letter he had received from the medical superintendent of the Marwari Relief Society. The doctor said that he treated both the Hindus and the Musalmans without any distinction. Muslim men and women gladly accepted his services. He noticed that in this part of the world the Muslims were poor. There was dirt and insanitation, wherever he went. Would he (Gandhiji) say something about it? He (Gandhiji) would gladly do so. For he had been a lover of cleanliness and sanitation for over fifty years. He had to speak much in disparagement of the West. It was therefore a pleasure for him to be able to say that he had learnt the laws of cleanliness from Englishmen. He was pained to see the same tanks in Noakhali used for drinking and clean-'ing purposes. It was wrong. The people thoughtlessly dirtied the streets, lanes and footpaths by spitting everywhere and clearing their noses. This was the cause of many diseases in India. No doubt, their chronic poverty was responsible for the diseases. But their chronic breach of the laws of sanitation was no less responsible. It was surprising that India lived at all. But it was worst in point of high death-rate. America was probably the first in the list. And then those that lived were specimens of living death. The sooner therefore the inhabitants of Noakhali attended to the laws of sanitation the better for them. Poverty was no bar to perfect sanitation.

*Harijan*, 2-3-1947, p. 45 at p. 46

## 57. SANITATION IN REFUGEE CAMPS

### I

(From "Gandhiji's Press Statements")

I understand from Rajkumari that it was well-nigh impossible to supply refugee camps with *bhangis* for attending to the cleaning of the latrines and general sanitation. Any infectious disease like cholera might break out. I have no doubt whatsoever that the refugees should look after sanitation, including latrine cleaning in their own camps and should do some useful work with the approval of the camp superintendent. There can be no exception to this rule, save for persons who are incapable of physical exertion. All camps should be models of cleanliness, simplicity and industry.

*Harijan*, 21-9-1947, p. 330

### II

(From "Gandhiji's Post-Prayer Speeches")

Then he observed the insanitation of the camps. They were filthy beyond description. In the Idgah the tank was dry. He did not inquire where the refugees could get their water from. The inmates performed natural functions anyhow. If he was the camp commandant and the military and the police were under him, he would take up the shovel and the pick-axe himself and ask the help of the military and the police to do likewise and then ask the refugees to follow suit so that the camps would be in a perfectly sanitary condition. As it was, the ground itself was a rubbish heap on which no human being should be asked to live before it was thoroughly cleaned out. It required no money, it required a little forethought and the possession of a sanitary sense which would refuse to tolerate insanitation. The Hindu camps were no better on this score. Insanitation was a national defect or better still a vice of which as a free nation the sooner they got rid the better it was for them.

*Harijan*, 21-9-1947, p. 330 at p. 336

III

(From "Gandhiji's Post-Prayer Speeches")

Gandhiji next referred to the many refugee camps here (at Delhi) and the insanitary conditions prevailing there and in the city. Everyone wanted scavenging to be done for them. He said that those who were not in the camps should see to their own surroundings being clean themselves. The taint of untouchability was tarnishing the fair name of Hinduism. One way of removing the blot was for everyone to become a *bhangi*. Sweeper's work was not a dirty work. It was a work that made for cleanliness. If the citizens of Delhi personally saw to the sanitation of the city, they would not only make Delhi beautiful but their example would have far-reaching results. If he were in charge of the camps he would induce the refugees to do everything for themselves.

*Harijan*, 12-10-1947, p. 365 at p. 371

## 58. WHEELERS, NOT SHOULDERS

(From "Notes")

Shri G. Tejpal of Rajkot has for years been conducting a campaign in favour of using light vehicles instead of shoulders for carrying dead bodies. He knows that he has to fight against a sentiment cherished by millions of Hindus and Musalmans from time immemorial. Persons vie with one another in giving their shoulders for carrying the dead. The carrying of corpses on human shoulders is an impressive sight. So at any rate we have been used to think. But apart from sentiment there is nothing to recommend the practice. Where the burial ground or the crematorium is some distance from the place where death occurs, carrying on shoulders becomes a trying task. Again when a caste has only a few members, or it is a poor man who has lost a relative, no matter how near the place of disposal is, the question assumes serious proportions. And we know that in times of plague and famine corpses are often left in the streets to rot or to be food for vultures. There is no doubt, therefore, that there is much to be said in favour of carrying corpses on carts. Shri Tejpal has constructed a cart which costs a little over 100 rupees. In a poor country like India a hundred rupees is a consideration not to be lightly dismissed. But if village *maha-jans* and municipalities were to own such carts and hire them out at a trifling charge, the question of expense can be eliminated- And local enthusiasts who appreciate the reform may popularize the practice in their surroundings. Shri Tejpal informs me that the Municipality of Ahmedabad keeps one such cart and so do *mahajans* or *seva samitis* in Surat, Baroda, Jamnagar and Porbandar. The Prarthana Samaj of Bombay is also reported to have one. It will be interesting to know the extent to which the reform has made headway in the places where such carts are kept.

*Harijan*, 8-8-1936, p. 208

## 59. THE USE WE MAKE OF OUR RIVERS

(Originally appeared under the title "The Message of Ganga and Jumna".)

A friend thus writes:

"The other day I went out for a walk and found my way down across the sands of the bank of the Jumna. It grasped me with the same power as the Ganga and squatting down at the edge of the water, I bathed my hands and face and my thought floated away in prayer and meditation. It was an absolutely still evening and the great river, slowly glided by, reflected every detail of the outer world. It seemed to be saying to one, "Look into the depths of my waters—behold the bright world there – the blue sky, the white clouds, the trees, the birds – all so clear and real. Yet they are nothing but a passing shadow. Know, then, that the outer world to which you cling is no more real than this shadow world which I am showing you. Once you can realize this you are in possession of true wisdom."

It was so wonderful. The river seemed positively to speak – but in a divine language that was beyond the need of words. Roused at last by a cool air which warned me that the sun was setting, I got up, and there in the distance I beheld the railway bridge with a fussy, smoking train puffing over it— the very emblem of materialism and the over-balance of human society that the "Mechanical Revolution" has brought.

We have more Gangas and Jumnas than the two. It is true they bear other names. They are however watering our vast plains from the North to the South and the East to the West. The message that the Ganga and the Jumna gave to this friend is not the only message that the mighty rivers of India are giving to her inhabitants. They remind us of the sacrifice we must make for the sake of the land we are living in. They remind us of the process of purification that we must continuously go through from moment to moment. I wrote nearly ten years ago that the *Gyatri*, the common prayer of Hinduism, was one of the precious gifts of the

Ganga. Her shining waters must have given the Rishis of old the inspiration. In the modern rush, the chief use we have for our rivers is to empty our gutters in them and to navigate our cargo vessels, and in the process make them dirtier still. We have no time as the friend had to stroll down to these rivers, and in silent meditation listen to the message they murmur to us.

*Young India*, 23-12-1926, p. 446

### 3. MILK SUPPLY

#### 60. A BLOT ON BOMBAY

Sjt. Nagindas Amulakhrai of Ghatkopar Sarvajanic Jivadaya Khata has sent to the President, Municipal Corporation the following reasoned letter on the question of milk supply to Bombay:

Newly-calved buffaloes of the best breed giving utmost quantity of milk are brought to Bombay with their young ones and sold from Grant Road Station yard to supply daily want of the cattle owners who have to purchase them to replace those which go dry after one milking period (9 to 12 months) is over. The owner has to pay about Rs. 300 per head for a fresh buffalo while he receives only about Rs. 60/- per head for his dry one.

From a letter addressed by the Municipal Commissioner of Bombay to the Corporation dated the 15th December, 1924, the following statement of facts is very important:

The high price at which milk is being sold in Bombay at present and the increase in the price with which we are being threatened are entirely due to the faulty system of stabling animals in the heart of a big city. The main causes of this high price of milk are:

1. the costly feeding of animals, and
2. the heavy depreciation on the initial cost of the animals.

As regards the first, the milch-cattle are fed on highly nitrogenous and expensive foods in order to maintain them in good milking condition, under the artificial condition in which they are kept. This kind of feeding would not be necessary if they were kept in more natural surroundings. Further, forage has to be imported into the city, many miles away from where it is grown, and both the cost of



transport and the cost of storing it in a place like Bombay, where storage expenses are very high, add to the cost of feeding.

The second and more important reason is the heavy depreciation on the initial cost of the animals. Under the present system, owing to various considerations, arising out of the unnatural conditions under which the animals are kept in the city, the cattle owner has no other option but to sell his animal to the butcher when it gets dry. The difference between the price he so receives, and the original price is very great, and this difference goes into the cost of the milk.

This can be avoided, if animals are kept under more natural conditions and given a chance to bear calves again and live out their life. Of recent years the initial cost of the milch animals imported into Bombay has increased considerably, without a corresponding increase in the price fetched by the animals when they run dry. This is one more reason for the present high cost of milk and unless measures are taken to do away entirely with the present city stables, the dangers of a further increase in the cost of milk will continue to exist.

Apart from these local considerations, the premature slaughter of useful animals brought to Bombay results in a constant drain on one of the natural resources of this country. But for the existing system of town stabling, few valuable animals, if any, would find their way to the slaughter houses.

This pernicious system of keeping stables in the city further leads to the loss by death of thousands of valuable calves and young buffaloes which are left by the owners to starve in the open exposed to all the inclemencies of weather, as they would not feed them with any part of their mother's milk and certainly not rent a stall in order to accommodate them.

Doctor Harold Mann, D.Sc., Director of Agriculture, Bombay Presidency, in his report on milch cattle stables in Bombay in the year 1919 stated as follows:-

The collection of animals housed together, the accumulation of dung even for a few hours, the smell which cannot be avoided when large numbers of animals are

packed in a confined space in a thickly populated area, the collection of milk in large quantities in the dusty and possibly disease-infected air of towns, all these tend towards the lowering of the standard of milk produced, lead to the creation of a nuisance in the neighbourhood and may result in the possible dissemination of disease by means of the flies which, inevitably follow cattle stables. I give below a statement showing the number of buffaloes slaughtered at the Bandra and Kurla Municipal Slaughter Houses along with the number of calves both of cows and buffaloes tortured to death in the city of Bombay and brought to Tardeo flats for disposal from 1st April 1919 to 31st March 1928:

Year ending 31 st March	Buffaloes slaughtered at—			Newly born young calves tortured to death
	Bandra	Kurla	Total	
1920	10,240	6,782	17,022	16,558
1921	10,241	6,282	16,523	18,394
1922	11,536	7,408	18,944	22,086
1923	11,009	8,205	19,214	20,564
1924	11,396	7,705	19,101	19,981
1925	11,248	10,416	21,664	21,733
1926	11,420	8,442	19,862	18,271
1927	10,912	8,754	19,666	20,097
1928	10,800	9,722	20,522	19,270

It does not reflect any credit to the Bombay Municipality, representing the best intellect of the country, to import best breed from outside Bombay and to slaughter them at the rate of 20,000 per year, although capable of bearing calves again and again for a long time and torturing to death all their calves – about

20,000 every year. Even in America and Europe no milch-cattle that are likely to bear calves again are ever allowed to be slaughtered.

Mr. W. Smith, Imperial Dairy Expert, Bangalore, in the *Dairy Journal* of April, 1927, states: "Fresh milk is 75% cheaper in London than in our capital cities which is a serious state of affairs when we consider the earning power and the consequent spending power of the workman in Bombay as compared with the earning power of his London confrere.

Considering purely from an economic point of view the poor of Bombay of all religions and creeds suffer immensely for want of milk which is responsible for the increasing high infant mortality in Bombay.

Such constant drain on the catde wealth of the country and the destruction of the dry catde and their calves by Bombay has made cattle stock very scarce in the whole country and a buffalo which could be had for Rs. 60 in 1903 costs now Rs. 300/- which state of affairs directly affects the milk supply of Bombay.

From the letter of the Municipal Commissioner No. H 80/C dated the 10th August, 1928 it appears that Bombay used to consume about 23,000 gallons of milk per day in the year 1928 and the maximum rate of milk in the year 1903 was Rs. 5 per maund which in the year 1928 is Rs. 15 per maund. The daily loss accordingly for the year 1928 owing to the dearth of milk over same quantity in 1903 isRs. 60,000 per day amounting to Rs. 2 crores and 19 lakhs for the year.

The Superintendent of Markets in his letter No. M.1140/C dated the 24th September, 1927, states that the maximum number of buffaloes slaughtered per day at Bandra is 33 yielding 16,500 lbs. of beef and at Kurla 18, yielding 10,800 lbs., in all 27,300 lbs. of the value of Rs. 6,825 per day at four annas per lb. (first class rate). Taking the same ratio of dearness as that of milk the loss per day in buffalo beef in the year 1928 over that in 1903 is Rs. 4,550, i.e.,Rs. 16 lakhs and 50 thousand for the whole year. This gives clear idea as to how much Bombay will

gain by making arrangements for protection and how much it loses by the slaughter as at present.

Bombay Municipality does feel for the daily havoc and therefore does not issue licences for over 16,000 buffaloes in Bombay stables and has not allowed new stables to be built for many years but that is not an effective preventive for the slaughter nor the right means for the increase of cheap milk supply. Obviously the only way to get cheap milk in the city of Bombay is on one side to stop the slaughter of dry cattle and on the other side to breed them and to rear the young stock. Thus supply of milk can be added from two different directions and the cost of milk production very much cheapened without having to send them upcountry and purchase fresh ones every year.

It behoves the greatest city of India to make provision for its own regular milk herd of about 36,000 animals in about 100 stables with about 400 acres of fodder and pasture land at different places near Bombay for the milk supply.

Bombay by its conduct as at present has disgraced itself and has created a blot on its good name. All citizens feeling proud of Bombay as well as the Municipality should now immediately take active steps to efface the blot and to remove the stables from the heart of the city and to start municipal cattle breeding and dairy farms near Bombay. The Municipality is further requested to encourage individual efforts by getting all convenience for them of transport of milk from suburbs to Bombay at convenient times at nominal rates of season tickets with no luggage pass fares, and of carriage of all kinds of animal feeds and animals from and to the suburbs and for grazing and fodder- growing land facilities in the suburbs within and without municipal limits so that cattle owners may be induced to remove their stables from the heart of the city

Bombay has been called Bombay the beautiful. If Bombay merely means Malabar Hill and Chowpati and beauty is to be referred only to the exterior, then Bombay is certainly beautiful. But if the heart of Bombay is penetrated, like most of our

cities, it is ugly both in appearance and reality. The indifference of city fathers to the milk supply of their city is truly criminal and the facts carefully compiled in the foregoing letter do constitute a 'blot' on Bombay the beautiful. But it seems to me to be useless merely to blame the members of the Municipality. They are after all what the voters make them. If Bombay is to have a cheap supply of pure milk the education of the voters should be undertaken on a wide scale. They should be taught never to vote for any candidate who does not pledge himself to secure a proper milk supply for the city in the quickest possible time. In the language of Blatchford milk should be treated like postage stamps. It should not be left to private enterprise but should be the first care of every municipality.

*Young India*, 29-11-1928, p. 397

## 61. MILK FOR BOMBAY

A friend on reading the article "A Blot on Bombay" in *Young India* (29th November) writes to Mahadev Desai as follows:

"In the recent issue of *Young India* of 29th November, an interesting article appears under the heading "A Blot on Bombay" about the milk problem of the Bombay city. The prevalent idea here is that the problem would be solved if the cattle stables in the city be shifted to the suburbs. But anyone having an intimate knowledge of the suburbs will be in a position to contradict the statement. Bombay being an island, it is not surrounded by villages. There is very little grazing land in the suburbs, and unless such land is available in plenty, cattle breeding for all the milch cattle of Bombay is out of the question. So long as facilities for cattle breeding to the requisite extent are not available, the slaughter of dry animals and of calves will continue. The cow protection societies in Bombay are merely tinkering with the problem. Its real solution lies in producing milk in rural conditions and exporting it to Bombay in bulk. The city life of Bombay is a product of modern conditions and its problems must be solved by modern methods. If milk produced in the country be pasteurized by modern machinery, it can be sent out in a pure condition to a great distance. In my opinion Gujarat alone is in a position to solve the milk problem of Bombay. It is the best milk producing area in the neighbourhood of Bombay. If some important milk producing centres in Gujarat be properly tapped and organized, it would be possible to send out milk to Bombay in large quantity after pasteurizing and to supply it to the consumers here at a considerably reduced rate. This can be made possible by starting a company with sufficient capital and Gujarat is quite capable of doing it if the idea is properly put into the heads of the capitalists and the lead is taken by some influential men. The slaughter of cattle and calves in Bombay cannot be prevented by any legislative measures; nor by shifting the cattle stables from the city to the suburbs; it can only be prevented by sending no rattle to Bombay, but by sending

only milk in their stead. When cheap milk in plenty is made available in the city, no one, unless he be a fool, will think of bringing cattle to Bombay for selling dear milk and selling dry animals to the butcher for a song. By adopting the above measure, both Gujarat and Bombay will gain; the increased milk trade will increase the prosperity of the peasantry of Gujarat, and the cheap milk supply will give a great relief to the poor of Bombay; and Bombay will perpetually bless Gujarat for the great boon conferred upon her. And above all the catde slaughter in Bombay will become a thing of the past and every one will wonder why this easy measure of prevention was not taken much earlier.

I am afraid that the writer of the letter has misunderstood the article in question. No one has suggested that the question of the slaughter of cattle in Bombay or of the supply of pure milk will be solved by shifting the stables from the city of Bombay to the suburbs of Bombay. What is required and what has been suggested is that Bombay should bravely face the problem as behoves it. Surely the Gujaratis who are not living in Bombay are not the philanthropists who might be expected to come to the rescue of Bombay and solve one of its tremendous and equally urgent problems. The Municipality of Bombay has to take the initiative and make the move and if need be enlist the sympathy of philanthropically-inclined Gujaratis. I fear that even if anybody outside Bombay wanted to come to the rescue, he would require special facilities from the Bombay Corporation. But we have not in this country the requisite capacity for private enterprise which would take great risks involved in a big venture that the supply of milk to a large city Bombay undoubtedly is. Let it be also known that such private effort has been made before now in Bombay and it has failed. I think that failure had definite causes. There was not sufficient grit and ability behind those ventures. But I submit that no cost is too great, no enterprise too risky for the Municipality of Bombay to undertake in order to ensure a supply of cheap and pure milk for its citizens and to rid Bombay of stables which are a source of danger to its health and which must be always coming in the way of any radical measure for dealing with malaria and

other diseases which are rampant in Bombay. I freely admit that Bombay has to travel outside its radius for the organization of a vast dairy scheme. But that every city in the world has done for many of its wants.

*Young India*, 27-12-1928, p. 431



## 62. BOMBAY MILK SUPPLY

Sjt. Nagindas Amulakhrai, the milk enthusiast, continues his well thought out agitation for procuring a cheaper and purer milk supply for Bombay. He has drawn up a memorandum showing that if the railway company would adopt a reasonable and responsive attitude it can very materially help cheaper production, i.e., by reducing the freight for milk and supplying cheap facilities for carrying milk from the suburban stations to Bombay. He says that it is owing to bad freight policy,

That places between Palghar (58 miles) and Bulsar (125 miles) although fully grass areas supplying thousands of bales of grass of the best quality to the whole of Gujarat and Bombay, and although having ample, favourable and natural conditions of climate and water etc. have no dairies started for milk supply to Bombay; that suppliers of milk in bulk have no alternative but to keep themselves and their buffaloes (16,003) confined in the stables (96) in the heart of the city in very unnatural conditions where there is no grazing area and the rent for accommodation of each buffalo in the stable is Rs. 9 or 10 p.m. resulting in a distinct additional loss at the rate of Rs. 240 per each of the 12 buffaloes that go dry every month after the lactation period out of a lot of 100 buffaloes in milk; and that the milk production from more than 26,000 buffaloes and supply thereof from year to year is being entirely stopped though they would again come into calf and produce milk to the same extent as before within a very short time if not slaughtered and wasted.

He contends that

All these factors doubtless go to prove how Bombay milk rate is the maximum in the world. It is much dearer than in New York and London. It is 50% dearer even than in Calcutta in British India. The result is the highest infant mortality of the poor of Bombay and nearly total extinction of the best breed of buffaloes, their fresh young calves prematurely dying also to the same extent. Loss on 26,000

buffaloes themselves amounts to 78 lacs of rupees per year at Rs. 300 per head, not to mention loss of milk production per day of about 4,000 maunds of milk that could be revived in a short time.

I understand that a Joint Committee consisting of a sub-committee of the Railway Local Advisory Board and a certain number of the members of the Bombay Corporation has been brought into being to consider this question. The question of cheap and pure milk supply for Bombay is a vital question. It affects the health of the inhabitants and especially the babies of "the first city" of India. The humanitarian and the economic aspects are no less important. It is to be hoped therefore that the Joint Committee will present a solution that will enable suburban dairies to thrive and simplify the question of removing the cattle stables from the heart of the city.

*Young India*, 1-8-1929, p. 256

### 63. MAN'S INHUMANITY

Not many people know what is *phooka*. Still fewer know that there is an association in Calcutta called the *Anti-Phooka* Association. Its patrons are Maharajadhiraja Sir Bijoy Chand Mahatab Bahadur and Justice Sir L. W. J. Castello. Its president is Shri Ramkumar Bangar. The office is at 65, Pathuriaghata Street. The secretary thus describes the process of *phooka*:

I have to inform you that the atrocities of *phooka* are perpetrated on each milch animal twice daily. The four legs of the animal are tied to four strong posts and two men hold the animal so tightly that she cannot make any movement of her limbs whatsoever. A bamboo rod or pipe, 22 inches long and 8 inches in circumference, is then forcibly pushed into the generative organ of the animal, and then one man begins to blow air into the uterus causing it to be fully distended thereby- This inflammation causes extra pressure on the glands which helps the milk man to extract the last drop of milk. The milching also is indescribably cruel, and it is continued to the great pain of the animal till blood comes out of the udder. Sometimes a few drops of the the blood get mixed up with the milk. Unable to make any movements the animal silently bears this inhuman torture and her great pain is manifested only by the copious perspiration and tears that flow down her body and cheeks. This is repeated twice daily and the animal invariably swoons after each operation.

It is difficult to conceive anything more torturing or revolting than the process described by the Secretary. From the proceedings of a meeting of the Association it appears that the practice results in the sterility of the cows and she-buffaloes subjected to the torture. They are therefore transferred to butchers after they cease to yield milk even in spite of *phooka*.

The Association undertakes the prosecution of the torturers. It engages plain-clothed detectives to discover the culprits. The activity of the Association is good

as far as it goes. But it does not appear to me to go far enough. Punishment of a few criminals won't stop the inhumanity. It is necessary to carry on propaganda amongst the offenders and educate them to understand the evils of the system. Of course the surest way of dealing with the evil is for the Corporation to take charge of the whole of the milk supply of Calcutta and change the *gwalas* into its paid servants. They would then not be open to temptation as they are now. They will be under sanitary supervision. Milking will be done under proper control. The citizens will have a guarantee of having pure milk for their money. And there is not the slightest reason why the milk supply department should not be self-supporting. The citizens will gladly pay an extra pie, if an increase in the selling price becomes necessary. Of course the milk supply has to become a monopoly of a municipality undertaking the enterprise, even as the postal stamp is a monopoly of the State.

*Harijan*, 19-6-1937, p. 152

## 4. HOUSING

### 64. A DOUBLE HELL

A Harijan servant in Orissa gives me a graphic description of his visit to some Harijan quarters in Balasore Dist., near Bhadrak:

This year, as you know, there was too much rain in these parts. Therefore, when we neared the Harijan quarter, we found it surrounded by water on all sides. The stench coming from that water was unbearable. Naturally, when we waded through it, we found the quarter sodden, foul-smelling and too damp for human habitation. The grass roofs were all leaking and water was dripping from them, for we had gone just after the rains. The walls of these huts could not have been more than 4', the surface not more than 4 x 5 In the hut opposite, there was an apology for a verandah, perhaps a foot and a half wide. Bones and pieces of rotting leather were strewn on the floor. Wherever you set your foot, it would go down knee-deep. If the spirit of service did not possess us, we would certainly have turned away from the places which one would not use even for one's cattle. You have described one of the quarters as a "hell upon earth." And if what you described was a hell, I have no doubt that, if you could see this quarter as we have seen it, you would call it a *double hell*. We had gone with a view to cleaning this quarter. There was not much that lent itself to cleaning here, but when we began with it, the Harijans said, "Babu, why have you troubled to come to us, low people?" When we spoke to the owner of the house about the verandah and suggested that he ought not to allow stinking leather to remain on it, he said, "Babu, this is my wealth. I have no other place to store it. You are the first people to come to us and talk to us about cleanliness and other things, but what is the use of our doing anything? We have to eke out existence as best we may." To stay for any length of time in this place was impossible. One of us was so overcome by the stink that on reaching our abode he fell ill and remained in bed for 24 hours

before he could think of taking any food. Nausea had overtaken him. This quarter that I have described to you is not very far from the Chandan Bazar of Bhadrak. The place is called Esopur. It has about 15 houses with a population of 65. Not far from it are to be found very substantial *kothis* belonging to merchants.

Is it any wonder that we have malaria, plague and cholera rampant in our midst? It is impossible to avoid these diseases so long as we neglect these useful members of society, consign them to the dirtiest places and, because of the monster of untouchability, we would not teach them to do their work in a proper and efficient manner. I suggest to workers all over the country that they must concentrate their effort upon the plague spots which they visit. Let us not be baffled by the vastness of the problem. Things will right themselves if everyone will attend to the work that comes his way, I would, therefore, advise the workers of Bhadrak to go to the merchants, make out a simple plan of improvement, present them with a budget, level up the ground, put up plinths and rebuild the fifteen houses. It cannot be a heavy budget and I doubt not that by sufficient importunity they will be able to raise a fund to reduce that plan to execution. The donors will find that the donations are a sound investment in a health promoting project. It would be like putting their courtyards in order.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1933, p. 5

## 65. ANOTHER PLAGUE SPOT

The reader may remember that some months ago I drew public attention to the disgraceful condition of the *bastis* of Allahabad. Professor Malkani has now sent me his impressions of the Delhi *bastis*. They are published in the *Hindustan Times*. These impressions show that the Delhi *bastis* are not much better than the Allahabad ones. There is the same tale of indescribable filth and consequent degradation. The scavengers, on whose careful labour largely depends the health of the inhabitants of Delhi, are housed in cells which are windowless and lightless holes. I cannot do better than reproduce Professor Malkani's closing sentences:

It had been raining very hard and several *bastis* had become quagmires inside and pools outside. One could not walk, but only skip over stones placed to order or be lifted up by sportive scavengers. We were a party including some Delhi notables. One entered and returned reeling, as he walked over unnamable filth. Another returned, and would not go again, for the bowels of his compassion had been moved and he felt like vomiting for ease. A third wondered how "these people living in filth had become filth-like". One brave soul, living in Easy Street, blurted out, "Oh! my house is leaking, where is the house in Delhi that is not leaking? Why worry?" His opinion is on all fours with the opinion of many *bhangis*, who think, poor souls, that born in filth they must live and die in filth. Why worry? .Living in a world of smells and sight, day and night, the *bhangi* himself becomes a smell and sight, a human waste-heap. Life in these *bastis* is ugly, almost hideous. It is too terrible for over-statement.

So long as we tolerate such plague spots and so long as we continue to treat most useful servants of society as if they were beyond the pale of humanity, there need be no wonder that we have more than our fair share of diseases which are due to filth and insanitation. Even as a rotten limb affects and corrupts the whole body, so does the condition of the scavengers, representing a rotten limb of society,

corrupt the whole of it. Unless, therefore, we wake up betimes and adopt summary measures to improve the condition of the scavengers, God's judgment must overtake us. This question of providing decent habitations for the scavengers is not merely for Hindus to tackle but it is for the society at large to deal with. In this matter, therefore, there need be no distinction between reformers and the orthodox, or between Hindus and non-Hindus. Let us hope that the Delhi Municipality, now that its attention is drawn to the disgraceful condition of its *bastis*, will waste no time in taking energetic measures and removing the disgrace.

*Harijan*, 23-9-1933, p. 4



## 66. HOUSING FOR SCAVENGERS

(From "Gandhiji's Mysore Speech")

I must now pass on to the mission that has brought me here. The municipal address reminds me that I should see things which are worth seeing, so that I may carry away happy impressions of the effort that has been and is being made here on behalf of the Harijans. The Reception Committee with very great forethought had arranged to take me, before bringing me to this meeting, to various *cheries* and showed me the improvements made during these six years. And you are quite right in thinking that after an examination of these places I should carry away nothing but happy impressions of what has been done on behalf of Harijans. I must congratulate the State and the Municipality of Mysore on the neatness and cleanliness I observed in all the places visited this afternoon. And I am glad for the assurance that the Municipality will not lose any time in looking after the domestic comforts of the Harijans of this city. In my opinion, sweepers in every city are its noblest servants. It must be a matter of humiliation and shame to have the sweepers and scavengers consigned to the dirtiest places and utterly neglected. In\* my opinion, they hold the key of the health of every city in their pockets. Any city that dares neglect its scavengers and sweepers commits the crime of neglecting the health of its citizens.

*Harijan*, 12-1-1934, p. 4

## 67. A MINIMUM STANDARD OF HOUSING

(From the reply given to the address presented by the Bangalore Municipality on 7th January, 1934.)

I am deeply grateful to you for presenting me with this address. You have reminded me in your address that you were good enough to do me the honour of presenting me with an address the last time I was in your State, and it flatters me to think that I still retain a corner in your hearts. I tender you my congratulations upon all that you have done and are doing on behalf of the Harijans whose cause has brought me here. I tender also my respectful congratulations to His Highness the Maharaja Sabej for the liberality with which his Government is dealing with this problem. You, Sir, have courteously admitted that, while so much has been done by the Municipality for the Harijan cause, much more yet remains to be done. It would be wrong on my part, if I did not re-echo that sentiment expressed in your address. During my peregrination this morning, I had the painful duty of witnessing some of the habitations occupied by the sweeper class. It is difficult to call them even huts. I have, therefore, not hesitated to describe them as holes. And holes in every sense of the term they are, except one. That exception is not at all in favour of these habitations. These holes have protection in all directions but the roof. The roofs are no protection whatsoever against rain. They are made of debris that they have been able to collect. You have every right to pride yourselves on the beauty of Bangalore. I am free to confess that Bombay is not properly described as Bombay, the beautiful. There are such hideous and ugly spots in Bombay that it is a misnomer to call it beautiful because of its naturally beautiful surroundings and because of some quarters of the rich kept in a proper condition.

Therefore, I would have no hesitation to give to Bangalore the first prize as a beautiful city. But I would like you to place before yourselves a minimum standard of comfort for the poorest of citizens below which you would refuse to go; and I

venture to suggest to you that the holes that I saw this morning fall far below the level that you, as wise and sensible citizens would agree upon if you meet together quietly for the purpose.

*Harijan*, 19-2-1934, p. 5

## 68. MY HEART WEPT WITHIN ME

(From a Speech by Gandhiji in Bombay)

It will not do to say that Harijans eat carrion, drink liquor and have dirty habits. What else can we expect if we segregate them and kick them at every step? We keep them in places unfit even for cattle, and then affect surprise if they develop any bad habits. But are we prepared to consider them as part and parcel of our society if they shed all evil habits? The fact is we must bear with them and try to improve them. My heart wept within me when I observed the housing conditions of the Harijan employees of Bombay Municipality. Bombay is beautiful, indeed, but wherein does its beauty consist – in Malabar Hill or in the *Kachrapatti* at Mahalakshmi? I tell you we can live in equanimity on the Ridge only after decent housing conditions have been secured for these Harijans. And the expenditure involved in this modest programme is a mere flea-bite for a Municipality, which counts its income in crores, and for the citizens of no mean city who once gave away 43 lakhs of rupees in a single month. I beseech you to have a look at the plague spots in Bombay and to move the Municipality to deal with them at once. How would you like to live near a sewer even for a single day?

*Harijan*, 29-6-1934, p. 154

## 69. CALCUTTA SLUMS

Many a time have I rehearsed to myself what should I do if I were a member of a Corporation, and when years ago I used to walk through the streets of Calcutta and compare the palaces with their beautiful and sanitary surroundings, with the ugliness and want of sanitation of its slums, I used to say to myself that the work and worth of the Corporation of Calcutta should be measured not by the number or beauty of its palaces, but by the condition of its slums, and I felt then that the Corporation had neglected its duties.

*Harijan*, 9-11-1935, p. 306

## 70. AN ENQUIRY INTO MUNICIPAL SWEEPERS' CONDITION

(From "Notes")

The Harijan Sevak Sangh has been for some time issuing a circular letter containing a brief account of the Sangh's activities. Like Bapa, its secretary, the letter is, business like. I take from the interesting letter for November and December the following three most interesting items:

1. .. .. .
2. It is understood that the work of the committee appointed by the last Congress Government for inquiry into the wages and living conditions of the sweepers has been suspended by the present Governor's Government.
3. The Report of the Municipal Sweepers' Inquiry Committee, appointed by the C. P. Government in 1938 under the chairmanship of Shri A. V. Thakkar, has been published. Among the important recommendations are:
  - a) a minimum wage of 4 as. per day,
  - b) an eight hours' working day,
  - c) employment of Welfare Officers for big municipalities, and
  - d) granting of privilege, casual and sick leave and half holiday on week ends.

Regarding the housing of sweepers the Committee recommends as follows:

1. It should be obligatory on the Municipal Committee to provide houses to sweepers.
2. The Government should provide Nazul land for the purpose.

The report costs Re. 1 and can be had from the Government Press, Nagpur.

I hope the report in the item two is wrong, or that there is a sound reason for suspending the inquiry. One had hoped that no lawful activity inaugurated by the Congress ministries would be stopped or suspended by the interim Governments.

The recommendations (item three) of the Municipal Sweepers' Inquiry Committee (C.P.) are so sensible and moderate that there should be no delay in their being carried out in their entirety. The report should not share the fate that befalls many such reports, i.e. of being shelved. It should be remembered that Thakkar Bapa's was a labour of love. He does not put his hands to anything for praise or show.

Segaon, 8-1-1940

*Harijan*, 13-1-1940, p. 407

## 71. VALMIKIS OF SIMLA

(From "Notes")

Readers must know that *Valmiki* is another word for *bhangi*. Their living quarters in Simla are deplorable. No one bothers about them. Rajkumari has tried her best for them for years but how much can a single person do? I am unable to get as far and see things for myself, but I requested Badshah Khan who is staying with me to go there. He gives me a piteous account of their hovels. Some of the *Valmikis* have been to see me and have placed other woeful complaints before me. I feel that if in the first instance their living quarters were rebuilt many of their other complaints too would be put right. It is the bounden duty of the public and the Municipality of Simla to remove this evil as soon as they can from their midst. They can be no cleaner than the least clean among them.

Simla, 13-5-1946

(From *Harijansevak*)

*Harijan*, 19-5-1946, p. 133

## 5. MISCELLANEOUS

### 72. ADULT LITERACY

(From "Notes")

The Gandhi Mission Society, Tiruvennainallur, send me their half-yearly report of adult literacy work. The total number of adults educated was 197. But the problem that really faces them is "how to enable the adults to retain the knowledge thus gained." The report goes on: "Nearly half the members who attended the class during the first session have approached the worker in charge to repeat the lessons. In fact they had lapsed into illiteracy. The workers are racking their brains to devise means to prevent this lapse." The workers need not rack their brains, at all. The lapse is bound to occur after the short courses that are given. The lapse can only be prevented by correlating the teaching to the villagers' daily wants. The dry knowledge of three R's is not even now, it can never be, a permanent part of the villagers' life. They must have knowledge given to them which they must use daily. It must not be thrust upon them. They should have the appetite for it. What they have today is something they neither want nor appreciate. Give the villagers village arithmetic, village geography, village history, and the literary knowledge that they must use daily, i.e., reading and writing letters, etc. They will treasure such knowledge and pass on to the other stages. They have no use for books which give them nothing of daily use.

Sevagram, 16-6-1940

*Harijan*, 22-6-1940, p. 173

### 73. OBSTRUCTION IN LITERACY DRIVE

(From "Question Box")

Q. We are students in Poona. We are taking part in the drive against illiteracy. Now in the parts we are visiting there are drunkards who threaten us if we go to teach people. Those among whom we are working are Harijans. They get frightened. Some suggest that proceedings should be taken against these drunkards. Some suggest we should try your method of wooing them. Will you advise?

A: You are doing good work. Literacy drive and many such things are by-products of the big reform, perhaps the biggest of modern times. As to the drunkards they must be treated as diseased persons entitled to our sympathy and service. You should, therefore, reason with them when they are sober, and take even the beating, if any, with good grace. I do not rule out court proceedings, but they will be evidence of want of enough Ahimsa in you. But you cannot go against your nature. If you do not evoke response from them to your wooing, your work must not be held up because of the obstruction referred to by you. Recourse to legal proceedings is then indicated. But you must make all honest efforts before you go to law.

Sevagram, 4-6-1940

*Harijan*, 8-6-1940, p. 159 at p. 160



## 74. TRUE ADULT EDUCATION

(From "Notes")

Of all the numerous letters and telegrams received for the Charkha Jayanti, a letter in Hindustani received from the Indore Adult Education Association most arrested my attention. The purport of it is that the Association in question instead of wasting time in performing some flattering function, devoted the *jayanti* week to doing urgent and useful work, i.e., young and old, rich and poor, official and non-official banded together in destroying a noxious weed harmful to man and beast. If such co-operation became the abiding feature of any locality, it would constitute the best education for young and old and change the face of the society in which it was done.

New Delhi, 18-10-1947

*Harijan*, 26-10-1947, p. 381

## 75. THE EXTENT OF MEDICAL AID

With the commencement of the activities of the A.I. V.I.A., medical aid finds a prominent, if not almost an exclusive, place on the programme of many workers. The aid consists in distributing among the villagers free medicines, Allopathic, Ayurvedic, Unani or Homoeopathic, or all combined. Druggists selling these medicines are quite ready to oblige workers approaching them for a few medicines, which cost them a trifle and which in their opinion, may, if they look at the gift selfishly, bring them more buyers. The poor patients become the victims of well-intentioned, but ill-informed or over-enthusiastic, workers. More than three-fourths of these drugs are not only useless but imperceptibly, if not perceptibly, harmful to the bodies into which they are put. Where they do bring some temporary relief to the patients, their substitutes are as a rule to be found in the village bazaar.

Medical men of the West are slowly but surely finding out that, the less drugs they prescribe, the better it is for their patients. The best of them never keep their patients in ignorance of what is prescribed. Instead of over-loading their prescriptions, they give some simple harmless drug. The best part of their work consists in steadying their patients, removing their fears and insisting on careful nursing and a change of diet. They are more and more veering round to the belief that nature is the best healer.

Therefore, A.I.V.I.A., is leaving medical relief of the kind I have described severely alone. Its primary care is educative in matters of health as well as of economy.

Are not both inter-related? Does not health mean wealth for the millions? Their bodies, not their intellect, are the primary instrument of wealth. The Association, therefore, seeks to teach people how to prevent disease. It is well known that the food of the millions is very deficient in its nourishing value. What they do eat they

misuse. Their knowledge of hygiene is practically nil. Village sanitation is as bad as it well can be. If, therefore, these defects can be put right and the people imbibe the simple rules of hygiene, most of the ailments they suffer from must disappear without further effort or an outlay of money. Hence the Association does not contemplate opening dispensaries. Investigations are now being made to find out what the villages can supply in the shape of drugs. Satis Babu's cheap remedies are an effort in that direction. But incredibly simple though they are, he is experimenting with a view to making drastic reduction in the number of these remedies, without diminishing their efficacy. He is studying the bazaar drugs and testing them and comparing them with the corresponding drugs in the British pharmacopoeia. The desire is to wean the simple villagers from the awe of mysterious pills and infusions.

*Harijan*, 5-4-1935, p. 59

## 76. MEDICAL RELIEF

Medical relief as part of village work or social service plays an important part in many reports I receive from numerous organizations. This relief consists of medicines supplied to patients who from far and near flock to any person who advertises himself as distributor of such relief. It means no trouble on the part of the medicine man. He need not have much or any knowledge of diseases and the symptoms. Medicines he often receives free from obliging chemists. Donations are always to be had from indiscriminate donors whose conscience is satisfied if they can distribute their charity in aid of suffering humanity.

This social service has appeared to me to be the laziest form of service and often even mischievous. It works mischief when the patient is expected to do nothing save to swallow the drug given to him. He is none wiser for having received the medicine. If anything he is worse off than before. The knowledge that he can get for nothing or for a trifle a pill or a potion that will correct certain irregularities will tempt him to repeat them. The fact that he gets such aid free of charge will undermine his self-respect which should disdain to receive anything for nothing.

There is another type of medical relief which is a boon. It is given by those who know the nature of diseases, who will tell the patients why they have their particular complaints and will also tell them how to avoid them. Such servants will rush to assist at all odd hours of the day or night. Such discriminating relief is an education in hygiene, teaching the people how to observe cleanliness and to gain health. But such service is rare. In the majority of cases mention of medical relief in reports is a piece of advertisement leading to donations for other activities requiring perhaps as little exertion or knowledge as medical relief. I would, therefore, urge all workers in the social field, whether urban or rural, to treat their medical activity as the least important item of service. It would be better to avoid all mention of such relief. Workers would do well to adopt measures that

would prevent disease in their localities. Their stock of medicines should be as small as possible. They should study the bazaar medicines available in their villages, know their reputed properties, and use them as far as possible. They will find as we are finding in Sindi that hot water, sunshine, clean salt and soda with an occasional use of castor oil or quinine answers most purposes. We make it a point to send all serious cases to the Civil Hospital. Patients flock to Mira-behn and receive lessons in hygiene and prevention of diseases. They do not resent this method of approach instead of simply being given a powder or a mixture.

*Harijan*, 9-11-1935, p. 308

## 77. THE CONDITION OF THE HINDU CREMATION GROUND

### I

(Originally appeared in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion*, dated 25-8-1906 from which it has been translated into English.)

Mr. Daugherty has written us a letter on the condition of the Hindu cremation ground, to which we invite the attention of the Durban Indians. If its condition is really such as Mr. Daugherty describes, it is a shame and a disgrace to the Hindu community. It is the duty of every Hindu to keep the ground tidy. By failing to do so, we not only violate the law of the land and the rules of sanitation, but the maxim that in such matters we human beings should have a sense of delicacy. We have in fact received more letters about the condition of the cremation ground. We have not published them as they are caustic and indulge in personal criticism. But we would earnestly remind every Hindu that, whatever our differences in other matters, death should evoke in us nothing but tender and solemn sentiments. And if it cannot, that will be thought a grave shortcoming of ours, as everyone will readily agree.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. V, p. 399

### II

(Originally appeared in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion*, dated 8-9-1906 from which it has been translated into English.)

We commented in a previous issue on the condition of the Hindu cremation ground. Some persons have construed our comments as intended to find fault with the management. We have gone through the article again, but are unable to read in it any such intention. However, to preclude any possible misunderstanding, we hereby declare that we have not, in the article, held the management guilty of any fault. As far as we know, they have been doing their best to keep the cremation ground clean and in good condition.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. V, p. 415

## 78. STRAY DOGS V. VILLAGE DOGS

(From "Notes")

A friend says, "You advocate the destruction of stray dogs. Do you include in the category the very useful village dogs?" Most certainly I do not. I have made that perfectly clear in the pages of *Navajivan*. The village dogs are the cheapest and the most efficient police we have for protecting villagers against thieves at night and intruding dogs and other animals during the day. But I have not advocated an indiscriminate destruction even of stray dogs. Many other remedies have to be adopted before that drastic measure is resorted to. What I have insisted upon is a municipal bye-law authorising municipalities to destroy unowned dogs. This simple legislation will protect the dogs from cruel neglect and put the *Mahajan* upon their mettle. It is the indiscriminate and thoughtless charity which has to be resisted. The charity which feeds dogs and indeed men who choose to become beggars harms the beggars and the society which encourages such false charity.

*Young India*, 2-12-1926, p. 425

## 79. PARIAH DOGS

A manager of a U.P. High School writes:

I would like your opinion in a matter of public interest. I mean the killing of stray dogs by municipalities. The harm that these dogs, especially the diseased ones, do to man is distressing, and a remedy to get rid of them, one way or the other, is highly solicited. I refer the point to you as people are prone to treat it as a question involving *himsa*.

To kill these dogs does, in my opinion, amount to *himsa*, but I believe it to be inevitable, if we are to escape much greater *himsa*. Every dog should be owned and a collar attached to it. I should suggest a dog licence. Every unlicensed dog should be caught by the police and immediately handed to the *mahajan* if they have adequate provision for the maintenance of these dogs and would submit to municipal supervision as to the adequacy of such provision. Failing such provision, all stray dogs should be shot. This, in my opinion, is the most humanitarian method of dealing with the dog nuisance which everybody feels but nobody cares or dares to tackle. This *laissez faire* is quite in keeping with the atmosphere of general public indifference. But such indifference is itself *himsa*, and a votary of Ahimsa cannot afford to neglect or shirk questions, be they ever so trifling, if these demand a solution in terms of Ahimsa. We should arrive at a proper understanding of the great doctrines only by boldly facing them even at the risk of committing serious blunders.

*Young India*, 11-4-1929, p. 117



## 80. CRUELTY TO IMPOUNDED ANIMALS

(Originally appeared under the title "Cruelty to the Dumb Creation".)

A Mysorean draws my attention to a small matter which however literally means life and death to the unfortunate dogs and cattle impounded in the Bangalore City pounds. The conditions there are very bad and the poor animals imprisoned for no fault of theirs are not properly fed nor given water. The lethal apparatus for the killing of dogs is out of order since some time and no attempts seem to have been made to repair it. The crude and cruel method of poisoning the animal is resorted to.

I have had the misfortune to advise the destruction of stray dogs. But that had to be, if men would be so cruel as, out of a false sense of pity, to feed *pariah* dogs and permit them to become a menace to the neighbouring population. But my advice can never include impounding such dogs and torturing them as those mentioned by my correspondent seem to have been. Humanitarian instinct demands destruction of such animals in an instantaneous and painless manner. I would love to hope that there is exaggeration in what the correspondent has stated. Anyway, the Municipality in question and all such other institutions should mend their manner if they do not satisfy the test demanded by humanity.

On the train to Calcutta, 29-10-1946

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946, p. 392

## 81. THREE SCHOOLS OF HUMANITARIANS

(Originally appeared under the title "March of Civilization".)

Q. On page 91 of *Harijan* dated 14-4-1946, it has been argued that the bullock is a living machine and that contact with such harmless animals is a potent factor in the onward march of human civilization. The animals are however, made "harmless" by making them "impotent". Is this the correct method of the onward march of civilization? If we have cows, we must have bulls. The bullock is a creation of human selfishness and cruelty. If not in thinking man, in the lower animals at any rate, all the force of their nature rages in the fury of the generative desire. Therefore, to turn the noble animal, the "*Vahana of Maha-dev*" into a beast of burden is sad.

A: The writer is logical. But such logic would prevent the domestication of the cow. For there is probably more cruelty in domesticating the cow than in castrating the bull. It is a question of degree. Further march of civilization seems to imply increasing domination of man over beast, together with a growingly humane method of using them.

There are three schools of humanitarians. One believes in replacing animal power by the use of any other. Another believes in treating animals as fellow beings and making such use of them as a brotherly spirit will permit. The third will not make use of lower animals for man's selfish purpose but will employ instead one's own power and that of fellow beings to the extent that the latter gives intelligent and willing use. I belong to the third school. It is possible by human labour, judiciously and humanely employed, to do fruit culture to a large extent and even corn culture. Indeed, as prisoners we civil resisters in Transvaal dug up stony ground for converting it into a municipsd garden. No ploughing would have answered the purpose. The ground could yield only to the pickaxe.

The first I hold to be useless and even injurious in the end to mankind. A judicious combination of the other two seems to me to be the goal. I can see no escape from castration. The only thing to be done is to make it progressively humane.

A correspondent has brought forward in this connection the question of branding animals. Does the pain caused by branding compensate for the benefit it confers upon the owner and the animal? If it confers none on the animal, naturally branding must be taboo.

New Delhi, 29-4-1946

*Harijan*, 5-5-1946, p. 121

## 82. ON BEGGING

(Originally appeared in "Question Box" under the title "A Social Nuisance".)

Q: The beggar problem has become a social nuisance everywhere, especially in the cities. India can ill bear the burden of this army of drones. They use self-torture, sometimes even threats and menaces, to work upon the sympathy and fear of our simple folk and extract alms from them. Some of them have in this way accumulated a secret hoard and lead a life of vice and immorality. What solution would you suggest for this problem?

A: Begging is an age-old institution in India. It was not always a nuisance. It was not always a profession. Now it has become a profession to which cheats have taken. No person who is capable of working for his bread should be allowed to beg. The way to deal with the problem will be to penalize those who give alms to professional beggars.

Of course begging itself by the able-bodied should be penalized. But this reform is possible only when municipalities conduct factories where they will feed people against work. The Salvation Army people are or were experts in this class of work. They had opened a match factory in London in which any person who came found work and food. What I have, however, suggested, is an immediate palliative. The real remedy lies in discovering the root cause and dealing with it. This means equalizing the economic condition of the people. The present extremes have to be dealt with as a serious social disease. In a healthy society concentration of riches in a few people and unemployment among millions is a great social crime or disease which needs to be remedied.

*Harijan*, 8-6-1940, p. 159

### 83. DISABLED BEGGARS

(From "Question Box")

Q. You stand for the poor and helpless. Would you not include the providing of at least one daily meal to disabled beggars as an item of the daily routine of a "constructive worker"? A large number of the former are lepers. There is not a city in India of any note without its quota of these helpless creatures. Their condition is deserving of your pity and consideration.

A: Valuable as this work undoubtedly is, it cannot become part of the constructive programme. It is not every form of social relief that can be made part of the Congress constructive programme. Such programme can only cover that part, the omission of which would make the attainment of swaraj through non-violence impossible. Who can deny that Hindu-Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, temperance and the charkha are essential for achieving our object? My answer, however, does not mean that disabled humanity does not need any attention. No man or woman whether of the Congress or not, can be worth much if he or she neglects to do his or her part of social service in the widest sense of the term.

Sevagram, 1-4-1940

*Harijan*, 6-4-1940, p. 73 at p. 74

#### 84. A WARNING

(Originally appeared in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion* dated, 29-9-1906 from which it has been translated into English.)

The report of an Indian case, published by the Town Council in the *Krugersdorp Standard* dated September 1, is regrettable, and puts the Indian community to shame. A leading Indian of the place did not effect the necessary improvements to his premises despite a notice requiring him to do so. His bed room had a ceiling only of cloth; the lavatory floor was not proof against the seeping of dirty water; and the lavatory was used although it had no bucket. Since the notice was ignored, the Town Council ordered proceedings to be instituted against him, with results so far unknown to us. But that those who are considered leading Indians should keep their premises in the condition described here makes us hang our heads in shame. One of the many charges the whites make against Indians is that of uncleanliness. Such cases only prove the charge, and the outcome cannot but be unfavourable when these are found among moneyed and respectable Indians. All Indians will, we hope, learn a lesson from this case and keep their premises clean. No one can deny that the state of our houses is not all that it should be. It is clear that we should be all the more cautious in matters where our shortcomings are only too apparent.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. V, p. 453*

## 85. ON SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

(Originally appeared in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion*, dated 2-2-1907 from which it was translated into English.)

Generally speaking, every person has an aversion to something or the other. To some the sight of blood or pus is nauseating, to others the smell of kerosene. Similarly an Englishman is averse to certain things. Of these aversions some are desirable, but others are carried too far. None the less, it is a fact that people do have these aversions. Trivial as some of these may seem, we should know what they are. It often happens that, starting from trifles, people go on to big quarrels. Because of trifles the whites sometimes cause havoc. We know of an instance in which a white man kicked an Indian simply because the latter happened to break wind. Once Mr. Miller, a Magistrate of the Amlazi Court, was so sickened at the sight of an Indian witness hiccuping that he could stand it no longer and asked the Indian to stop. Once an Indian and some Europeans were at dinner table. During the meal the Indian started belching. An English lady at the table almost fainted and could not eat at all that day. We can see from these instances how necessary it is for us always to show consideration for the feelings of others. Also, while we live in this country, we should so behave that the whites' prejudice against us is weakened. With this end in view, we list below some of the causes of their prejudice and appeal to all Indians to overcome them.

### SOME DON'TS

1. Avoid, as far as possible, blowing your nose or spitting on swept or paved walks or in the presence of others.

On hygienic grounds also, this rule is worth observing. Doctors say that sometimes serious diseases are caused by contact with the nasal or oral discharge of another. Dr. Murison has said that we often spread tuberculosis through our habit of spitting anywhere. Both these things should be done into a spittoon while at home, and into a handkerchief while out, and, as far as possible, in privacy.

2. One should not belch, hiccup, break wind, or scratch oneself in the presence of others.

These (maxims) are useful for correct social behaviour. By practice one can learn to check one's instinct to do any of these things.

3. If you want to cough, do so holding your handkerchief against the mouth.

If one's spittle gets blown on to others, it annoys them and if one has any disease, the spittle carries it to them.

4. Even after a bath, in many men, some dirt remains in the ears or under the nails. It is necessary to pare one's nails and keep them as well as the ears clean.

5. Those who do not grow a regular beard should, if necessary, shave every day. An unshaven face is a sign of laziness or stinginess.

6. One should not let much mucus accumulate in the corners of the eyes. One who allows this to happen is considered slothful and a sleepy head.

7. Every act of cleaning the body should be done in privacy.

8. The turban or cap and the shoes should be clean. The life of the shoes is prolonged by cleaning and polishing.

9. Those who chew betel-leaf and nut should do so at fixed hours, as with other kinds of food so as to avoid giving the impression that we are eating all the time. Those who chew tobacco have a lot to think about. They disfigure every spot by spitting. Addicts to tobacco, as the Gujarati proverb goes, spoil the corner of the house where they chew tobacco, the whole house if they smoke and their clothes if they take snuff.

These are rules for personal cleanliness. Later we shall write of those relating to the home and its environs.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. VI, p. 308



## 86. A DIRTY HABIT

A sister writes:

For some years I have been trying to help people to understand the clanger of spitting everywhere. The filth and the dirt is so bad on account of spitting and cleaning noses everywhere that one does not know where to begin. Even small boys, girls, educated men and women, apart from illiterate folk, spit on railway platforms, carriages, trams, outside shops, in corridors, outside their houses and everywhere. Our country is getting dirtier and dirtier and diseases are spreading all over. Will not volunteers come forward for spreading the message of cleanliness?’

Promiscuous spitting is a bad habit on which I have commented often enough. It is all part and parcel of the incredible ignorance that exists in our land among all classes of people in regard to the elementary laws of sanitation and hygiene. It is a habit which we must give up, if we would avoid certain diseases. My correspondent's suggestion is certainly commendable.

Panchgani 14-7-1946

*Harijan*, 28-7-1946, p. 232

## 87. TIME-SENSE

It is a common charge against us as a nation that we have no sense of the time; we are as a rule behind time. One who is too late is admittedly behind time. But it is equally true to say that one who is four hours before time is also behind time. He has neglected a hundred things to enable him to be four hours before time. The villager when he wants to catch a train reaches the station hours before the scheduled time. He may succeed in catching his train, but he will be behind time for many other things probably more important. We the educated class are too

late for every thing. Our meetings need not commence in time. It is a most usual thing not to commence proceedings at the appointed time. One man's absence is often regarded as sufficient reason for keeping hundreds, some thousands, waiting. It speaks volumes for the patience and forbearance of a nation that can so wait. But it bodes ill for its progress.

This lack of time-sense is now being noticed in connection with the working of the spinning resolution of the A.I.C.C. To read the resolution is simple and innocent enough. But it is taxing all the resources of the All-India Khadi Board. The collection, transmission and classification of yarn requires a large organization and much organizing ability. The difficulty is increased tenfold when the workers do not work to time. The fifteenth of each month is the last date for the delivery of yarn. That date was fixed not to give more time to spinners but to give enough time to the secretaries of different committees. Only if spinners deliver or workers collect their yarn on stated dates the whole work can be efficiently organized. Each province may fix its own dates so as to enable it to send packets of yarn in time to the A.I.K.B. Instead of sending packets in instalments, there should be only one complete delivery from month to month provided that suits the arrangement of the A.I.K.B. Unless the whole work is done with clock-work regularity, it is impossible to organize it in a thorough manner. When thousands of details require attention, time is of the utmost importance. Even as the slightest slip in observing times on railways may result in disastrous consequences, so may want of attention to the A.I.K.B. time table result in consequences just as serious to the prospect of universalizing spinning. In fact no organization is possible without punctilious regard to the observance of agreed time tables. I trust, therefore, that all the workers connected with the spinning organization will religiously keep to the times agreed to or appointed by them.

*Young India*, 6-11-1924, p. 366

## 88. DUTY OF SPEAKING GENTLY

(From "Notes")

A Gujarati correspondent writes:

Speaking unnecessarily loud affects the health of hearers. In this country and among us, women and children more than men, are in the habit of speaking much louder than we need and a false sense of delicacy makes most of us, even though we may be aware of the noise and its ill-effects, tolerate such speaking which really grates on our ears. We would not protest. This may be a sign of our Ahimsa but I would not classify it under "courtesy". Model Montessori Schools can be abodes of peace, not so our so-called homes, much less our institutions or our public roads. You advise people not to tolerate insanitation. Can you not do likewise about noises that are almost equally injurious to health? I am quite clear that gentle speech should have the same place in our system of education as sanitation. May I warn you that you are yourself often guilty of tolerating the vice of loud speaking about you and thus injuring your health and missing the opportunity of educating public opinion ?

I must plead guilty to the charge. What the correspondent says is largely true. I have often tolerated maddening noises which could have been easily avoided. I am well aware that they are injurious to health. The object of giving place to this correspondent, however, is to draw the attention of teachers to this national defect and invite them to make a beginning by restraining their pupils from making noises and speaking loud in class-rooms and outside. In railway trains these noises are simply maddening. They are made in total disregard of the feelings of fellow passengers. Many indulge in loud talks which they can easily carry on in gentle tones. In this connection I am reminded of the meetings of Sikhs in which whenever necessity arises someone on the platform puts up a board which is fastened on to a long bamboo containing the words 'Please avoid loud talking' or 'Peace Peace'. Some such device can be adopted by passengers who notice such noises.

*Harijan*, 12-10-1935, p. 279 at p. 280

## 89. TRUE HOLIDAY MAKING

A correspondent invites me to warn those who care against turning during the forthcoming Diwali holidays good money into fireworks, bad sweets and unhygienic illuminations. I heartily respond. If I had my way I should have people to do house cleaning and heart cleaning and provide innocent and instructive amusements for children during these days. Fireworks I know are the delight of children, but they are so because we the elders have habituated them to fireworks. I have not known the untutored African children wanting or appreciating fireworks. They have dances instead. What can be better or healthier for children than sports and picnics to which they will take not bazar-made sweets of doubtful value but fresh and dried fruit? Children both rich and poor may also be trained to do house cleaning and white-washing themselves. It will be something if they are coaxed to recognize the dignity of labour if only during holidays to begin with. But the point I wish to emphasize is that at least a part, if not the whole, of the money saved by doing away with fireworks etc. should be given to the cause of khadi, or if that is anathema, then to any other cause in which the poorest are served. There cannot be greater joy to men and women and young and old than that they think of and associate the poorest of the land with them in their holidays.

*Young India*, 25-10-1928, p. 355

## 90. FIREWORKS DURING DIWALI DAYS

(From "Notes")

I have received several letters complaining of the use of fireworks to celebrate *Diwali*. The complaints are justified. I wrote against this practice in the columns of the now extinct *Navajivan*. I do not know whether the writing had any effect. At present when fire surrounds us, surely there can be no *Diwali*. It is sinful to have fireworks of joy or illuminations or parties consuming sweets and the like while millions are starving.

New Delhi, 18-10-1946

(From the Original in Gujarati)

*Harijan*, 27-10-1946, p. 369 at p. 370

## 91. ADULTERATION OF GHEE

(From "Notes")

Shri Pannalal, an old member of Sabarmati Ashram, is a lover of cattle. He has for years been a lay farmer and dairyman. He has tried to study the cattle question. Very few people realize that conservation of cattle wealth of India is a major economic problem beset with many complexities. Adulteration of *ghee* has always been one of them. During the last few years it has become a growing menace, owing to the import of cheap vegetable oil miscalled *ghee* because of its having been congealed and otherwise processed so as to look like *ghee*. Shri Pannalal says that middlemen and sellers of dairy products profusely adulterate real *ghee* and thus undersell the farmer or cattle-keeper. He says that it is impossible for farmers to hold out against this competition if the mischief continues for any length of time, especially as such vegetable *ghee* is being manufactured in Bombay

and elsewhere on a large scale. Shri Pannalal rightly adds that agriculture with dairying and cattle breeding for draught purposes will be an impossibility if real *ghee* disappears from the market. Cattle-keeping will then become a luxury instead of a paying occupation. Shri Pannalal, therefore, suggests that drastic measures should be taken to prevent adulteration. I heartily endorse the suggestion. There should be a well-regulated public agitation against adulteration, and preventive legislation should be passed if necessary. In addition to the economic, this adulteration has a medical aspect which is no less important than the economic. It is well known that vegetable *ghee* has a much lower protective value than *ghee*. From the health point of view, doctors say, vegetable *ghee* can never be a substitute for real *ghee*. This is, therefore, a question for corporations, medical men and humanitarian leagues to tackle without delay. If corporations have not adequate powers, they should have them. Shri Pannalal says:

The remedy is not very difficult if the will to is there. It is quite feasible to make it compulsory by law to add some edible colour or flavour to each and every tin of vegetable *ghee*, whether imported or produced in India. This will readily distinguish the vegetable product from the genuine *ghee* and make detection easy. If it is possible to stamp each match box with a Government seal, surely it is not difficult to have every tin of vegetable *ghee* duly coloured or flavoured similarly.

Segaon, 8-1-1940

*Harijan*, 20-1-1940, p. 423

## 92. MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN

I

(From "Notes")

In the midst of the incessant rush I am going through in this land of palms (Travancore), where I am writing these notes, I cannot resist noting down a never fading sight I had to witness at Cochin. Cochin has imported from Japan numerous rickshas which its well-to-do citizens use for their convenience. These are drawn not by animals but by men. I carefully noted as many of these carriers as passed. Not one impressed me with his physique. They had neither the calves nor the chest nor the arms well-formed for the arduous task of carrying a burden in the hot sun and melting heat. The rickshas are built for carrying one passenger only. In my opinion it is bad enough for a healthy and full-limbed man to be carried by man, but I was ashamed of my species and pained beyond measure to see two and even three passengers huddled together in some rickshas. It was no doubt wrong for the carrier not to refuse to carry more than one burden. But what is one to say of the pair or the trio who in order to save a few coppers would not be ashamed to be carried by a member of their species who is hardly fit to carry even one of them. I hope there is a law in Cochin prohibiting the carrying of more than one passenger in these rickshas. And if there is one, I hope the kindly citizens will see to it that it is strictly obeyed. But if there is no such law, I hope that one would be passed making the carriage of more than one passenger an impossibility. If I had the power I would abolish the ricksha. But that I know must remain a pious hope. But is it too much to hope that men who ply these rickshas will be subjected to a strict medical examination as to their fitness for the heavy work?

*Young India*, 19-3-1925, p. 93

II

In another column\* will be seen an extract from *Navajivan* of a most disgraceful case of calculated inhumanity of a medical man towards the dying wife of a member of the suppressed class in a Kathiawad village. Sjt. Amritlal Thakkar who is responsible for giving the details of the case has withheld the names of the place and parties for fear of the poor suppressed class school-master being further molested by the medical man. I wish, however, that the names will be disclosed. Time must come when the suppressed class people will have to be encouraged by us to dare to suffer further hardships and tyranny. Their sufferings are already too great for any further sufferings to be really felt. Public opinion cannot be roused over grievances that cannot be verified and traced to their sources. I do not know the rules of the Medical Council in Bombay. I know that in other places a medical practitioner, who refused to attend before his fees were paid, would be answerable to the Council and would be liable to have his name removed from the Council's list and be otherwise subject to disciplinary action. Fees are no doubt exactable; but proper attendance upon patients is the first duty of a medical practitioner.

The real inhumanity, however, if the facts stated are true, consists in the practitioner refusing to enter the untouchables' quarters, refusing himself to see the patient, and refusing himself to apply the thermometer. And if the doctrine of untouchability can ever be applied in any circumstances, it is certainly applicable to this member of the profession which he has disgraced. But I am hoping that there is some exaggeration in the statement made by Sjt. Thakkar's correspondent and, if there is none, that the medical practitioner will himself come forth and make ample amends to the society which he has so outraged by his inhuman conduct.

*Young India*, 5-5-1927, p. 144

\*Reproduced herein below.



**READ, REFLECT AND WEEP**

There is a school for the children of the suppressed classes in a village in Kathiawad. The teacher is a cultured, patriotic man belonging to the *Dhedh or Weaver* (untouchable) class. He owes his education to the compulsory education policy of His Highness the Gayak-wad and has been doing his little bit for the amelioration of his community. He is a man of cleanly habits and refined manners, so that no one can recognize him as belonging to the untouchable class. But because he has had the fortune or misfortune of teaching the children of his own community in a conservative village in Kathiawad, every one regards him as untouchable. But unmindful of that he has been silently working away. There are some moments, however, when the most patient man living under intolerable conditions may give vent to his agony and indignation, which are evident in the following letters from the school-master. Every little sentence in it is surcharged with pathos. I have purposely omitted the names of the village and all the people mentioned in the letter, lest the school-master should come into further trouble.

I

Dated 9-4-1927

*Namaskar.* My wife was delivered of a child on the 5th instant. On the 7th she was taken ill, had motions, lost her speech, had hard breathing and swelling in the chest, and her ribs were aching painfully. I went to call in Dr.—, but he said: "I will not come to the untouchables' quarters. I will not examine her either." Then I approached the Nagarsheth and the Garasia Darbar—, and requested them to use their good offices for me. They came and on the Nagarsheth standing surety for me for the payment of Rs. 2 as the doctor's fee, and on condition that the patient would be brought outside the untouchables' quarters, he consented to come. He came, we took out the woman who had a baby only two days ago. Then the doctor gave his thermometer to a Musalman who gave it to me. I applied the

thermometer and then returned it to the Musalman who gave it to the doctor. It was about eight o' clock and having inspected the thermometer in the light of a lamp, he said: "She has pneumonia and suffocation." After this the doctor left and sent medicine. I got linseed from the market and we are applying linseed poultices and giving her the medicine. The doctor would not condescend to examine her, simply looked at her from a distance. Of course I gave Rs. 2 for his fee. It is a serious illness. Everything is in His hands.

II

The light in my life has gone out. She passed away at 2 o'clock this afternoon.

Comment is needless. What shall one say about the inhumanity of the doctor who being an educated man refused to apply the thermometer except through the medium of a Musalman to purify it, and who treated an ailing woman lying in for two days worse than a dog or a cat? What shall one say of the society that tolerates this inhumanity? One can but reflect and weep.

*(Navajivan)*

A. V. Thakkar

## SECTION THREE: RELIEF WORK

### 1. FAMINE RELIEF

#### 93. DISTRESS IN ORISSA

I

Orissa in spite of its enjoying the honour of having one of the greatest places of pilgrimage, viz. Jagannath Puri, appears to be a God forsaken country. For, even whilst India is pulsating with a consciousness of national life, we know little of Orissa. For most of us, it is a mere geographical expression. Not being a centre of modern education it has not produced the modern type of workers and, therefore, nobody knows whether the people of Orissa are happy or unhappy. For months past an Orissa friend has been trying to interest me in its problems. He has for the last few weeks been telling me that there is practically a famine in the land. In a little village containing 59 families numbering all told 411 men and women, recently, 11 infants, he says died for want of nutrition. Altogether 58 deaths have taken place owing to starvation, 61 have abandoned the village and those who are left are mere skin and bone. They have neither food nor clothing. Women being insufficiently clad will not leave their homes and some are living on grass and leaves! I was not prepared to believe this terrible story. I felt that before making a public appeal there should be some authentic information to be placed before the people. I, therefore, approached the Servants of India Society for lending Mr. Amrat- lal Thakkar's services. His fitness for the work cannot be questioned, for he has qualified himself for it for years by such kind of investigations. My request was readily granted and the following is the substance of what he has to say after a week's stay in the Puri District of Orissa:

I have been travelling in the villages for the last 3 days. There are certainly famine conditions in Orissa. Whilst I was in Jamshedpur, I believed that Orissa was one of the granaries of India because Belassore provided a vast quantity of rice.

But alas! To day I find that the people of the affected district have to get their rice from Calcutta, Sambalpur etc. The country had a double visitation—famine and flood. It is said that during the last six months over 1,500 people must have died of starvation. I have already visited nearly 19 villages. Of these 6 are said to have lost forty inhabitants simply from starvation. People are still dying. An old man died in my very presence. He was among those who had come for relief. A co-worker has just returned from a village telling me that he saw an old man who was dying of starvation. One stumbles upon children recently bereft of parents. You see wherever you go, many reduced to mere skeletons. I have sent you the following telegram:

I have visited 19 villages. I am still travelling. Scores have died of starvation. Recently the Government have begun to distribute relief but it is insufficient. Please send five thousand rupees at once. Altogether from 30 to 50 thousand rupees will be required.

According to the Famine Code, 50 tolas of grain have to be given to those who are unfit for work but only 26 tolas are being given per head. The relief was commenced on the 10th April. Nearly 4,000 men have already received it. The quantity will, I hear, be shortly increased to 40 tolas.

The Oriya people are very poor. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor sometime ago visited the affected parts but not more than 5,000 people have been able to obtain partial relief. No famine works have yet been opened.

Mr. Thakkar's letter speaks for itself. I hope that the cry of distress coming from Orissa will not be heard, in vain and those who can will not fail to contribute their quota.

*Young India*, 12-5-1920, p. 1

## II

The following is the second report submitted by Mr. Thakkar to the people's Famine Relief Committee, Puri:-

Babu Laxminarayan Sahu and myself went out early on the 13th instant in villages along the coast on South side, up to Satpada, 25 miles .from Puri, to see Famine conditions that side and returned late evening. Our report is as follows:

2. On the 13th, we stopped for an hour at Rebana Navagaon, 8 miles from here and enquired there. There were no deaths reported due to starvation, but we saw five families that required immediate assistance. We gave chits for rice (to last for 15 days) to three families to be received from Secretary at Puri and we bought rice from the village for one old man, who was too infirm to walk to Puri. We came across one wandering orphan, and with a very bad sore on the scalp and sent him to Rai Bahadur Sakhichand Orphanage at Puri and he is admitted there. We found a very large number of houses come to grief completely and the number of children in L. P. School gone down from 40 to 16. We then visited Naharpada and Brahmagiri on the same day. At Naharpada there was the weekly *hat* (market) and we distributed Chuda and Mudhi to famished persons wandering about the bazar. In Brahmagiri we found 9 families that required immediate relief and we brought and gave them rice about 4 seers to each family. We also found that there have been two recent starvation deaths, one on April 8 and the other on April 27, both deaths in the same family, in addition to a third which was reported to have taken place 7 months ago. We also found that in the beat of Chowkidar Natha Padhan, the rate of mortality for the last twelve months was as high as 100 per thousand, which is nearly three times the normal. The people represented that the rice *gola* here was badly needed now and in the rainy season it would be a great boon. The sub-inspector of Police has got the advance of Rs. 50 to meet emergent cases, but he has not spent a pie out of it, though he could have used some money to great advantage.
3. On the 14th at about 8 a.m. we reached Satpada, 25 miles from Puri, having travelled during the night. We made our enquiries there in the afternoon, after seeing the ferry across the creek which takes people to Parikud Raja's villages.

We met 40 people of the village, who fully ventilated their grievances to us. We selected ten families for immediate relief, whom we gave one seer broken Rangoon rice (only that variety being obtainable in that village) and promised to send from Puri Re. 1 each, as our small amount of cash was exhausted. We were told that a number of deaths had taken place, due to starvation and 14 names were given out of a population of 300 houses or 1500 souls and some of these were verified from Chowkidar's books, wherein, of course, they were not entered as due to starvation.

4. Satpada and neighbouring villages consist mainly of (fishermen) and have good fishing trade, but they all suffer from want of rice. Their rice supply is cut off from Parikud, Banpur, Delang, Tangi etc. There was not a grain of country rice to be had for love or for money, Rangoon broken rice too, one year old and full of worms being had at the high rate of 4 Cuttack seers per rupee. They ought to have either a *gola* at that place, or the shopkeepers of the village must be given all facilities for getting rice from Banpur, which is their convenient market. The Collector may be specially requested to look into this matter as the majority of the people have money to buy rice with, but no rice is obtainable at present.
5. The fact that we met with, in our hasty tour, 5, 9 and 10 families in Navagam, Brahmagiri and Satpada respectively, which were in need of immediate relief (and we selected only such families as had members quite emaciated and showed bones and ribs prominently or showed other signs of starvation) goes to prove the necessity of Government gratuitous relief on a liberal scale in many villages on this side. Up to now no relief has been started by Government here and the Collector may be requested to start a few relief centres at convenient places or arrange to relieve distressed and starving people in their own villages, as per clause of the Famine Relief Code, by payment of cash money.
6. There is no work of any kind going on in this part of the district. Work is needed, and a couple of small works in Brahmagiri Thana will provide work for

those who want it. Repairs of bunds round the strip of country between the Chilka and the sea, i.e. from Gopinathpur to Satpada, may be very useful. People round about Satpada have got fishing and collection of Polang fruit to do, but repair of embankment will be doubly useful.

7. We returned last evening travelling 50 miles in three days.

We also enquired thoroughly in a fourth village Garwal only 8 miles from Puri, and even there several starvation deaths were reported. We have got a list of 13 names. Immediate relief was given to 12 families there.

If proof were still needed, the foregoing from Mr. Thakkar shows the necessity there was for him to go to the scene of distress and render timely help. The response to the call for subscriptions has been generous and spontaneous as the list published by the Gujarat Sabha would show. Further instalment of Rs. 5,000/- has been forwarded to Puri thus bringing the total to Rs. 10,000/-. Through the Hon'ble Purushottam Thakurdas, a loan of Rs. 10,000 has been granted without interest to rice depots. For, in times of distress even the well-to-do suffer owing to the forcing up of prices by greedy dealers. No subscription however has been perhaps so striking as the one received from the Esplanade High School Poor Box. Such kind of charity seems to be the special prerogative of Parsees. This poor box is a unique institution organized by its Parsee Managers. It is a box to which the teachers, other employees and the school boys contribute whatever and whenever they can. No single subscription however can be less than two annas. The boys are in no way pressed, but they are in every way encouraged to make contributions out of the pocket and other monies they may receive. Elaborate rules have been formed for the proper management of this trust and its distribution. It is an example worthy of imitation by every well-managed school.

*Young India*, 2-6-1920, p. 8

### III

(Originally appeared under the title "The Distress in Puri")

I invite the attention of the readers to the latest report of the Puri distress.\*

The response made hitherto has been generous but not enough to cope with the distress in full. Volunteers are becoming scarce owing to the prolongation of the distress. They have to be replaced by paid workers. The committee has been obliged for want of funds to cut down the number relieved and the Government of Bihar and Orissa will not relieve "economic" distress. The committee needs at least Rs. 50,000. I take that the generous readers who see the appeal will not be slow to respond. An eye-witness who chanced to go to Puri from Calcutta told me that he saw a hungry man die in his presence. He had walked to the place where relief was being given. He was too exhausted to live to get relief. Only the other day an Oriya was found in the act of committing suicide because he was unable to bear the pangs of hunger. He was charged with the crime of attempting to commit suicide. The presiding Magistrate practically discharged him and gave him Rs. 20/- from the poor-box.

What do these incidents teach us? Distress is chronic in the land. We hear something of Puri because there it has become acute. But in India, it must be held to be a crime to spend money on dinner and marriage parties, *tamashas* and other luxuries so long as millions of people are starving. We would not have a feast in a family if a member was about to die of starvation. If India is one family, we should have the same feeling as we would have in a private family. But whether we connect ourselves generally with every Indian as a member with our own family or whether we do not, let me hope that every one will help to relieve the acute distress that is now going on in Puri.

Nor, let me hope, will the death of Mr. Krishnachandra Naik from snake bite discourage volunteers from offering their assistance. Mr. Naik has died well in dying in harness. Any day such a death is better than a death from disease. In



India it is an article of faith even with the most ignorant person that the soul survives the body and weaves for itself a better one or worse according to its *karma*; death ought not to matter so much as it seems to do. Mr. Naik will return to the earth with a body better equipped for the work before him. And with that faith in us we must refuse to mourn over his death and rejoice that he had the good fortune of meeting his death while engaged in relieving distress among fellow beings.

*Young India*, 22-9-1920, p. 4

\*Omitted from this collection.

#### 94. FAMINE RELIEF

(From "Notes")

The visit to the Ceded Districts brought abundant proof of the spinning wheel being the greatest insurance against famine, and being also the best measure of relief. There is a severe famine raging in some parts of these districts. One of the workers told me, that a woman not being able to support herself and her children had drowned herself and her children. It is not possible to give doles of charity to hundreds of thousands of men. And men who live on charity lose all sense of self-respect. It is not as if there is no corn to be had in the affected area. People have no work and no money. The Government's relief works consist in breaking and carrying stones. A friend remarked, that the Government had roads torn down and repaired in order to find work for the men and women in distress. Whether roads are torn down or not, road repair is the only relief work the Government provides. I understood, the actual wage that found its way into a woman's hands was an anna or five pice, and not more than ten pice into a man's hands. I saw on the other hand, that a Congress Committee was paying three annas per day to Panchama women working at the spinning wheel for eight hours a day. And what is being done for the Panchama women can be done for thousands of famine-stricken

women and for that matter men. In these districts 3 annas a day, even for men, is a veritable boon. But the spinning wheel has possibilities which no other occupation has. For it involves the preliminary processes of ginning and carding and the subsequent process of weaving. In the Ceded Districts it is possible without much difficulty to teach weaving. And if the whole of cloth manufacture can be organized, thousands of men can find permanent occupation in their own homes. Every worker freely acknowledged, that both the workers and the afflicted people had begun to realize the possibilities of the spinning wheel, and already the people were filled with hope and the workers had commenced organizing spinning and weaving everywhere. I met people who told me they used to laugh at my statement that the spinning wheel was the best famine insurance, but practical experience convinced them of the truth of it.

I know, this is but the commencement of the transformation. But when it is complete, not a man nor woman having sound hands need beg or starve. To day, we have the humiliating and debasing spectacle in a famine year of thousands, though well able to work, living on charity and semi-starvation for want of useful work.

*Young India*, 6-10-1921, p. 314

## 95. TWO SCENES

During my visit to Puri in 1921 I saw many things that I shall not easily forget. But among them all there were two that I shall never forget. One of them haunts me day and night.

In those days Puri had a philanthropic Superintendent of Police. He managed an orphanage. He showed it to me. It had many happy, well-looking, bright children who were engaged in all kinds of industries – mat-weaving, basket-making, spinning, weaving, etc. The Superintendent told me they were all children of famine-stricken parents, some of whom were picked up as mere skin and bone.

He then took me to an open space in the very shadow of the hoary temple where were arranged in rows the famine-stricken people who were living within twelve miles of Puri. Some of these had no doubt owed their lives to the charity of the Gujaratis and the loving service of Amritlal Thakkar who doled out to them the rice he bought with the monies supplied by the Gujaratis. The life was ebbing away in them. They were living pictures of despair. You could count every rib. You could see every artery. There was no muscle, no flesh. Parched, crumpled skin and bone was all you could see. There was no lustre in their eyes. They seemed to want to die. They had no interest in anything save the handful of rice they got. They would not work for money. For love, perhaps! It almost seems as if they would condescend to eat and live if you would give them the handful of rice. It is the greatest tragedy I know of— these men and women, our brothers and sisters, dying a slow torturing death. Theirs is an eternal compulsory fast. And as they break it occasionally with rice they seem to mock us for the life we live.

"Why could they not be kept like the orphans?" I asked the Superintendent. "They will not work and will not stay there", was the reply. The Superintendent might also have added that he could not accommodate thousands of starving men and women, even if they were ready to work, in an asylum.

There is on the face of the earth no other country that has the problem that India has of chronic starvation and slow death – a process of dehumanization. The solution must therefore be original. In trying to find it we must discover the causes of the tremendous tragedy. These people are starving because there is chronic famine in Orissa due to floods or want of rains. They have no other occupation to fall back upon. They are therefore constantly idle. This idleness has persisted for so long that it has become a habit with them. Starvation and idleness are the normal condition of life for thousands of people in Orissa. But what is true of Orissa is to a less extent true of many other parts of India.

We may find remedies to prevent floods. That will take years. We may induce people to adopt better methods of cultivation. That must take still more years. And when we have stopped inundations and have introduced among millions up-to-date cultivation, there will still be plenty of time left with the peasants if they will only work. But these improvements will take generations. How are the starving millions to keep the wolf from the door meanwhile? The answer is through the spinning wheel. But how are the people who will not work at all be made to take up even the spinning wheel? The answer is by us the workers, the educated and the well-to-do people taking up spinning. An ocular and sincere demonstration by thousands who need not spin for themselves cannot fail to move these starving men and women to do likewise. Moreover it will be only when we take up spinning that we shall be able to get the requisite number of skilled spinners who can give the necessary preliminary tuition, choose the right kind of wheel, do the repairs etc. Lastly voluntary spinning by thousands cannot but cheapen khaddar and enable us to produce finer counts. If therefore we will identify ourselves with our famishing countrymen, we will not only not cavil at the spinning franchise but would welcome it as the surest way to the solution of the problem of the ever-deepening and distressful poverty of the masses.

*Young India*, 31-10-1924, p. 357

## 96. TERRIBLE DISTRESS IN ORISSA

I have a telegram from Mr. Andrews advising me that there is terrible distress among the cattle of Orissa and men also. He has asked me to find ten thousand rupees for keeping the cattle alive and he has written a letter in which he tells me that khaddar is required for women who are almost in a naked state. I am trying to find a reliable agent who would take charge of the work. I do not propose at the present moment to appeal for funds to the public as there is still a large amount remaining unspent out of the Malabar Relief Fund that the readers of *Young India* and *Navajivan* contributed. As I am writing this note in Cutch I do not know the exact amount available. But I have no right to disburse anything from the Malabar Relief Fund for relief in Orissa without the consent of the donors. I, therefore, appeal to the donors of the Malabar Relief Fund to send me, if they approve of my suggestion, their consent to utilize the balance of their contributions for relief of distress in Orissa. Those who may send their consent are requested to mention the original amount paid so as to enable me to identify the amount.

*Young India*, 5-11-1925, p. 377

## 97. NEED FOR IMMEDIATE RELIEF

Chakravarti Rajagopalachariar is a busy man. He is now touring all through the South with Sheth Jamnalalji in the interest of Hindi propaganda. That accounts for his sending me the following telegram instead of sending a letter which might easily have been sent but for his touring. Here is the telegram.\*

This telegram hardly needs any supplementing. A Latin proverb says: *bis dat qui cito dat*. He gives twice who gives soon. This is a case in point. Donors have been sending money in dribbles for which he and I are duly thankful. But meanwhile the famine-stricken people are starving. Instead of reporting that they are starving Rajagopalachariar might have any day to report that people are dying for want of food. Relief then might be too late. Let the donors, who want to give, give now. Rs. 5,000 is not much to give. The telegram contains enough details to prove the necessity for relief.

*Young India*, 28-2-1929, p. 70

\* Omitted from this collection.

## 98. KHADI AS FAMINE RELIEF

The Editor, *Harijan* Dear Sir,

The Taluqas of Dharapuram and Palladam in the District of Coimbatore have been very seriously affected by the failure of monsoon. There has been practically no crop and the people are suffering from acute distress. The provincial branch of the All-India Spinners' Association has been straining every nerve to offer such relief as it can to the famine-affected population through the spinning wheel. Large numbers of women in the area have been drawn to this work and the number of spinners on the roll of the Branch has gone up from 34,000 to 54,000 with the result that the production of yam and therefore of khadi has also increased considerably. In the year 1937 the total production for the Tamilnad stood at Rs. 6,45,594 but in 1938 this has gone up to Rs. 16,07,394. This has been a great strain on the limited resources of the Branch as this increased production has been much in excess of the normal demand. The work, however, of offering relief to the spinners has to be continued for some months more and this could be done only if the charitably inclined public would come to the help of the Branch and take up the stocks of khadi as these are produced. May I request you to kindly put in an appeal in the columns of *Harijan* for a generous response so that this much needed relief can be extended to as large a number as possible?

Yours sincerely,

S. G. Banker

This letter shows conclusively what a relief khadi is to famine areas. Those, therefore, who buy relief khadi help the famine-stricken and themselves. In addition they give not doles but wages and these at khadi market rates for spinning which are higher than for any other relief work. I hope, therefore, that this appeal will receive a generous response from the public.

Bombay, 26-2-1939

M. K. G.

*Harijan*, 4-3-1939, p. 40

## II

(From "Notes")

There has been a full discussion among the khadi workers at the meeting of the A.I.S.A. held at Wardha on the 12th inst. and thereafter. It has been claimed for khadi that it has at least three definite functions. It provides a supplementary occupation to the semi-starved and semi-employed millions of India on a scale unequalled by any other occupation. It provides with the least possible loss, work in famine areas; and it is the best medium of instruction for the boys and girls of India in the primary stage.

But there is one definite condition for the success of khadi as famine insurance or medium of instruction in the primary stage. What is to be done with the khadi produced in famine areas and in the schools? If khadi cannot be sold, it is as useless as the stones broken in many parts of India during famine time. I have suggested often enough in these columns that all the khadi produced under the last two heads must be taken up by the State. This can be most easily done through the A.I.S.A. if the State guarantees the losses as it guarantees today railway dividends and many other things. Considering price, khadi is undoubtedly dearer than mill cloth. Therefore it commands a market only among patriots and philanthropists. But those who have no spare cash will not be easily actuated by philanthropy or patriotism. They will go to the cheapest market. It is, therefore, the business of the State to shut out or tax heavily enough such goods as compete with those which, for a general good, should command a market. I think it can be taken as proved that khadi comes under such goods. The administration of eight provinces is virtually in Congress hands to an extent enough to protect khadi and the like. There is no reason why the other provinces should not follow the Congress provinces in matters like protection of khadi on which there is no difference of opinion.... But whether the other provinces fall in line or not, it is necessary for the Congress provinces to confer with the A.I.S.A. and A.I.V.I.A. and



evolve a line of action whereby the difficulty I have pointed out can be solved without delay.

Segaon, Wardha, 14-8-1939

*Harijan*, 19-8-1939, p. 241 at p. 242

## 99. WAYS OF FAMINE RELIEF

(From "Notes")

Though the most terrible distress that was feared has been averted by the falling of rains, however belated, some distress is bound to continue for a few months, and it will be unwise for relief agencies to go to sleep. What is more, time is now more propitious for devising measures for making permanent provisions for preventing distress caused by scarcity of water. I have already made some cardinal suggestions in this direction. The Secretary of the Saura- shtra Seva Samiti sends me a businesslike report of the elaborate steps taken by that body for enlisting helpers and providing relief. I need not detain the reader over them. He also suggests preventive methods. As these are still seasonable I give below the substance, the original being in Gujarati:

1. The States should refrain from auctioning their stock of grass but they should store it as a precaution against dry years. The store should be replaced when fresh store becomes available. There is nowadays danger of the stacks being destroyed by incendiaries. The State should have no difficulty in protecting them. They may even allow private collectors to deposit their stores in such private areas.
2. The existing banks should be renovated and flood water should be banked.
3. In the places where cattle are moved during famine times, measures should be taken to ensure proper water supply for the cattle.
4. There should be control over the cultivation of money crops to the detriment of food crops. Thus people nowadays sow groundnuts in the place of most valuable fodder and food crops, i.e. Jawari and Bajri.
5. Existing forests should be preserved, indiscriminate cutting of trees should be made punishable, and people should be encouraged to plant trees according to plan.

6. The management of *pinjrapoles* should be put on a sound basis and they should become efficient famine insurance agencies for cattle. They should become castration depots.

7. The State should encourage khadi as a famine insurance measure.

All these suggestions seem to be sound and deserve the collective consideration of the States and the people of Kathiawad. In this humanitarian project all can and should combine in spite of political differences and struggles.

*Harijan*, 9-9-1939, p. 261 at p. 262

## 100. HISSAR FAMINE AND SPINNING

(From 'Notes')

Dr. Gopichand has been discussing with me famine in Hissar. It seems to have become almost chronic. The A.I.S.A. has been working for many years in that district and giving relief to the poor people through spinning. Dr. Gopichand thinks that, if more capital can be made available, much aid can be given. It is perhaps not possible to make a successful appeal outside Hissar. There is so much distress everywhere, and with the terrible spectre of war much more is to be expected. Therefore everywhere local charity has to be depended upon. As often happens even in poor areas there are to be found monied men. Bhiwani is a big trade centre in Hissar, and it has several monied men. Let me hope that they and those others in Hissar who can will come to the rescue and do what they can for the much needed relief.

Sevagram, 12-4-1942

*Harijan*, 19-4-1942, p. 117 at p. 118

## 2. FLOOD RELIEF

### 101. AFFLICTED SOUTH

The monsoons are playing an exasperating trick. The South is submerged and the North is pining for the rains. There is a heart-rending wire from South Kanara which says: "Devastating floods again. Forty feet above normal. River level only four feet below last year's." Then follows a detailed account of families rendered homeless; people fleeing terror struck in all directions. The volunteers were hoping that the relief work done by them after last year's floods would put the starving families on their feet again. Now the hope is perhaps blasted. It will be remembered that the volunteers were organizing families by giving them spinning and carding work. Nature however has more misery in store for the poor homeless families. No wonder Mr. Sadashiv Rao appeals for help. Let us hope the effect of the floods is not so serious as the account before me suggests. Detailed and accurate information is eagerly awaited.

*Young India*, 24-7-1924, p. 244

## 102. UNHAPPY MALABAR

(From "Notes")

Last week I referred to the floods in South Kanara. This week the public has the painful news that Malabar is practically under water. I have also a wire from Mr. Nambudripad giving details of the havoc played by the floods and asking me for help. The matter however seems to me to be beyond the capacity of private agency. The Congress neither possesses funds nor influence nor an organization that can cope with a calamity of the magnitude such as Malabar has to face. It is best in all humility to admit our limitations. I would even not hesitate to help the distressed people, if necessary through any committee that the authorities may appoint, provided of course that they would accept our help. If we find that our service is unwelcome or the organization of official help is make-believe, I should refrain from joining the committee and should render such personal and individual help as I may be capable of rendering. God will not punish me for want of capacity. But He will for want of will. I would therefore advise local workers to do whatever lies in their power and neglect no opportunity of alleviating distress. After all money plays the least part in such times. It is the personal touch, the readiness to suffer for the sake of the sufferers, readiness to share the least morsel with the neighbour in distress that counts for much more than millions. The sacrifice of the Brahman who shared his scanty meal with the man in distress was infinitely more meritorious than the rich sacrifice of king Yudhisthira who showered gold mohurs as donations.

*Young India*, 31-7-1924, p. 253

### 103. THE MALABAR FLOODS

(From "Notes")

The floods in the Southern Presidency are so vast in their magnitude that imagination refuses to picture them. They demonstrate man's helplessness. Fruits of years of patient toil have swept away in a moment. Help seems almost a mockery. Whilst therefore I have given my opinion that effective relief is beyond the capacity of the Congress, I have not desired it to mean that Congressmen should do nothing. Personal service is always of course there. But even monetary assistance must be given where- ever it is possible for individuals to render. If therefore readers of *Young India* would care to send me subscriptions for relief, I would gladly receive them and utilize them in the best manner I should know. I am certain that the damage is too vast for sporadic or isolated effort. Some agency that would command universal confidence should handle the work of relief. I repeat that Congressmen should not hesitate to help Government agency in the face of this awful calamity. Adversity makes strange bedfellows.

*Young India*, 7-8-1924, p. 262 at p. 264

#### 104. HOW TO HELP MALABAR?

(Some paragraphs from the "Notes" about the floods in Malabar are reproduced herein below.)

##### REPORTERS BEWARE

The A.P. Reporter in Ahmedabad lost me (temporarily I hope) all the reputation for humanity that I had built up through painful toil. For he reported me as saying that the only message I could send to afflicted Malabar was that those who were rendered naked and hungry and homeless should spin. If Mr. Painter may receive Rs. 15,000/- for damage to his reputation, I think I should receive at least Rs. 1,50,000/- for damage done to mine. And If I could receive that sum, I should retrieve somewhat my lost reputation and make over the sum without deduction to the Malabar sufferers. But unlike Mr. Painter I acquit both the reporter and the agency from all blame. The local reporter tells me he was not present at the meeting. The people who attended the meeting heard little but the listeners thought I had said something about spinning. What could be more natural for me than that I should ask the Malabar sufferers to spin for food, clothing and lodging? Was not the great Acharya Ray doing the same thing? The poor reporter forgot that Dr. Ray was doing it after the people had settled down. However the awful slip is a lesson for the reporters and the public. The reporters hold the reputation of public men in the hollow of their hands. It is not a light thing to misreport public men's speeches and acts. The public have to be equally careful about believing every report as gospel truth. So far as I am concerned, I must continue to warn the public and all concerned against believing what may be reported of me unless it is certified by me as correct. I am in no hurry to have every word of mine reported. The reporters would therefore do me a favour, if they would not report me at all when they cannot get their notes confirmed by me.

I am obliged to say all this because I have many painful memories of misreporting. In 1896 I published in India a pamphlet covering 30 pages or more on British



Indians in South Africa. A five-line summary was cabled by Reuter to Natal. It was wholly contrary to the gist of my pamphlet. This very incorrect report inflamed the Natal colonists. I was nearly lynched to death by an infuriated crowd on my return to Natal. Lawyer friends pressed me to bring a suit for damages. But I was a non-resister even then. I refused to sue. I lost nothing by not suing. When the colonists perceived that I was not a 'bad-sort', and that they had cruelly misjudged me, they regretted the error. I therefore in the end lost nothing by self-restraint. But I have no desire to court another such experience even though it may bring me added glory. I want to put in more work, if God so wills it. I must therefore ask the reporters to spare me yet a while.

#### HELP TO MALABAR

I have not written the foregoing lines merely to put reporters and the public on their guard. Under the best of circumstances such mistakes will occur. I am satisfied that there was no wilful neglect either in Ahmedabad or at the headquarters. But I wish to utilize the occasion for getting more money for the sufferers. I invite all those who were indignant over my supposed callousness to send me as much as they can towards helping the sufferers. I have invited the readers of *Navajivan*, not merely to give me out of their savings, but even out of their necessities, to share their clothes and food with the sufferers. The response has been quick and generous. The students of the Mahavidyalaya have after the style of Shradhanandji's pupils of the Gurukul during the South African Campaign, been doing manual work at labourer's wages on the very premises that are being built for them. The possibilities of such effort are immense.

Boys and girls even under 12 have given up milk for a number of days, the savings to be devoted to the relief fund. This means in some cases 3 annas per day. Adults are denying themselves one meal per day.

Boys and girls are giving up their clothes retaining for themselves the veriest minimum. A girl has given up her silver anklets. A boy has given up his valued gold

earrings. A sister has sent in her four heavy gold bangles, another her heavy gold necklace. These are not exhaustive but typical instances. A little girl brought out all the coppers she had stolen. The National College students and others have given me heaps of yarn they have already spun. Others propose to spin for a certain period daily on behalf of the sufferers.

These to me are more precious than the donations in the next column, generous as they are in several cases.

May these offerings, but especially the little offerings and self-denials of the little ones, give comfort to the homeless, hungry and naked men, women and children of the afflicted areas. I invite the readers of *Young India* who have not paid elsewhere to the fund to send their quota. Telegrams before me tell me that clothing will be just as welcome as money. The poorest must identify themselves with their country men in Malabar by some act of self-denial.

#### CLOTHING

With reference to clothing being received in abundance I wish to inform readers that no distinction is being made as to hand-spun or other clothing. Those who have still got mill or foreign clothes may send these. Inquiry has been made in Bombay as to where clothing should be delivered. I suggest arrangements being made with the Provincial Congress Committee. Pending such arrangements delivery may be at the Navajivan depot in the Princess Street, Bombay. Donors will however please note the following instructions:

1. Dirty clothes should be washed and folded.
2. Torn clothes should be mended and folded.
3. All clothing should be well packed and tied in parcels with list of clothing and name of donor attached.

These will not be acknowledged separately in these columns. But donors will do well not to deliver anything without a receipt being obtained at the office of

delivery. I would warn donors from paying or giving any article to anyone without taking a full receipt and knowing the collectors.

Whilst it flatters my pride to receive monies and jewellery and clothing at the *Navajivan* and *Young India* offices, I would ask the readers not to worry where they make their donations. They may pay wherever they like. It is enough so long as they pay. In a calamity of such magnitude as that through which the South is passing, there should be no distinction between co-operators and non-co-operators. As for the funds being sent to me, I am conferring with Mr. Vallabhbai as to the best method of distribution. I am in correspondence with Mr. Rajagopalachari regarding the disposal, but if those who have been sending me wires will kindly send their suggestions, I shall be grateful for them.

*Young India*, 14-8-1924, pp. 271-73

### 105 SOUTH INDIA FLOOD RELIEF

The response to the appeal on behalf of the afflicted people of the South continues, to be satisfactory both in cash and in cloth which is daily accumulating. But the most satisfactory feature of the response is the way in which the poor people are coming forward to help. Untouchables have come forward with their liberal help. I have before me a touching letter in which a whole family of them has sent the monies saved out of their special self-denial. The teachers and the boys of the Proprietary High School have sent Rs. 720/-. The Mahavidyalaya has collected Rs. 500 of which Rs. 200 they have spent in buying khaddar for the naked. I am sure that the knowledge of such donations will bring true comfort to our distressed countrymen. I hope the workers will remember that nature has made no distinction between Mussalman and Hindu, Christian and Jew and that they too will make no such distinction. We may not mind all the denominations giving through their respective organizations, but it will be unbearable if they confine relief only to their own flock.

*Young India*, 28-8-1924, p. 286

## 106 SOUTH INDIA RELIEF

Hardly had Mr. George Joseph been out of jail when he made time to send a friend the following description of the distress in Travancore:

The dominating fact is the floods. This very house in which I am living and the garden (coconut plantation), damp <sup>1</sup> still and bearing marks of the level to which the water rose and rushed into living and bed rooms, kitchen and cellar, bear evidence of what the devastation meant. The garden has been partially swept away and immense damage done. But I am assured, and I believe it to be true, that I have got off very cheaply. I intend to leave tomorrow and inspect the places affected.

The position generally is this. The acute starvation and absolute paralysis, which overtook men and women in the first shock of the flood, and drove them foodless, provisionless, rain-soaked to roofs and high trees, is past. Immediate relief was necessary to prevent shivering, foodless folk from dying and on the whole the relief was forthcoming. That stage is past, and people have gone back to their sodden lands and broken houses and they are bravely resuming the thread of their career. The little reserves of money and valuables they have saved all their lives through are barely able to keep them alive; but it is capital that is being eaten up, and the days of tribulation will soon be upon them. As for income, it is altogether hopeless. The year's crops have been washed away (grain, vegetables, fruits, tubers, roots). That means six months of starvation. But it is not the worst. The seed for the next sowing, and (therefore) the reaping one year ahead is also destroyed. The practice is to dry the seed in April and May and keep it for sowing at the end of the South-West monsoon, and before the North-East. This seed is precious and is always kept in the granary by the farmers. That seed is no longer available. What we shall be in for, as soon as the consumption of liquid capital is over, is famine for a year. The consequences will be staggering.

There are three things that can be done.

1. The supply of seed and food in the interval. This is impossible, because the burden will be overwhelming. No private agency can even dream of doing it. The State may be able to do it; but the Congress cannot.
2. Restoration; i.e., helping people put up their fallen houses, spoiled fields etc. That too is impossible. The State can conceivably do it, by agricultural loans etc.; but my definite impression is that it is perhaps beyond the capacity of the State itself, because the damage is so immense.
3. Helping people to keep themselves going by some profession other than agricultural, for agriculture will give them nothing during the next twelve months. Here I think we can do something. My thought is about the spinning wheel. I would get the broken folks to spin and maintain on a minimum standard of existence, which is better than no existence at all. Famine in this case (and perhaps in all others) means unemployment; what we can do is to get the unemployed profitable work.

The organization will mean a stupendous amount of labour, but, stupendous or simple, the work of one man at his best cannot exceed his best, and I feel it can be managed. Every situation has got its own difficulty; and ours is that we have no cotton here. This is not a cotton-producing area so far (whether we shall be able to grow our own cotton is the subject of private experiments, but that is no consolation and absolutely useless for present purposes). The essential condition of spinning is cotton. We have to import it and so organize the spinning, weaving and the disposal of the woven stuff, that the processes will be self-contained and automatic. I do not know what Gandhiji intends doing about the relief here; that is why I have ventured to be so profusely explanatory. By the way, the counsel which the Associated Press made him give, i.e., "Spin" to the flood-stricken was really sound; only for the moment, it sounded heartless.

What another friend wrote immediately after the floods was also quite true. He said that what damage the rebellion could not do in months was done by seemingly heartless Nature in a day. The real relief will commence after the preliminary work of immediate relief is finished. The readers of *Young India* and *Navajivan* are making a most liberal response to my appeal. They may be sure that it is none too liberal for the task before the workers. I invite cotton merchants to send cotton when they cannot send cash. Thousands who cannot possibly cultivate their land for another year have nothing but the spinning wheel to fall back upon. I am asking workers to send plans of finding employment for these distressed countrymen and countrywomen. The wheel is no fetish for me and I assure the donors that if I find another common form of work for the thousands, I will not hesitate to devote their donations to that purpose.

*Young India*, 18-9-1924, p. 305 at p. 306

## 107 FLOOD RELIEF

It was impossible for me to visit Bengal and omit the flood area and the relief given there by Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray's Committee. It was a place of pilgrimage for me first because of my association with the Acharya since 1901 and secondly because of the successful manner in which he demonstrated the efficacy of the charkha as an instrument of relief and an insurance against future distress. If the villagers were well instructed in the methods of dealing with floods and famine and were also accustomed to an occupation besides agriculture which is impossible in times of flood or famines much time, money and labour that are generally required on such occasions could be saved. When people are taught at such times to depend upon charity for their sustenance, they lose their self-respect and also the use of their limbs. Demoralization then sets in and at last such people are reduced to a state worse than that of mere lower animals. For the latter have at least pleasure in living. The former are dead to life. I, therefore, wanted to see as much as I could with my own eyes what the charkha-mad Chemist had done in the relief area.

I was taken to Bogra and thence to Talora where I met the distinguished countryman in his element. "This hut is more precious to me than the palatial science college. I got more peace and quiet of mind here than elsewhere. And the charkha is growing on me. It gives rest to a mind distracted by study of books!" Talora is a little village where the Relief Committee has one of its centres. The Committee has bought a piece of land about 20 *bighas* and erected bamboo huts with thatched roofs amid surroundings of great natural beauty. There is malaria in East Bengal which is nature's revenge for man's neglect of her laws. But East Bengal has vegetation which gives it a beauty that is hard to excel. Man has succeeded in making it malarial but not yet in robbing the land of its natural beauty.



Here in restful surroundings I learnt the whole story of the relief operations. The address presented to me would not adorn me with a single adjective. Its six typed foolscap sides are a recital of facts and figures which I propose to digest for the benefit of the reader.

The great flood overwhelmed parts of Rajshahi and Bogra districts in the September of 1922, devastating nearly 4,000 square miles of Northern Bengal. The loss was estimated at one crore rupees. The first difficulty felt was that of organizing the relief organization and coordinating the activities of relief parties that sprang up like mushrooms. Everyone who knows anything of relief works knows that the mere will to serve or money are of no avail if the requisite knowledge and ability are wanting. By judicious handling overlapping and ignorant management were checked. The affected area was divided into fifty centres. The head of this vast organization was no other than Sjt. Subhas Chandra Bose now His Majesty's guest in the Mandalay Fort. He was assisted by Dr. Indra Narayan Sen Gupta. This agency distributed foodstuff to the value of Rs. 25,606 and clothing worth Rs. 55,200 besides 80,000 pieces and 75,000 old jackets and shirts. It distributed also fodder of the value of Rs. 1,274 and 52 waggon-loads of straw received as gift. Ten thousand huts were constructed under its supervision. "Materials were brought to the doors of the villagers, labour charges were given to them in instalments after the previous ones were properly utilized and inspection reports submitted." Supervision was so strict that there were only three cases of defalcation of Rs. 1,500, Rs. 350 and Rs. 200/- respectively. These were soon detected and money was duly realized. The construction of huts cost 1,12,755/-. If at Kalikapur land was to be reclaimed embankment was a necessity. It was strictly speaking the District Board's work. But that body being unable to shoulder the burden the Committee built the embankment a mile long costing only Rs. 5,775 and reclaiming 6,000 *bighas* of land. Gradually as the things settled the Committee thought of engaging the villagers in some work if they gave them food and clothing. So they were given paddy to husk. A quantity was advanced to each

distressed family which had to return husked rice to the centre appointed. Each family was entitled to retain the fixed quantity for its maintenance. There were 14 such operating centres, 20,000 mouths were fed for four months from these centres. Out of 50,000 maunds of paddy, 27,400 maunds of rice were realized. There were no defaulters. This operation cost Rs. 43,000. Side by side with this relief medical assistance was freely given.

But this did not satisfy the Committee's ambition. It wanted to deserve the generous aid it had received from the public by doing permanent work. It wanted to make the people self-supporting and self-reliant in times of trouble. I must give the details of the introduction of spinning in the language of the address:

When the rains set in, it was found difficult to continue the husking operations any longer, but relief was still necessary in almost all the centres. There were cases everywhere which demanded attention even in good harvest time. They had no land to plough, no harvest to reap. These cases became desperate when the persons happened to be women. Such cases were by no means rare in the area under notice. Relief by spinning was thought out and was introduced slowly in some of the centres. The first of these was Khamargaon, where the tradition of spinning was in the memory of old women. But there was not much progress made before the middle of 1923, when vigorous attempts were made to popularize the charkha in this area. To organize spinning was felt to be more difficult than all other previous stages through which the workers passed. It was an ordeal to them. Hitherto the eagerness was on the part of the people, but now the eagerness had got to be infused in them. To introduce spinning workers must be expert spinners themselves. Most of the workers who had done hitherto creditably fell back in the new test. During the latter part of 1923 selected workers were trained in a centre opened for the purpose at Raghurampur, where practical training was given. By this time all the centres now extant were started except three which have been opened in 1924. Three centres have since been closed for want of sympathy from local people. In 1923 the total yam output in the five months of the initial stage of

the nine centres was 61 maunds, the cloth woven was 10,000 yards in length and the total sale of khaddar in the year was Rs. 4,896/-.

In 1924, the output of yam from 9 centres was 390 maunds, 90,300 yards were woven in the weaving centres and Rs. 76,225 was the total sale proceeds of khaddar produced in the year.

At present khaddar work is being conducted from 10 spinning and 3 weaving centres; 199 villages are served by the workers and 2,987 charkhas have been distributed among the same number of spinners. Most of the spinners are Muslims, Hindu population being very very small in this area. They do not constitute even 5 per cent of the total spinners.

Of 200 weavers in the 3 weaving centres there are only 12 Hindu weavers, 104 weavers weave only pure khaddar and their earnings vary from Rs. 110 to 150 per year. The maximum earning of a spinner named Foyzan Bibi and a weaver Yosmat amounted to Rs. 7-13-3 and Rs. 31-0-0 a month respectively.

At Nimadighi, a village under Talora centre, where 130 charkhas are now working, during the six months of the last year the total earning of the village by 122 charkhas was Rs. 1248 which comes to Rs. 1-11-0 per month for each spinner, and at Shaol, under the Tilakpur centre, 11 weavers earned Rs. 1,174 in six months, or one weaver on an average earned Rs. 18 per month. This is certainly a good income for a villager.

#### THE CHARKHA, AN INSURANCE AGAINST FAMINE

The difficulties of the people of Bogra were not less acute when compared with those of "bil" area round about Atrai. Severe drought followed in the rear of the flood, 60 per cent of the crop in the greater portion of the Kahaloo and Dhupchanchia *thanas* failed. Relief measures were urgently invoked; the District Magistrate of Bogra was impressed with the utility of charkha as a relief measure and he allotted to us this portion to look after. We conducted the operation from our Talora, Ghampapur, Durgapur and Tilkapur centres.

Talora ..	<u>33</u>	villages	Spinning	Weaving	Ginning	Total
	425	charkhas	charge		charge	
	Rs.					
			Rs. 4,344	Rs. 4,519	Rs. 535	9,398
Champapur ..	<u>24</u>	villages				
	358	charkhas	Rs. 3,797	..	..	3,797
Durgapur ..	<u>18</u>	villages				
	135	charkhas	Rs. 1,415	..	..	415
Tilakpur ..	<u>8</u>	villages				
	67	charkhas	..	Rs. 2,810	..	2,810

Thus the grand total of money given as spinning, weaving and ginning charges in the above four centres for the 7 months from March to September, 1924, is Rs. 17,420/-. It will thus be seen what an immense potentiality lies in the adoption of the charkha not only as an insurance against the famine but also as securing an additional income to the peasant folk during the slack season.

The centres were opened on the Committee's own lands either purchased or rented from Zamindars. The total area of our lands is 43 *bighas* of which 25 *bighas* are in one plot at Atrai. Speaking on an average, there are three sheds in each centre, one for workers' residence, one kitchen and one store room. Each centre has a working area from 25 to 30 sq. miles comprising about 10 to 30 villages. Villages are grouped together and each worker is entrusted with one group, having generally to attend to 100 wheels a week and is expected to visit 13 to 20 spinners a day. As soon as a spinner acquires some proficiency in spinning she is given a quantity of cotton sufficient for one week's consumption and exactly on the day of its expiry the worker re-visits her for collection, pays her a pice to the tola of 10 counts of the yarn spun. All the yarn thus collected are properly labelled and sent to the Base Office where they are checked and sorted and sent to weaving

centres. Workers of those centres distribute them among weavers to be woven in accordance with orders from Base. Woven stuffs, again are all sent back to Base to be washed, packed and finally to be disposed of at Calcutta.

The present strength of our workers is 62, nearly all of whom are tolerably experts in the art of spinning and its concomitants; 48 among them can spin 15 counts at the rate of 400 yards or above per hour. The highest speed attained, as has already been reported was, by a worker named Osman Kazi, i. e., 820 yards of 20 counts and by Meajan Paramanik, 790 yards of 20 counts per hour.

Brilliant as the results are, they are nothing compared to what they are likely to be. A stage must be reached when it will be no longer necessary to take cotton to the doors of the villagers and receive yarn from them but when they will get cotton and sell yarn in the ordinary course as they are doing in the Feni District in Bengal today and in the several villages of the Punjab, Rajputana and elsewhere. The organization of the charkha seems to me to be so complete that I do not anticipate any difficulty in the evolution of the movement in the direction indicated.

*Young India*, 4-6-1925, p. 194

## 108 HELP GUJARAT

Proud Gujarat is laid low and she who has hitherto filled the beggars' bowl is now obliged to take the bowl herself. I have had up to now nothing to go by except the newspaper reports. Though Sjt. Vallabhbhai Patel was preparing me for the worst through his private wires he was unable to give details. I give below his telegram just received on my return from Hassan:

Most part of Gujarat North of Narmada and Kathiawad devastated. People rendered homeless. Cattle and belongings washed away. Total damage in crores. Loss of life small except in Baroda. Kheda district is worst with 100 inches of rain. Borsad still isolated. Piteous appeals for help coming from all parts of Gujarat and Kathiawad. Public meeting was held on August 2nd, Relief Committee formed. Three lakhs for food relief Ahmedabad District and ten lakhs for advancing loans reconstruction of houses to be raised. Provincial relief to be separately conducted under Prantik Samiti. Relief centres have been opened under Amritlal Thakkar, Lakshmidas Purushottam and Narahari Parikh respectively at Anand, Nadiad and Mehmedabad. Maganlal Gandhi will reach Borsad and establish communications. Other centres are also being reached and relief operations started. Amritlal Sheth is trying to reach areas of Kathiawad and is organizing relief. The immediate problem is one of saving life by the timely supply of food stuffs. Local resources are inadequate. Pray issue a general appeal to all India for succour without delay.

Sjt. Fulchand Shah sends a detailed wire from Nadiad about Kheda. Dr. Chandulal of Broach sends an angry wire asking me what I intend doing towards the relief of the distress in Gujarat. I have been dumbstruck by the newspaper reports. Those who know anything of the devastating floods in the South can somewhat realize what a howling wilderness parts of Gujarat must have become. Kheda owes its fertility to the industry of its resourceful farmers. It is no joke for them to find the

whole of their crops washed away and their fields stinking with the stench of the carcasses of their valuable and splendid cattle.

I know that no human effort can possibly make up for the loss of crores\* worth of crops, cattle and belongings, together with rich manure washed away into the ocean, but human sympathy can do much to relieve the mental agony of the people who have lost their all. I do hope that all who see this appeal and who can will send their mite towards relief.

Sjt. Patel is a seasoned soldier and has no other occupation than that of service. He has got an efficient agency of workers under him. Donors need, therefore, have no fear of wasteful expense or misappropriation. Properly audited accounts will be published, and all sums received will be acknowledged in the columns of *Young India* and if necessary *Navajivan*. Relief work will be done by him in collaboration with other agencies that may be brought into being. The chief thing is to send help. Let the donor choose his favourite and most trusted agency, but let him make sure that he sends not the least but the most he can.

*Young India*, 11-8-27, p. 249

## 109 THE HAVOC IN GUJARAT

The destruction wrought by the heavy floods in Gujarat appears to be of an unprecedented character. The meagre accounts I have seen in the press supplemented by two telegrams from Vallabhbhai Patel and one from the Ashram gave me but a faint idea of the enormous damage done by the flood. I am handicapped, too, as I am writing this in an out of the way place in Mysore where newspapers reach very late. When communications are thoroughly established, the total extent of the damage done will probably be found to be much heavier than the estimates made by responsible workers. Benevolent and wealthy gentlemen of Bombay and Gujarat have been as prompt in their work of mercy as Nature has been furious in her work of destruction. Sjt Vallabhbhai Patel has already issued an appeal. I hope that there will be a liberal response to the appeal. A private telegram tells me that Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas has also, as is his wont on such occasions, started relief work. On occasions of such calamities when deepest emotions are stirred, many relief agencies are brought into being to render help. They must be all welcome. Not one agency can hope to overtake the whole work of relief over such a vast area. However, it will be the duty of several agencies to co-operate with one another, so as to avoid overlapping and so as to make every rupee go the longest length and every grain of wheat find its way to the neediest hands. Let those whom God has blessed with ability to give remember the proverb, "He gives twice who gives the quickest."

*Young India*, 11-8-1927, p. 252



## 110 THE GUJARAT FLOODS

(Translated from Gujarati by V.G.D.)

### GOOD IF TRUE

On reading the reports of flood relief operations as well as Swami Anand's article in *Navajivan* I hesitated, and still hesitate, to believe in the examples there given of the people's heroism, solidarity and humanity, as false praise, exaggeration and self-deception are the order of the day in the country. But I have no reason to disbelieve these reports. Exaggeration, untruth and the like are studiously eschewed in *Navajivan*. The Swami knows this ever since the paper was started and indeed it is this policy of the paper which induces him to interest himself in and work for it.

Therefore so long as I have not any reason to consider the *Navajivan* reports as erroneous, I must take them to be true. And I tender my congratulations to Gujarat and the Gujaratis. For a moment one is almost tempted to welcome a disaster which has been the occasion for the people to display such virtues.

Catastrophes and calamities will now and then overtake the country. Wealth may be in our possession today and be lost tomorrow. We construct houses and make farms and gardens, and when these are destroyed, we can remake them. The distress will soon be forgotten.

But what if Gujarat along with the distress also forgets the virtues which she has realized in herself on the present occasion? We are everywhere familiar with momentary fits of heroism and renunciation. If Gujarat's present heroism proves to be only a temporary fit, the lesson of the floods will have been lost upon her. Let the Gujaratis, men as well as women, beware.

Let us convert the virtues of courage, patience and humanity in us, of which we have had a sudden glimpse, into a possession for ever. Hindus and Musalmans embraced one another as brothers. The higher classes sheltered and succoured the

suppressed like blood-brothers. If we now give up these relations as only suited for the days of adversity, our last state will be worse than the first, and we will have passed in vain through this calamity, which is really the throes of a new birth. And such calamities there will be, so long as we have not experienced a true rebirth.

Gujarat's doings on this occasion amount in my view to pure Swaraj. If the virtues now manifested by the people become a permanent feature of their daily life, Gujarat may be said to have acquired the fitness for, as well as the power to win, Swaraj.

The havoc worked by the floods was of a most unprecedented character, before which even Dyerism pales into insignificance. Dyer killed or wounded a thousand or twelve hundred men. No one can tell the heavy toll of life exacted or the immense property destroyed by the floods. But we did not abuse the floods. We practised Satyagraha against them. We purified ourselves. We did constructive work. We achieved Hindu-Muslim unity.

We removed untouchability. We became self-reliant. We placed our all at the disposal of our brothers and sisters. We did not wait for a leader. Instead of falling back before the enemy, we bravely faced him, and set to work as if nothing had happened. If we had feared the floods, if we had wasted precious time in abusing them, if we had engaged in violent struggle with them, we would only have multiplied our troubles.

All honour to Gujarat for the proof she has given of her greatness.

#### **BUT WHAT ABOUT ME?**

But has a Gujarati, who is away from the scene of danger and of achievement, the right thus to bestow praise and tender congratulations?

I received three wires and a letter asking me to come and lead the relief operations in Gujarat. The letter was Swami Anand's and the wires were from Sarojini Devi, Ghandulal whom I mistook for Dr. Chandulal and Dev- chand Parekh.

But I did not give myself to anxiety. I was fully confident of Gujarat's self-reliance. I had not the shadow of a doubt that monetary help would be forthcoming in an adequate measure. I whole-heartedly trusted to Vall- bhbhai to do the needful. I was in touch with him by wire. I wired to him, informing him of the insistent calls I had received and asking him to let me know if he thought my presence necessary. Vallabhbhai at once wired me in reply, that though the distress of the people was beyond words, it was not advisable for me to come over to Gujarat in the present state of my health, that my effort to make Gujarat self-reliant and the organization I had helped to set up therein had achieved more for her than my presence would have done; that people there would be, who would misinterpret my absence but it could not be helped; and that I must continue to rest without worrying over my absence from Gujarat.

I have not related this history in defence of myself. A servant of the people never needs to offer defence. And again I do not think my health is so delicate, that I could not come over. My health is certainly delicate. Physically I am not today equal to even a tithe of the strain which I successfully stood during the days of the Kheda satyagraha. The brain is nearly useless and is easily fagged. I have still to keep to my bed. But when there breaks out a fire, even a person who is ill must at risk to himself take a bucket of water and do his bit if he can. Even if he can only sit himself and issue orders toothers, he must attend the place in a stretcher and help to extinguish the conflagration.

But I propose to point a moral from these events and to put co-workers on their guard. In Gujarat we have obeyed an unwritten law that when once a task has to be entrusted to a worker, others should not seek to have a hand in it unless the worker in charge wishes or permits it; that the workers in charge of various branches of activity should be trusted but fearlessly removed in case they betray their trust. Our leader in Gujarat is Vallabhbhai. I may pass as an elder, but so far as work in Gujarat is concerned I must bow to Vallabhbhai's rulings. It is only by a strict observance of this rule, that we have been enabled to do whatever stands to

our credit in Gujarat. We have thus subjected ourselves to discipline, conserved our energies and carried out an efficient division of labour.

But even independently of Vallabhbhai's instructions I was of opinion that my presence was not needed in Gujarat. I have implicit confidence in Vallabhbhai's ability to serve the country. He has been my co-worker ever since the Kheda struggle. The self-sacrifice of none of us is greater than his. He has often placed before Gujarat the ripe fruits of his intelligence. He has previous experience of such relief work. In view of all this I fail to see what I myself could possibly have done more than he has.

Again If I came over to Gujarat specifically for this, Vallabhbhai according to his temperament would expect a lead from me, and would resign his liberty of action in my presence. On occasions like the present I should consider this to be nothing short of a misfortune. If I ran up there and began to meddle with this, that and the other thing, new as I would be to the work, I should only make an exhibition of ignorant vanity.

And I am not here enjoying a holiday. According to my lights I am pretty fully occupied in grappling with the fatal disease which is eating into the vitals not only of Gujarat but of India as a whole, a disease which is beyond all comparison very much more powerful and insidious than a week's deluge. It would not only be not meritorious but on the other hand a clear breach of duty on my part to give up this work for something else that is more tempting. We have the charge often levelled against us that we are apt to lose our heads in times of danger. To the extent that this is true, we must get rid of this shortcoming.

None of us, especially no leader should' allow himself to disobey the inner voice in the face of pressure from outside. Any leader who succumbs in this way forfeits his right of leadership. There is much truth in the homely Gujarati proverb that "the person concerned can see things in the earthen pot and his neighbour cannot

see them even in a mirror". I have not been able to see that it was my duty on the present occasion to run up to Gujarat.

The insistent calls I have received are evidence of a wrong attachment which we must surmount at all costs. I am nothing but a mere lump of earth in the hands of the Potter. Truth and Love – Ahimsa – is the only thing that counts. Where this is present, everything rights itself in the end. This is a law to which there is no exception. It would be very bad indeed that Gujarat or India should look up to me and sit with folded hands. Let her worship Truth and Love, look up to that divine couple, employ servants like myself so long as they tread the strait and narrow path and check them when they swerve from it.

If I had come over to Gujarat, perhaps she would not have done what she has done and is still doing.

Invalidated leaders or public servants should give up the hankering after active leadership or service. There is no place for a sick man in these operations for relief, which require only such persons as are able-bodied, can run up from place to place, and have the power of enduring hunger and thirst, heat and cold. Those who do not reach this standard would only act as a drag on a quickly marching army.

Finally, a servant of the people should never fear or give way to bitterness if he finds himself a victim of misunderstanding, whether unintentional or wilful. The acts of men who have come out to serve or lead have always been misunderstood since the beginning of the world and none can help it. To put up with these misrepresentations and to stick to one's guns come what might, – this is the essence of the gift of leadership. Misunderstandings have been my lot ever since I entered public life, and I have got inured to them.

In short let Gujarat ever be, as it has been on the present occasion, self-reliant and self-helpful and proceed from achievement to achievement. Men like myself will come and go, but let Gujarat go on for ever.

## To CO-WORKERS

A few words more to co-workers.

1. I take it that none of the workers will allow their pride to come in the way of their heartily co-operating with their compatriots.
2. Any one who works for name and fame on an occasion like this incurs sin.
3. There should be the fullest co-operation between the various agencies at work.
4. Where Government offers help on our own terms we should freely accept it, as it does not involve any breach of the principle of non-co-operation. But all hairsplitting is out of place where the question is one of serving the people and serving them in time and to the fullest extent possible. If the money in the hand of the Government is available for *good use*, we should unhesitatingly ask for it and accept it.
5. Let us not forget that organizations are meant for the service of the people, and not the people for the service of the organizations.
6. I see that there are three agencies at work, the Provincial Congress Committee under Vallabhbhai, the Saurashtra Seva Samiti under Amritlal Sheth and the Servants of India Society under Sjt. Deodhar. Possibly there are others. But in any case we must prevent any overlapping and ensure the closest co-operation among the agencies. Workers who have not still reported themselves should join the centre of work which is nearest to them or which they like best. Any one who remains aloof either from angularity or from pride will dig his own grave. The people will fail to benefit by his services and will think lightly of him.
7. It would be really terrible if any one in disregard of existing organizations tries to start a fresh one. Seeing that time lost can never be regained, every one should take his place at the point which he can reach the soonest.

*Young India*, 18-8-1927, p. 264

## 111. TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

(From "Notes")

Swami Anand has collected, in the issue of *Navajivan* of 7th August 1927, information about the heroic deeds of people all over Gujarat. In the sketches are given instances of Hindus and Musalmans helping one another as if they had never quarrelled, also of the suppressed and suppressors living together under the same roof and sharing the same food, people saving one another at great personal risk. Whilst I was reading the sketches I was wondering if they could be all true. Then I remembered, that it was *Navajivan* I was reading and that unauthenticated stories were inadmissible in its columns and that Swami himself was, if it was possible, more careful than I about admitting anything doubtful. The sketches show from Bhavnagar to Broach—a wide enough area of distress—stories of unexampled self-help, self-reliance and mutual help. As Swami well remarks for the moment the "people exhibited every quality that makes a nation great and self-governing". There was no fear, no panic, but grim determination to battle with death. If the account is true,—I must still be cautious, — it reflects the highest credit on all concerned. All were leaders and all were led. It was a spontaneous organization that came into being on the advent of distress.

The thing for the leaders to see to is, whether the lessons of the mighty deluge can be made permanent. Will the Hindu-Muslim friendship outlast the immediate need, will the yoke of the suppressed be lifted for ever, will the self be used to subserve the benefit of all in everyday transactions? Will the pre-deluge avarice remain under check in the face of the charity that is freely flowing Gujarat-ward? Will the stewards in charge of relief funds resist the temptation to steal or misappropriate trust funds, will there be no feigning of distress and no needless applications for relief?

The answers to these and many such questions can only be satisfactorily given, if the many leaders who are now operating will be good as gold. That would mean real change of heart and real penitence and purification. It is said, that there is always, after a deluge of any magnitude, a reformation of life among the survivors. It may be, that extensive as the calamity was, it may not be classed as a real deluge warranting a sweeping reformation. Mankind is notoriously too dense to read the signs that God sends from time to time. We require drums to be beaten into our ears, before we would wake from our trance and hear the warning and see that to lose oneself in all is the only way to find oneself. Will Gujarat show enough advance to regard the recent floods as an all-sufficing warning to us to write a new and brilliant chapter in the history of this afflicted land of ours? Posterity will have every reason to distrust the contemporary accounts of heroism, self-reliance and mutual help, if the people of Gujarat are unable to show any lasting and demonstrable reformation.

*Young India, 25-8-1927, p. 273*



## 112. LEST WE FORGET

There is some danger of the calamities of Orissa and Sindh being forgotten in the midst of the universal attention that the Gujarat floods have attracted. Probably the distress is more felt in Sindh than in Gujarat and the most felt in Orissa, for it is the least organized and the poorest of our provinces. Gujarat has produced an army of workers whose numbers are already proving embarrassing to Sjt. Vallabhbai. After all everywhere it is the merchant class that is the freest with its purse and most able to organize relief in times of distress. Let those Gujaratis, who are not wanted for work in Gujarat, or who can be spared, turn their attention to the places where help may be most needed. The distress of Gujarat must not blind the Gujaratis to the need of the other provinces. The present distress must be utilized to make us less provincial and more national. We must feel one with the least and the remotest of the thirty crores of God's creatures who inhabit this land.

*Young India*, 1-9-1927, p. 285

### 113. FLOOD-RELIEF WORK IN SINDH

I gladly publish the following first instalment of notes by Prof. N. R. Malkani\* about the distress in Sindh which was truly no less acute than in Gujarat. But as I have already remarked before, Gujarat attracted the widest attention not merely because of its being the storehouse of India's donors but also and perhaps more because it found an army of workers under Vallabhbhai Patel ready and determined to handle and organize the task of relieving distress. Sindh no less than Orissa suffered because they could not produce such an organization. But no lack of organization can be allowed to excuse any avoidable misery.

The public should know that Prof. Malkani is himself personally organizing the relief operations under the supervision of the central committee which I hope is giving him all the assistance he may need.

*Young India*, 16-2-1928, p. 55

\*Omitted from this Collection.

#### 114. SYLHET INUNDATED

It was in Kausani that I received the first information from the Chairman of the local Congress Committee of the devastating floods that have overtaken the Sylhet valley. Even the usual rainfall is terrible in these parts of India, but the papers before me tell me that a flood such as was recently experienced there has not been known within living memory. The area affected is said to be 5,500 square miles and the population over 18 lakhs. I need not reproduce the terrible story of destruction which has been vividly described in the daily press. I have had telegrams and letters from at least four committees asking for relief. These include one from Sjt. Subhas Bose informing me of the formation of the Central Relief Committee with Dr. P. C. Ray as its President. Sjt. Amritlal Thakkar has proceeded there to see with his own eyes the damage done to life and property. I ask those who have not already given to send their subscriptions which will be used in a manner that would give the greatest relief with the means that the donors may put at my disposal. Relief in the case of unprecedented destruction such as this only comes in well after the first shock is over. First aid in such cases is rendered by Nature herself in that utter destruction is its own remedy. Man brings the healing balm through his fellow feeling to those who remain behind to tell the tale of woe. The donations that the readers may send will be used after the most careful inquiry I may be capable of making.

*Young India*, 11-7-1929, p. 228

## 115. ASSAM-BENGAL FLOOD

(From "Notes")

I am publishing the first list of donations to the appeal in respect of the calamity that has overtaken East Bengal and Assam. Just at the time of sending the manuscript to *Young India* office I find the following wire from Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh:

Sheth Ramanlal Keshavlal of Petlad (Gujarat) accompanied by Bhimjibhai, representative of Messrs. Ranchhoddas Jay-ram & Sons at Chittagong, Sjt. Harivallabh C. Shah and others came to Abhayashram, Comilla, on their way back from Silchar and Sylhet. Shethji personally inspected the Mainamati relief centre and sent Harivallabhbhai to study the conditions round about Rajapur centre. He proceeded from Rajapur station to a distance of about 5 miles on a boat over submerged fields where no trace of any crop was to be seen. The conditions, he said, were like those to be found on his way from Karimganj to Sylhet by boat. The method of work followed by the Ashram appealed to them, and they appreciated very much the idea of giving a sort of permanent relief to the agriculturists by the introduction of spinning wheels, of which the Ashram has decided to have one thousand, and the idea of giving paddy for husking by which they can anyhow earn an honourable living instead of depending on doles. Shethji and Bhimjibhai were pleased to announce a donation of Rs. 2,550 on the following heads:

1. For 200 spinning wheels-Rs. 550
2. For paddy husking work-Rs. 1,250
3. For two huts for the Ashram-Rs. 500; and
4. For Khadi debt of the Ashram-Rs. 250.

Owing to breaches at three different places in the embankment of the Gumti the *Aus* paddy crop, which was almost ready for harvesting, has been destroyed.

Consequently there is dearth of fodder for cattle, practically little or no work for the labourers, and the small agriculturists are in a miserable condition. They have neither paddy to eat nor money to carry on the cultivation afresh. Where the water has subsided the loss of crop worth about 9 lakhs from about a hundred villages, from which the figures have up till now been collected, is of no little consequence to the villagers who are already in a miserable condition. The relief operations will have to be continued for a long time, because in many fields no crop will be available before July, 1930. For spinning wheels and for capital, both for paddy husking work and spinning, a large sum of money will be required. Our appeal goes forth to one and all to help the people of Tipperah in their distress. All contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged by Suresh Chandra Banerjee, President or Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, Secretary, Abhayashram, Comilla. This is merely a sample of what is being received by me.

*Young India*, 25-7-1929, p. 245

## 116. ASSAM FLOOD

(From "Notes")

Sjt. Bipin Chandra Pal wrote to me whilst I was in Bombay:

I am here since last Wednesday on a mission of mercy. You know that Sylhet is my native district. Sylhet and Cachar have been recently overtaken by a flood of the like of which the oldest living people of those parts have no recollection. I understand that you have already been moved by the reports of the suffering of the poor of these districts to send a few thousands of rupees for their help. The extent of the calamity is being gradually brought home to the workers there. Mr. Thakkar of the Servants of India Society had been to the afflicted districts and seeing things with his own eyes, and realizing the inadequacy of the help already received, he asked the Sylhet-Cachar Flood Relief Committee to try and send a deputation to Bombay and other provinces and induce me to lead it. When asked to undertake this, I could not possibly refuse to do so though I am not as young as I was twenty years ago nor in the best of health. This is the story of my present visit to Bombay.

I write this to ask your help in this work. I enclose a cutting from the paper giving the latest estimate of the extent of the calamity. If you are moved to say a word in support of our appeal, I have no doubt that even the present trade depression, which is certainly very bad in Bombay, will not be able to close the channels of charity for this purpose. I have no doubt that you will do this for our poor.

I gladly endorse the appeal. The calamity is appalling and every little help tells.

*Young India*, 15-8-1929, p. 269

### 117. DESOLATION IN SINDH

(From "Notes")

Sindh has had a second disaster. I have purposely refrained from saying a word hitherto. The floods have this time wrought greater mischief than before. Only familiarity has made us indifferent. The distress however is not less felt by the afflicted on that account. Professor Malkani has sent me some harrowing details of the havoc wrought by the floods. The latest news is that cholera has followed in the wake of the floods. I suggest to the donors who have been sending donations for the Assam flood relief that they combine their donations for both the areas and leave me to apportion the amounts in the best manner I know. And unless henceforth the amounts received are specially earmarked for one or the other list, I shall treat the donation as jointly for both. Whatever is received for Sindh will be disbursed through Professor Malkani. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel has already sent Rs. 10,000 out of the late Gujarat Famine Fund.

*Young India, 22-8-1929, p. 277*

### 118. AFFLICTED SINDH

(From "Notes")

The pen refuses to move to record the tale of Sindh's woe. Day after day I follow the harrowing accounts in the daily press, and realize our helplessness. But we may not therefore sit idle. Every rupee received will relieve some distress. We have simply to do the little we can. The widow's mite coming from a pure heart goes much faster than millions given grudgingly. All the contributions received will be spent through the very careful and tried agency of Professor Narayandas Malkani. Let the donors not delay their contributions.

*Young India, 5-9-1929, p. 293*

### 119. DISTRESS IN SINDH –AN APPEAL

This is a calamitous year for Sindh. We have had rain in three instalments, each after a break of a week or ten days. Sindh is a dry tract and the average annual rainfall is hardly 5". But the total rainfall this year varies between 25" and 50". All this has fallen within a period of less than 3 weeks. The result is that, the countryside is full of pools and lakes of water even now. From Mirpur Khas to Chhor a distance of about 100 miles, 3 feet water is standing on both sides of the railway line. It is difficult to estimate the losses at this stage, but it is certain that this province never suffered so acutely within living memory. Not one district has escaped the disaster, but it seems that the central parts of Sindh have suffered most.

We have just come out of one calamity when another and a more terrible one seems to face us. The Indus was in floods in 1882, when Attock rose to 56". It has risen beyond that record limit twice within the last ten days. A few days back it rose to 73". Nor is this all. The Punjab rivers are in full flood and threaten to spread destruction in Sindh after doing their worst in that province. Mithankot, the place where all rivers meet, is now at 13.4 and is fast rising as I write. This tremendous volume of water is expected to reach Sindh within 24 hours. Government is taking all necessary precautions, but if any one of the several vulnerable points in the long *bund* bursts there is nothing but an all-destroying deluge for Sindh. The people of this province are living in a state of utter panic. Government has opened 4 big refugee camps at Hyderabad, Sewhan, Sukkar and Chhor, and kept special trains ready for an emergency. We refuse to think of what is in store for us during the next few days, though all that is human is being done to save life and property.

The Peoples' Flood Relief Committee which did some useful work during the floods of 1927, has been revived. It started with a generous donation of Rs. 10,000 from



the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee and has since collected a sum of about Rs. 15,000 in Sindh. But misfortunes never come single, and rains, pests and pestilence have disorganized the trade of Karachi and Hyderabad. The Zamindars are unable to pay because of the losses of crops, and the merchants are hard hit by cholera in Upper Sindh and floods in the Punjab. We are, therefore, obliged to appeal for funds outside our province. There was a noble response from Bombay during the floods of 1927, when the Peoples' Flood Relief Committee received nearly 2 lakhs of rupees from the Bombay Central Relief Fund. The distress is much more acute now, and my Committee is confident that its appeal for funds will not be made in vain.

In closing I beg to mention that our Committee is the only non-sectional and non-communal Committee working in Sindh with the fullest co-operation from all.

3-9-1929

N. R. MALKANI

Hyderabad

Secretary

(This was received early last week, and was written, as the reader will notice, on 3rd instant. At the time of its publication in *Young India* therefore the final fate will have been decided. Whatever the fate may be, the distress depicted in the appeal cannot be lessened. If God so wills it, the further calamity feared might have been avoided. In every case the appeal ought to find a generous response.

— M.K.G.)

*Young India*, 12-9-1929, p. 304

## 120. THE CRY OF ORISSA

In the morning of the 17th inst. (October), we went to Khandayta. Here the rushing waters had broken through the banks and for miles and miles a new river had come into being, destroying many a home. Very few houses appeared to be standing. The Marwadi Society has carried on operations here. It has been feeding 3,500 persons from 25 villages and doling out 7 seers (1£ seers of Cuttack is equal to 4 lbs.) of rice per month per head and one cotton sheet, and husk for cattle. Thus the Society has distributed Rs. 5,000/- among these. At another centre, the Society has been giving relief to 5,700 people from 27 villages; each person gets here 26 tolas of rice. There is a big rush even for this little dole. There are two central depots in Cuttack and two in Puri. Nearly Rs. 15,000/- have been spent there. From Khandayta we went to Khadarda. Half the number of houses belonging to Harijans have been razed to the ground. Those that remained have become dilapidated. There we saw a woman only half clad and in perfect destitution. She complained of want of work. In a house nearby, we saw a sister lying on the damp floor and suffering from high fever. These people will need clothes against the approaching cold weather. From Khadarda we went to Jharpada. There we saw eight volunteers working under most difficult circumstances. They distributed medical relief among ailing people and they had rigged up a kind of accommodation for admitting very bad cases. You can imagine what sort of nursing poor patients can get. Here 4 lbs. of rice (costing 6 pice) per week are issued to adults. Half the rations are doled out to minors. Those who are able-bodied get nothing. Therefore, relief is confined principally to women and children. *I cannot imagine at the present moment a better use for the money of those who are charitably inclined.* You should not imagine that anything like adequate relief is being given. It is possible to make the best use of 40 to 50 thousand rupees per month, for even at the rate of 8 as. per month, out of half a lakh of rupees only one lakh persons can be reached, and the number affected is surely larger.

I have translated certain extracts from letters received from Sjt. Harakchand Motichand, who has been specially sent to Orissa in order to help the local Flood Relief Committee, of which Deenabandhu\* Andrews has accepted the chairmanship. Thakkar Bapa rebukes me, and he has every right to do so, by saying:

How can you close the columns of the *Harijan* to the distress of the people who are sorely affected by the flood? They are no better off than Harijans. And if you will plead only for those who are labelled as '1 *Harijan*', even so there are thousands of these labelled ones also. Surely, if you can give some space to a description of the Devdas-Lakshmi marriage, you ought to take notice of the distress amongst the flood-stricken people of Orissa. You have already issued a moving appeal for Orissa. To open the columns of the *Harijan* to periodical descriptions of the effects of the Orissa floods is but a logical extension of what you have done.

Thakkar Bapa has to be pardoned for forgetting that notice of the marriage was necessary in the interest of Harijan cause. But love is blind. And he is a lover of humanity in distress, no matter in what quarter of the globe that humanity is to be found. His love is limited only by the limits that God Almighty has prescribed. Therefore he exclaims: "See what my workers got the other day for my Bhils in the Panch Mahals. Why can't you get much more for the more numerous population of a Whole province!" He is right. And in all humility I make this appeal to whomsoever may see it. There is no doubt about the distress. I have always held that Orissa is the most helpless and the poorest province of India. Thousands of pilgrims visit the ancient temple of Puri for acquiring merit. Hundreds among them are rich enough to satisfy the hunger of the hungry and clothe the naked. Times are no doubt bad. That is just the opportunity for the moneyed people to deny themselves many things they have hitherto held necessary for their comfort or enjoyment, and establish their right to the wealth, God has blessed them with, by unstintingly helping the helpless.

Somehow or other, ever since my return to India in 1915, Orissa has been to me an epitome of India's distressful helplessness. The Bombay Committee is there, but I must tell the citizens that their response is very poor. At the time of writing I find that only Rs. 12,000/- have been subscribed by Bombay. I cannot recall an instance when Bombay has pleaded bad times in the face of hunger and nakedness. Bombay has felt uneasy in its cinemas and theatres, with the cry for help ringing in the ears of her citizens. Let them not do less now than they have done before. And why should not the wealthy people of the other parts of India wake up and vie with Bombay in catholic charity? Any money sent to the Editor, *Harijan*, at 8-C, Pycrofts Road, Triplicane, Madras, will be acknowledged in these columns and forwarded to the proper quarters.

*Harijan*, 3-11-1933, p. 3

## 121. STRETCH YOUR IMAGINATION

(Originally appeared under the title "Pice Per Day".)

Sjt. Harakchand writing on 26th October, says:

In our perigrinations we saw the *Goshala*, the cow-shed of Puri, conducted under Gujarati management. The cows give not more than 1 lb. of milk per day. The question of castration of calves presents difficulties no less here than elsewhere. The prejudice against their castration is strong enough. The recent flood has affected the cattle in common with man. Many that survived the flood have fallen under the butcher's knife at a rupee and a quarter per head. The management is combining with the Marwadi Relief Society to save such as can be saved. Whereas a dying cow fetches a rupee and a quarter, it costs two rupees to save her till the next rainy season. On the 23rd we left Puri for Billange and from there we had to walk 10 miles to reach Kanaskam. In this centre the Marwadi Society is operating. The rice keeper having no rice in stock, all the hungry people had to be turned away. 2,500 persons get relief through this centre. Here the weekly dole cost 5 pice per head, that is, less than a pice per day. People flock from long distances to receive the dole. The volunteers informed us that many who need help have to be left without food for want of funds. This is not an exceptional case. In this centre the Local Board has a dispensary. We took shelter in it for the night, but we had to get up at 1 o'clock to take the boat for Khajuria, at a distance of 15 miles, which we negotiated in 8 hours. Whereas formerly 26 tolas were given now only 20 tolas are being given per head. 1,700 persons are aided here. Leaving Khajuria we met on our way an old woman who appeared to be 80 years. With her was her seven year old grandson. She has a widowed daughter-in-law with two little ones. They receive one ticket for four. She belongs to a Harijan priest family and she told me that she supplemented the dole by such begging as was possible. From Khajuria we went to a village where a little bit of relief spinning was done under the auspices of the Gopabandhu Seva Sangh. There is room for a large orga-

nization of spinning in this part, but I am told that it will last only so long as the people do not get more paying employment. From Khajuria we had to take the boat again to reach Damo- darpur. The flooded river had cut through her bank, and the waters had overspread an area of nearly 200 sq. miles. On the way the Deputy Magistrate crossed us and he told us that on behalf of the Government 1000 people were given relief. He asked us to send him the list of persons helped by us so as to enable him to prevent duplicating of relief. There is in Bhawaneshwar a branch of the Ramakrishana Mission going on for the past 14 years. This mission has its relief centres under its charge, and they have been distributing over 400 maunds of rice per week since 1st August last. The head of the Mission told me that in order to help the poor he had to encroach even upon his prayer times. I learned through the Marwadi Society that round about this centre there was an attempt at defrauding and that once there was a danger of the famishing men who had come to receive help falling upon the rice bags. Fortunately the situation was saved by turning away the canoes containing rice bags to the opposite bank. Everywhere the cry is for more help. Some of us proposed, therefore, to go to Calcutta to stimulate the Gujaratis to give donations. We proposed also to induce more help from Marwadis. Manilal Kothari has been doing good work at Wadhwan. He has sent me Rs. 500/- for distributing khadi and tells me that he is arranging to send Rs. 590/- to the Cuttack Branch of the All-India Spinners' Association. Sjt. Shivaram will distribute the khadi. Sjt. Kothari promises to send still further help.

Here the reader should stretch his imagination and ask himself what it must mean when people gladly walk miles to secure doles giving them less than one pice worth of rice per day and then search his heart as to whether he can honestly plead hard times when he is called upon to give a donation towards partially feeding the hungry skeletons of Orissa. He must not expect a collector to go to him before he will part with his rupee or whatever sum he can give. He should send his money order without delay. Or he will, to save commission, combine with

his neighbours so as to send the maximum amount covered by the minimum commission.

*Harijan*, 17-11-1933, p. 7

## 122. A SUGGESTION FOR THE FUTURE

(Originally appeared under the title "Havoc in Orissa".)

Floods, famines and pestilences have become part of the natural life of India. Famines and floods take place almost all the world over, but their effects are largely overcome in countries which have financial and other resources. But in India, where poverty reaches the point of starvation the effects of floods and famines are not only not overcome but are felt with double force, and pestilences are ever with us through the same cause. But the gravest defect of India's pauperism is that we have come to regard these visitations with resignation which is none the less brutal because it is unconscious. To illustrate my point I single out the case of Orissa because of the appeal issued by the Minister of Revenue and Public Works in his capacity as Chairman of the Orissa Flood Relief Committee. In him, a member of the Congress Ministry, the Government and the Congress combine. But in a covering letter he tells me that the response to the appeal has been nothing worth mentioning.

The Orissa Governor, in his address at the inaugural meeting of the Flood Relief Fund, says: "As it was graphically put to me, on the night of the 6th August, 30,000 people in this town, Cuttack, were sleeping or trying to sleep ten feet below the river level.\*\* Cuttack is an insignificant place compared to Bombay. It is not one-tenth the size of that city. Imagine what would happen to Bombay if there was a river passing by it, and floods put three lakhs of people in the predicament in which the people of Cuttack found themselves on the night of the sixth of August! Fifteen hundred square miles in the Districts of Cuttack and Puri have been affected by floods. But the recurrence of such floods annually in many parts of India has made popular conscience blunt even in a place so cosmopolitan as Bombay which has never failed to respond to the cry of distress no matter from what corner of India it has come. If my pen moves any person to respond to the appeal, let him or her send whatever he or she can. There are various charities in



Bombay. I venture to suggest that they can take consolidated action by making a joint enquiry into all such cases and can then make proportionate contributions in accordance with the funds at their disposal. If this suggestion is adopted, no distress need go unheard because of want of proper championship. At present, it will be admitted, that there is no method of distribution of these great charities. This suggestion is, however, for the future. For the timebeing, following the proverb "he gives twice who quickly gives", let those who feel impelled give without waiting for any joint action.

A word, however, to the Ministers. Whatever donations they may receive will give only partial relief. They ought, therefore, to do two things: First, adopt means and measures to make people, who may be affected, learn the art of helping themselves by engaging in any productive occupation. Bihar took up spinning and the like. Orissa may take up other occupations if people will not look at the spinning wheel. The chief thing is to learn the dignity of labour. Let the Ministers put off their *kurtas* for a little time daily, and work as common labourers, so as to give an impetus to others who may be in need of labour and what labour brings. Secondly, they should make a proper effort to harness engineering skill so as to guide into healthy channels the course of the rushing waters during the mosoons.

*Harijan*, 25-9-1937, p. 269

### 3. CYCLONE AND OTHER RELIEF

#### 123. HELP CYCLONE-STRICKEN HARIJANS

Sjt. G. Sitaram Sastri writes to Sjt. Thakkarbapa the following letter:

The havoc caused by the terrible cyclone that burst over the coastal district of Andhra Desha, especially Guntur District, cannot be adequately measured in terms of money. The Official estimate is one crore of rupees. But whether it is one crore or ten, it matters little to the stricken land which is in immediate need of food, clothing and shelter and then wherewithal to build their houses and huts. Appeals have been already issued by the president of the Congress and that great and good man Mr. C. F. Andrews. I am writing this to you specially on behalf of Harijans who have been terribly hard hit. Their plight is very pitiable and calls for prompt and adequate relief. Over 3,000 weavers have lost homes and looms. Fishermen on the coast, aboriginal tribes, Harijans and other Depressed Classes have lost their all – food, clothing and shelter. The intensity of their sufferings is aggravated by their utter helplessness to carry out any repairs. A sum of Rs. 25,000 is the bare minimum required to give them immediate relief. Through you and the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh I appeal to all philanthropic persons and institutions to come to their rescue and contribute their mite. Donations may be sent to Deshbhakta Konda Venktappayya, Guntur.

I gladly publish this letter. Calamities such as the one that has overtaken Guntur have become part of our life.

There is no doubt that philanthropists will be helping cyclone-stricken people in Guntur, but the call of the Harijans affected by the cyclones requires special emphasis and I hope that those who are interested in Harijans will not fail to respond to this call.

*Harijan*, 21-11-1936, p. 325

## 124. CYCLONE IN ANDHRADESH

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

On our return Gandhiji was invited by Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya and Sjt. Sitaram Sastri to give a day for the cyclone area. It was too late in the day to do so, but Gandhiji could not resist the request of these good men, and he hurried through 129 miles of Nidubrole to Bezwada, taking on his way places like Chirala, Bapatla, Vetapalem, Gollapalem, Timmasundaram, Paruchuru, Chikalaluripeta and Guntur, making collections wherever he went. Making collections in the cyclone area would sound paradoxical. But as he himself explained: "I want you to be stricdy honest with me and tell me how many of you have suffered and how many have not. I have worked on many an occasion in distressed areas, e.g., in Bihar, where the distress was infinitely greater than here, but even there cent per cent people had not suffered. If several thousands had suffered, several hundreds had escaped. Now I would ask such of you as have actually suffered to raise their hands. (Honestly enough very few raised their hands.) I am glad, and I know that those who have suffered would not come to attend these meetings. I should have to go to them. Then please make the beginning, and those of you who have not suffered please pay for the sufferers as much as you can."

That is how he collected something like a thousand rupees that day. Our car drove through scenes of devastation, and it was easy to picture to our mind's eye the terrible havoc the cyclone must have caused. The numerous ruined houses and cottages filled Gandhiji with a sense of pain and pity and helplessness. "I have been wandering from 6-30 through the cyclone area," he said in a village which was a scene of utter ruin, "but I cannot say that I have seen much. If I really wanted to see the cyclone area, I should not have gone about like a lord in a car, but should have walked through it. But I had only a few hours and there is no time left for anything like a study of the situation. The only thing I can do having come here is to say a word of comfort. I know that my voice cannot reach the

Government. I have no influence with them, nor have I any with those in charge of affairs here. But I can certainly say that though everyone else may forsake you, God never forsakes people in distress. When I studied Tamil many years ago I came across a proverb which I cannot forget. This is it: ' *Tikkattravannukku Davivamedhune* which means 'for those who are helpless, God is the Help'. But it should not remain merely on our lips, it should enter our hearts, and then no matter how many cyclones we have, we shall rejoice within. That also does not mean that you will be lazy. A man who has faith in God works twenty- four hours, for He has given us hands and feet. And if we use them, He will give us food and clothing too. So you must not expect me to weep with you. My function is to make those who weep forget their sorrow and smile. But those only can smile well who know how to labour with their hands and feet for others and, especially in a place like this, those can smile who divide their good fortune with others. If the powers that be, give us help, we shall receive it gratefully, but if it does not come, we will not commit suicide or swear at them, nor become misanthropes instead of philanthropes. You must therefore be cheerful and help your less fortunate brethren. I am coming from a place where a gentleman has given six acres of land for Harijans. Those who are wealthy will, I hope, follow his example."

At Guntur he summed up his impressions: "I cannot estimate the actual extent of the damage, but I may say that I have seen many a house utterly destroyed, more houses where the roofs had been blown off, many huts rendered utterly uninhabitable even after three months. Mighty trees have been bent from their roots and there were innumerable fields from which crops were swept away. It seems to me that the relief granted by Government and sent to the Committee by the public was wholly inadequate to this emergency. I have no influence with Government. I can only make an appeal to them, if my voice can reach them."

As for the public, he summed up his appeal in Bez- wada. Guntur District, which was affected, did not mean the whole of Andhradesh. He said, "Let it not be said of the people in Andhradesh that homes were destroyed, crops were swept away,

trees were uprooted, men and cattle killed, and yet no person in Andhradesh lifted his finger to organize relief. Because a part has been affected, let no one say that the whole of the province has been affected. It is altogether wrong to expect that Bombay would relieve the distress. People in Bombay will not see havoc. You can see it within a few miles of you. You must do all in your power before you look to any other province for help."

*Harijan*, 13-2-1937, p. 1 at p. 2

## 125. THE GREAT CALAMITY

(The following is the full text of the speech delivered by Gandhiji at the public meeting in Tinnevely on 24th January 1934)

Before I refer to the proceedings of this morning, I must take the very first opportunity that has occurred to me of making a reference to a great calamity that has descended upon India, I mean the great earthquake that has desolated fair Bihar. I read yesterday the Viceregal communication. I read also the reports of the Government of Bihar that were published in the papers; and I had a most heart-rending telegram from Babu Rajendra Prasad as soon as he was discharged from his prison. All these communications show what puny mortals we are. We who have faith in God must cherish the belief that behind even this indescribable calamity there is a divine purpose that works for the good of humanity. You may call me superstitious if you like; but a man like me cannot but believe that this earthquake is a divine chastisement sent by God for our sins. Even to avowed scoffers it must be clear that nothing but divine will can explain such a calamity. It is my unmistakable belief that not a blade of grass moves but by the divine will.

What are you and I to do in the face of a calamity of this magnitude? I can only say to you that all of us should contribute our mite to lessen the misery to the best of our ability. But I may not be deflected from the purpose to which as I believe by the direction of God, I have dedicated myself for the few months at my disposal; nor have I the authority to turn from their destination the funds that I am just now collecting from you. But with all the earnestness that I can command and in the name of the affection which I know you cherish for me, I must ask you, in spite of your having contributed to this purse, to give all you can save for the sake of those who are today without shelter, food, and clothing in the land of Sita. You must show to your brethren and sisters of Bihar, by your sharing your food and clothing with them, that the same blood courses in your veins as in the veins of the Biharis. You can send your contributions to Babu Rajendra Prasad, or you can

send them to me and I shall see to it that every pie you give reaches the proper quarters.

For reasons given by the Government and for other reasons best known to them, many persons in their employ are prohibited, or they think they are prohibited, from contributing to the Harijan purse. The orthodox people who think that I am sinning against them and against the Almighty by engaging in this work, do not give their contributions to this cause. Nor do I expect non-Hindus to contribute to this purse. Therefore, on behalf of afflicted Bihar my appeal is addressed to a much larger audience than those to whom the Harijan appeal is addressed. Here, in the face of the great calamity over which we have no control, let us forget that some of us are Congressmen and others are non-Congressmen, that some of us are Hindus and others are non-Hindus, that some are officials and others are non-officials, that some are Englishmen and others are not. Let us remember we are all Indians eating the Indian grain and salt and living on the dumb Indian masses. And as such let us all act and work with one will and absolute unity. Let us supplement in a perfectly unobtrusive manner the measures of relief that may be devised by the official world. Remember that time is the most essential element at the present moment. I shall be glad to know that my appeal has not fallen on deaf ears. I want you to remember that not many years ago when floods had overtaken this fertile land, the whole of India had come to your succour. Now is your turn to run to the rescue of Bihar.

For me there is a vital connection between the Bihar calamity and the untouchability campaign. The Bihar calamity is a sudden and accidental reminder of what we are and what God is; but untouchability is a calamity handed down to us from century to century. It is a curse brought upon ourselves by our own neglect of a portion of Hindu humanity. Whilst this calamity of Bihar damages the body, the calamity brought about by untouchability corrodes the very soul. Therefore let this Bihar calamity be a reminder to us that, whilst we have still a

few more breaths left, we should purify ourselves of the taint of untouchability and approach our Maker with clean hearts.

*Harijan*, 2-2-1934, p. 15



## 126. FIRE IN SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Servants of India Society".)

In the note issued by the Society upon the loss suffered by it owing to the recent fire nothing so much stirs one as the offer of the employees of the Press. It is evidence of the scrupulous care with which the Society has dealt by its employees. Unless the latter felt the loss to be personal, they would not make the self-sacrificing and handsome offer that they have made of foregoing half the bonus and offering to work without extra pay for ten instead of eight hours a day, and the printer himself offering to work for six months without any pay whatsoever. Both the Society and the employees deserve heartiest congratulations, for this spirit of comradeship existing between what may be called Capital and Labour. This expression of the excellent spirit is no small compensation for the tremendous losses the Society has suffered.

The loss of the valuable manuscripts containing Gok- hale's life and files of the *Dnyan Prakash* for the last eighty years is indeed irreparable. But it is only in this manner that nature gives us rude shock and reminds us that there is nothing permanent, nothing ever-lasting except God himself; and that therefore ours is but honourably and humbly to labour, only to do His will irrespective of consequences.

The members of the Society are now manfully striving to restart without avoidable delay the interrupted activities. The question is how will the public help. Assurances have been given from many parts of India. It is to be hoped that the assurances will be translated into action without delay and without fuss. However much one may differ from the politics of the Society, there is no denying the honest and self-sacrificing labour of its members, there is no denying their patriotism. It stands unique in its great social activities no less valuable than the political. I hope that the readers of *Young India* will show their appreciation of the

many services of the Society, and their toleration where they differ from the Society's politics, by sending in their subscriptions in response to its appeal.

*Young India*, 10-6-1926, p. 207

## II

(Originally appeared under the title "Servants of India Society's Relief Fund".)

I gladly publish the following appeal to the public made by Mr. Sastri:

The Servants of India Society has sustained a terrible loss by the fire which brought to ruin the Arya Bhushan Press and the Dnyan Prakash Press. These had been built up with great patience and foresight by Mr. Gokhale, who knew the mutations of public support and desired to provide for the Society a constant source of income. Deprived of their mainstay, the members of the Society cannot but turn in their distress to their countrymen for that prompt and generous help in money which alone can put them back in their former position and enable them to resume their career of service to the public. I have already appealed to personal friends through private letters, and I wish by this means to reach the wider public who are interested in the Society and its work. Sympathy and help are flowing in from all sides, and our hearts have been gladdened beyond measure by the spontaneous expressions of good will received from those who are not in habitual agreement with us on public matters. As I said on another occasion, it seems as though the essential kindness of human nature, being so often forced out of its natural current by conflict of interests, were only waiting for a pretext to come back to its own channel.

We calculate that two lakhs of rupees would be required to enable us to make a fresh start. The sum is large, and there is depression all round. Still my colleague and I have every confidence that in a few months<sup>1</sup> time we shall get what we want. Our members will go round to various places, but they are not many and cannot be everywhere. We look to our Associates and sympathisers in all parts of the country for active help. We beg them to respond to this appeal as though it

had been made to them individually and in person. No amount is so small but it will be welcome; in fact small contributions, if sufficiently numerous, will give us, the pleasing reflection that we are known and appreciated by a wide circle of those whom we seek to serve.

The total amount collected at the time of circulation of the appeal amounted to over Rs. 26,000. I hope that the whole of the two lacs required to set the two presses and the papers going will have been subscribed by the time these lines appear in print. The true insurance for public concerns like the Servants of India Society is public goodwill reduced to concrete terms.

*Young India*, 24-6-1926, p. 225

### III

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Servants of India Fire Relief".)

Contributions made in answer to the appeal of the Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri total nearly Rs. 50,000. It should be remembered that two lacs at least are wanted to enable the Society to make a fresh start in respect of the interrupted activities. The weekly organ, *The Servant of India*, is being brought out under difficulties. It is to be hoped that the whole amount will be subscribed without delay irrespective of one's politics.

*Young India*, 8-7-1926, p. 243

#### 4. MEDICAL RELIEF

##### 127. SILENT WORK

Sjt. Jayaramdas, an old Ashram inmate from Ceylon, through whom I have endeavoured to keep myself somewhat in touch with the recent outbreak of virulent malaria in Ceylon, writes:

I beg to be pardoned for the delay in replying to your letter of the 8th instant as I was away at the relief centres from the 5th instant. There I got a relapse of malaria followed by an attack of dysentery. Before I could recover properly, I had to submit to another relapse of malaria.

I am glad to be able to state that the epidemic is now on the wane and we have closed 6 out of the 11 convalescent homes.

The following number of patients have been attended to by us without a single casualty.

<i>Village where convalescent home was opened</i>	<i>No. admitted</i>	<i>No. cured and left</i>	<i>No. still being treated</i>	
Dippitiya	912	865	47	
Mavanella	74	53	21	
Balabatgama	157	157	..	closed
*Hemmatagama	177	122	55	
Vadamaldeniya	114	88	26	
Arakotavella	48	30	18	
Kadigamuwa	63	63	..	closed

Arama	135	135	..	closed
Talgaspitiya	102	102	..	closed
Mipitiya	75	75	..	closed
Ussapitiya	39	39	..	closed
	<hr/> 1896	<hr/> 1729	<hr/> 167	

\* Only for females and children.

The number of volunteers now working is 85 composed of 21 *Bhikkus* and 64 laymen; besides we have 12 *Bhikkus* and 78 laymen as helpers.

We are having showers of rain here, and if the favourable weather- conditions continue, further improvement of the situation is expected.

Appeals for help were received by me from Ceylon. I had made such inquiries as I could. There is a large Tamilian settlement in Ceylon. Such aid as was possible was being given by it. Most of the relief measures were in the hands of the Government of Ceylon. But the poverty of the people and their ignorance of the first principles of hygiene rendered effective aid impossible. Some voluntary aid was organized by workers like Sjt. Jayaramdas. The greatest good that the severe outbreak of Malaria did was to discover the *Bhikkus* of Ceylon. "They toil not, neither do they spin." They do a little bit of teaching. If they wished, they could, by serving society in a tangible way, rid the beautiful Island of want and disease and restore the beauty with which Nature has endowed it and which man has ravished. It should be the duty and the privilege of the *Bhikkus* to carry the message of goddess Hygeia to every cottage of Ceylon. It is criminal to go off to sleep when disease in its virulent form abates and to wake up when it revives. Real service consists in devising measures that would make a recurrence impossible.

An object-lesson is being taught us by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who has just now buried himself in Borsad where plague has broken out. Assisted by Dr. Bhaskar

Patel and a band of volunteers, he is giving aid to those in need. But his enduring work consists in doing scavenging work. One by one, he is cleaning the infected villages; he is bringing people out of their dark houses and inducing them to live in the open, in their fields, while he is opening out roofs and letting in light, sunshine and air, removing debris, clearing out filth, disinfecting insanitary places and destroying vermin. He is flooding the villagers with crisply written leaflets giving them instruction in preventive measures. He has made no appeal for funds or volunteers. Volunteers have been recruited locally. All villages are not plague-infected. And if the spirit of help cannot be locally roused, it is a moot question whether one should not wait till it is. It is possible to bring from a distance experts who would teach. But workers should surely be coming from walking distances. And so should funds from near neighbours. It is good for Bombay and such big places to keep their purses open for all causes that do not admit of local relief, but it is equally necessary for afflicted people to learn the lesson of self-help.

*Harijan*, 13-4-1935, p. 72

## SECTION FOUR: PREVENTION OF ALCOHOLISM

### 1. GENERAL

#### 128. OMISSIONS FROM THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

(Appeared in the article "Notes on the Agreement" under the title "Other things?".)

Mr. Andrews drew my attention even during my fast to a note in the *Modern Review* expressing surprise at the omission from the constructive programme of the movement for abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs. Other friends drew attention much earlier to the omission of reference to national schools. I may inform these friends that the constructive programme that forms part of the agreement contains only those items without which Swaraj appears to me to be an impossibility. Unaided and unaffiliated national schools are there and they must be maintained. They help us to carry the programme through. A drink and drugs reform is silently but surely going on. It cannot be given up. One sees no excitement about it because we have done away with picketing as it led to violence. Nor for that matter are we going to give up the idea of promoting private arbitrations. Only, none of these things is absolutely essential for achieving Swaraj in the sense in which the three items included in the agreement are. Nor is there any difference of opinion among national workers on these as there is on the three items. In mentioning national schools and private arbitration in the same breath as the drink and drugs reform, I do not wish to be understood to give the same value to them. The drink and drugs reform is a problem of the highest national importance. If by any honest means we could be wholly free today from the drink and the opium evils, I should accept and advise them now. But we have no such heroic remedy. Apart from picketing we are powerless to deal with the evil, root and branch, till we have an effective voice in the government of the country. Happily, bad as the evil is, it is not a national vice. It is confined to a small though unfortunately growing minority. Hence there - would be no opposition to liquor or

opium prohibition, if we had the power. It is the Government that comes in the way of the nation becoming free from the drink and the drug curse. Not that we shall ever make drinkers sober by legislation. But we can and ought to penalize the drink and the drug habit and by closing all liquor and opium shops and dens make it as difficult as possible to indulge in it.

*Young India*, 13-11-1924, p. 371



### 129. ABKARI – AN ANCIENT EVIL?

(From an English translation of Gandhiji's Presidential address at the 3rd Kathiawad Political Conference held at Bhavnagar on 8th January 1925 which appeared under the title "Kathiawad Political Conference".)

The Princes' imitation of the British *Abkari* Department in order to increase their revenue is particularly distressing. It is said that *Abkari* is an ancient curse in India. I do not believe it to be so in the sense in which it is put. Princes in ancient times perhaps derived some revenue from the liquor traffic, but they never made the people the slaves of drink that they are now. Even granting that I am wrong that *Abkari* in its present form has been in existence from times immemorial, still I do not subscribe to the superstition that everything is good because it is ancient. I do not believe either that anything is good because it is Indian. He who runs may see that opium and such other intoxicants and narcotics stupefy a man's soul and reduce him to a level lower than that of beasts. Trade in them is demonstrably sinful. Indian States should close all liquor shops and thus set a good example for the British administrators to follow. I congratulate the Kathiawad States which have tried to introduce this reform and I trust the day is not distant when there will be not a single liquor shop in our peninsula.

*Young India*, 8-1-1925, p. 9 at p. 11

### 130. SHUN THIS EVIL IN TIME

(From "With Gandhiji in Burma-III")

"I was intensely pained," he (Gandhiji) said at Moule- mein, "to learn yesterday that the drink evil was on the increase and I was intensely pained to learn that the drink revenue amounted to one-third of the land revenue. It is a terrific thing to contemplate for any country in the world, but it is nothing less than suicidal in a country like Burma where climatic conditions are totally opposed to the drink habit. I know what the habit is doing in India. A serious responsibility rests on the shoulders of people living in towns. I would like the leaders of public opinion in Burma to consider this thing seriously and make every endeavour to root this thing out. Whatever may be true of countries with cold climates I am sure that in a climate like ours there is no need for drink whatsoever. Nothing but ruin stares a nation in the face that is a prey to the drink habit. History records that empires have been destroyed through that habit. We have it in India that the great community to which Shri Krishna belonged was ruined by that habit. This monstrous evil was undoubtedly one of the contributory factors in the fall of Rome. If therefore you will live decently you will shun this evil whilst there is yet time.

*Young India*, 11-4-1929, p. 114 at p. 115

### 131. WIPE THE SHAME

(From Gandhiji's reply to the welcome speech delivered by the President of the Ceylon National Congress, which appeared under the title "Message to Ceylon Congress".)

As I travelled from Candy to Colombo this morning, I asked myself what was the Congress going to do in order to save Ceylon, whom God had blessed with enough natural intoxication, from the intoxication of that fiery liquid. I make a humble suggestion to you. If the Congress is to be fully national, it cannot leave this fundamental social question. In this temperate climate, where no artificial stimulant is necessary, it is a shame that a substantial part of your income should be derived from liquor. You may not know what is happening to the labourers whose trustees you are, whose will is only once expressed when they cast their votes in your favour. I saw thousands upon thousands of them at Hatton. I have lost all sense of smell, but a friend told me that some of them were stinking with liquor. They had gone mad over the fact that one of their own was going in their midst, and had broken the bonds of restraint. Well, I know what you will say. You will say it was the result of excess and that it is not bad to drink in moderation. Well, I tell you, I have found so many making that claim and ultimately proving dismal failures. I have come from cities of South Africa where I have seen Africans, Europeans, Indians rolling in gutters under the influence of drink. I have seen proctors, advocates and barristers rolling in gutters and then the policemen taking them away in order to hide their shame. I have seen captains mad with drink leaving their cabin to the chief officer, or defiling the cabin where they were supposed to keep guard over the safety of their passengers. . . . When the evil stalks from corner to corner of this enchanting fairy land, you must take up the question in right earnest and save the nation from ruin.

*Young India*, 1-12-1927, p. 402 at p. 404

### 132. BANEFUL EFFECT OF LIQUOR

(From "Questions and Answers" by M.D.)

I summarize here for the benefit of the European reader Gandhiji's views on the baneful effect of liquor. The question was asked in a meeting of pacifists, and though there is nothing in it that is new for the Indian reader, the European reader would like to have on record what Gandhiji said....

"Liquor, as we say, is an invention of the devil. In Islam it is said that when Satan began to beguile men and women he dangled before them the 'red water'. I have seen in so many cases that liquor has not only robbed men of their money but of their reason, they have for the time being forgotten the distinction between wife and mother, lawful and unlawful. I have seen drunken barristers wallowing in gutters carried home by the police. I have found on two occasions captains of steamers so dead drunk as to be incapable of keeping charge of their boats, and the first officer had to take charge of their boats till they came to their senses. For both flesh-meats and liquor the sovereign rule is 'we must not live in order to eat and drink and be merry, but eat and drink in order to make our bodies temples of God and to use them for service of man'<sup>5</sup>. Liquor may be medical necessity on occasion, and when life seems to be extinct it may be possible to prolong it with a dose of liquor, but that is about all that can be said for it."

*Young India*, 14-1-1932, p. 17 at p. 19

### 133. A SUGGESTION OF THE DEVIL

I have heard Harijans telling me that drink is prescribed for them on occasions of marriage and death. I can tell you, without fear of contradiction, that that is a suggestion of the devil. It is nowhere written in scriptures. I would ask you, brothers and sisters, not to go near the devil. I hope you will take my advice to heart and it will give me great joy when you will be able to say that you have given up drink.

*Harijan*, 12-1-1934, p. 8

### 134. DANGEROUS EVEN IN FRIGID ZONES

Apropos of my remark that alcohol might be required in a frigid zone, a friend sends me the following interesting paragraph from *Liquor Control* by G. E. G. Catlin who while discussing the apparent warming effect of alcohol says:

A simple mechanical consideration should, however, warn us against a misinterpretation of these results. The body temperature has not been changed but the warmer blood has been sent to the surface where, if it is chilled, it returns to reduce the temperature of the whole system. In cases where there is serious need of protection against cold, alcohol is not only useless but dangerous. Fridtjof Nansen stated that "my experience leads me to take a decided stand against the use of stimulants and narcotics of all sorts" in Arctic journeys—in the case of alcohol owing to the increased risk of death by freezing.

We in India, however, do not need such testimony. We have no excuse apparent or real for taking alcoholic drinks in our temperate zone where the sun gives us all the warmth we need.

*Harijan*, 28-8-1937, p. 225

### 135. THE PATH OF PROGRESS

(From " Gandhiji's Post-prayer Speeches")

Gandhiji next referred to a Harijan conference recently held in the U.P. where a Minister is said to have counselled the Harijans to give up dirty clothes and liquor. Upon this came a spontaneous retort from a Harijan that the Government could burn all dirty clothes, if they would cut off the toddy trees root and branch, and close all liquor dens. Gandhiji admired the courage of this Harijan brother, but he would advice the Harijans and the general public that the remedy lay in their own hands that even if liquor were being sold, they should avoid it as poison. Indeed, liquor was worse than poison. While the latter killed the body, the former destroyed the awareness of the spirit and all that was noble in man including the sovereign quality of self-control. At the same time Gandhiji advised the Government to convert liquor dens into restaurants for the supply of clean and wholesome refreshments and to provide instructive literature and other recreation to wean the addicts from the lure of intoxicants. From experience gained in many a country, reinforced by his own observation in India and earlier in South Africa, Gandhiji was confident that abstinence from intoxicants would materially enhance the physical and moral strength of the workers as well as their earning capacity. Prohibition was therefore included in the Congress programme since 1920 and now that freedom has been won, the Government should proceed to implement that pledge and be prepared to renounce the tainted revenue. In the end, in fact, there would be no loss of revenue, and the gain to individual would be very great. That way lay the path of progress for our nation.

Birla House, New Delhi, 1-1-1948

*Harijan*, 11-1-1948 p. 506 at p. 508

### 136. WHY THE POOR SHOULD NOT APE THE RICH

(From "Gandhiji's Post-prayer Speeches")

Before the prayers started several slips were passed to Gandhiji by members of the audience.... Another friend referred to what Gandhiji had said about the Harijans and the drink habit. The friend asked why the Harijans should be asked to give up liquor while the soldiers and the rich continued to indulge in it. Gandhiji's reply was that the question was unnecessary. If the rich would waste money on drink, that was no reason for the poor to do likewise. There was no reason why anyone should copy the evil habits of others. So far as he was concerned, he was of the opinion that the upper classes had less reason to drink than the lower. The latter tried to drown their poverty and misery in drink. For the former there was no such excuse. It might be said that the soldiers could not do without drink. Gandhiji did not agree with that. He knew of soldiers, both Indians and Englishmen, who did not touch liquor. The prohibition laws would make no distinction between the rich and the poor, the Harijans and the others. But they should not wait for the prohibition laws to be passed before giving up the evil habit. Drink wrought more havoc amongst the Harijans and the labour class than any other class of society. Hence his special appeal to to the Harijans to give it up.

*Harijan*, 18-1-1948, p. 518 at p. 520

## 2. ALCOHOLISM IN INDIA AND AMERICA

### 137. INDIANS AND ALCOHOL

(The following statement was sent by Gandhiji from Pretoria Jail by courtesy of the Governor as "Written evidence to the Transvaal Liquor Commission, Johannesburg, and was published in *Indian Opinion*, dated 10-4-1909.)

I have seen your letter addressed to the British Indian Association regarding its evidence to be submitted to the Commission. I have not been able, my movements having been uncertain, to submit my statement earlier. Nor has it been possible to call a meeting of the Association to consider the evidence to be given. The Chairman and the Acting Chairman of the Association are in gaol. The statement, therefore, that I am about to submit represents my personal views only.

I have been in South Africa now for the last fifteen years, and having, almost throughout that period, been officially connected with Indian public bodies, I have come in contact with all classes of Indians. Since 1903 I have been practising as an attorney, in Johannesburg, and have held the office of Honorary Secretary of the British Indian Association.

The Transvaal has a population of not more than 13,000 adult male Indians. Indians actually resident in the Colony since the war have probably never been more than 10,000 at any time. At the present moment, owing to the Asiatic struggle, there are probably not more than 5,000 in the Colony. These are chiefly Mahomedans and Hindus. For the purposes hereof, I do not consider the Christians and the Parsees, as they form, though important, a numerically small section of the Indian community.

Both Mahomedans and Hindus are prohibited by their respective religions from taking intoxicating liquors. The Mahomedan section has very largely conformed to the prohibition. The Hindu section, I am sorry to say, contains an appreciable number who, in this Colony, have disregarded the prohibition of religion.



The method adopted by Indians who indulge in alcoholic drinks is generally to secure the assistance of some unscrupulous whites. There are other methods, also, which I do not care to go into.

I am of opinion that the legal prohibition should continue. I think, however, that the prohibition has not succeeded in preventing Indians, who have wanted it, from obtaining liquor. The only use I see in continuing the prohibition is to let those of my countrymen, who indulge in it, retain the sense of shame they have in drinking liquor. They know that it is wrong for them both in religion and in law to obtain and drink liquor. This enables temperance workers to appeal to their law-abiding sentiment. I draw a fundamental distinction between wrongful law-breaking and a conscientious breach of man-made law in obedience to a higher law. Happily, those Indians who break the liquor law know that it is wrong for them to do so.

I am aware that some of my countrymen – themselves ardent temperance men – see in the liquor legislation one more disqualification based on the ground of colour. Superficially speaking, they would be right. But I believe that this legislation has little to do with colour. It is, in my opinion, a recognition on the part of the predominant race that the drink habit is an evil which, while they themselves are yet unable to get rid of, they do not want other races to contract. Viewing the position in this manner, I believe liquor prohibition among the Asiatic and Coloured races to be the forerunner of general prohibition.

Whether, however, general prohibition becomes an accomplished fact or not, so long as the predominant race continue to indulge in alcoholic drinks, be it ever so moderately, partial prohibition such as we now have cannot be of much practical use. This, it is submitted, is a forcible illustration of one of the evil incidents of contact between the European and other races. And unless those who preach abstinence are themselves ready to practise it, all liquor legislation must largely be a make-shift. I wish the Commission could see their way to point out to the electors of the Transvaal what a serious responsibility rests on their shoulders. They make it impossible for their representatives to pass legislation that is so

desirable. It is they who must take the responsibility for the breaking up of many a home. I am writing under a full sense of my own responsibility. I know only too well how many Indian youths who never knew the taste of spirituous liquors have succumbed, after having come to South Africa or the Transvaal.

If the Commission desire me to answer any question, I shall be pleased to do so.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. IX, p. 210

### 138. DOES INDIA WANT PROHIBITION?

Much has been made by the opponents of total prohibition in India of the speech of Mr. King, Financial Commissioner in the Punjab, who was reported to have said that the Local Option Act which was passed over a year ago in the Punjab has been a perfect failure. The Commissioner quotes in support of his statement the following facts:

That out of nearly 200 municipalities, district boards etc. only 19 have asked to be empowered under the Act. Of the 19, only 6 took further steps. And in the 6 the *referendum* that was held had precious little support. At Rawalpindi for instance out of 7,000 voters, only six registered their votes. At Ludhiana out of 12,500 voters at the first *referendum* not one turned up. A second date was fixed at which only four turned up. Of the other four only in one small town, that of Tohana, out of 1,052 voters, 802 voted for total prohibition.

Mr. King argued, as he would be entitled to argue if he was a stranger to India and Indian conditions, that there was no demand for total prohibition in the Punjab. Unfortunately for India the conditions are that people are apathetic even about things that concern them as a society. The methods adopted for *referendum* are new to them. Probably, the voters knew nothing of the fact that there was a *referendum* being taken about total prohibition. Mr. King must have known the fact which every one knows who knows anything of India that the vast majority of the people of India do not drink and that drinking intoxicants is contrary to Islam and Hinduism. The inference therefore to be drawn from the so-called failure referred to by Mr. King is not that the Punjab is against total prohibition but that the Punjabis being themselves as a class teetotallers do not bother their heads about those who are ruining themselves through the drink curse. He is also entitled to draw the inference that the Municipal Commissioners and the members of the local boards have been criminally negligent of their duties to the voters in

this matter of great social importance. But to argue from the facts cited that the Punjab is opposed to total prohibition is to throw dust in the eyes of strangers or ignorant people. That unfortunately is the way of the officials. Instead of looking at things impartially or from the popular standpoint, they constitute themselves pleaders for what the Government stands or for methods which the Government may wish to defend at any cost. It is a well-known fact that the Hindus are against the slaughter of the cow and her progeny. Supposing there was a *referendum* taken precisely in the manner in which it was taken in the Punjab regarding drink and the millions of Hindus fail to register their vote, will any one who knows Indian conditions argue therefrom for one moment that Hindus want slaughter houses where the sacred cow is done to death? The fact is that there is not that consciousness created amongst the people that is impatient of social wrongs. It is no doubt a deplorable thing. It is being gradually mended. But it is a wicked thing to suppress facts which would warrant an inference totally different from the one that may in the absence of those facts, be drawn from another set of facts. As the *Manchester Guardian* has mildly put it, the case against total prohibition in India is much weaker than the case against it in America or England where respectable people see nothing wrong or harmful in moderate drinking.

*Young India*, 8-4-1926, p. 130

### 139. IS INDIA PROHIBITIONIST?

An English friend who is anxious to undertake prohibition work for India writes:

I know that what every one will say to me is that Indians themselves have shown no overpowering desire for Prohibition and that as *they* have not organized any movement for this, it is interference on our part to move in the matter. Moreover of all the councils only one or two have declared for Prohibition. Already people are saying this to me. I always point them to the non-co-operation movement when volunteers picketed the liquor shops. But when they say that was five years ago and they have shown no great enthusiasm lately, what is the answer?

The puzzle the friend asks me to solve is not new. The question is bound to occur to one who does not know the history of the total prohibition movement in India. And a stranger coming in our midst is bound to ask himself, "If India wants total prohibition, why does she not agitate for it as she does for many other things?" One observes that people do not agitate when they feel absolutely helpless. It is our helplessness which prevents us from agitating beyond having resolutions by temperance societies and sometimes petitions to the legislative bodies. The cry for Swaraj came out of a realization of growing helplessness in matters of paramount importance to our well-being. Take the military expenditure. Everyone recognizes that much of it is a criminal waste of money collected from the starving millions. Instead of agitating for reduction in military expenditure, we agitate for Swaraj, the argument being that nothing is possible without Swaraj. Who can say that there is no great deal of truth in the argument? When in 1920 we felt that we were getting Swaraj, we took the law into our own hands, we successfully picketed the liquor shops and the Government was frightened to notice an immediate fall in the liquor revenue. Liquor dealers trembled in their shoes and for a moment it appeared as if the drink evil had gone. Unfortunately the party of non-violence had not attained sufficient control over the people.

Violence broke out. It was discovered that pickets did not everywhere carry out the instructions to create a blockade without resort to violence or threats to use it. The picketing had therefore to be suspended.

But the history of 1920-21 shows in unmistakable terms what India would do if she had the power and what she did do when she thought that she had it. Let it be further borne in mind that millions of India are teetotallers by religion and by habit. Millions therefore cannot possibly be interested in keeping up the nefarious liquor traffic. Thus in so far it can be said that there is no agitation in India in favour of total prohibition, absence of agitation is due not to want of desire on the part of the people to secure total prohibition, but it is due to a consciousness of helplessness and to the certain knowledge that it is an integral part of the struggle for Swaraj.

The very fact that it is necessary for any Englishman to defend liquor revenue on the ground that there is no agitation among us for total prohibition, makes out an irresistible case for Swaraj. For, it shows utter ignorance of Indian condition where the opinion is honestly held. There is no agitation on the part of the people against malaria and scores of other diseases. Is that any reason for taking no measures for eradicating malaria and other diseases? In order to deal with a known evil, no agitation should be necessary for taking prompt measures. The drink and the drug evil is in many respects infinitely worse than the evil caused by malaria and the like; for, whilst the latter only injures the body, the former saps both body and soul. The drink revenue, military expenditure and the Lancashire exploitation of India through its calico, constitute the threefold wrong done by British rule to India. When Englishmen realize that it is sinful to trade upon the drink habit of the poor labourers of India, that it is sinful to dump down English and other foreign calico on the Indian soil when India's starving millions can easily produce during their spare hours all the cloth needed for her requirements, and when they realize that it is sinful to impose a terrific military burden upon India under the ostensible purpose of defending her borders but in reality for the sake

of holding her people under subjection against their will, it would be a complete demonstration of change of heart, and co-operation on a basis of absolute equality will become a real possibility. The only agitation therefore that India can carry on is to end the system which makes these wrongs possible, which is the same thing as saying that the agitation for Swaraj is the agitation for the removal of these wrongs. This removal is the acid test, in my opinion, of English sincerity.

*Young India*, 3-3-1927, p. 68

## 140. PROHIBITION IN AMERICA

(From "Notes")

One hears so much about prohibition being a failure in America that it is refreshing to find references which prove the contrary. The cuttings that a correspondent has sent show that delegates to the Middle West Students' Conference representing 123 thousand college students in the South East and Middle West of America passed resolutions opposing liquor drinking by students.

The February issue of the Journal of the Locomotive Engineers contains the following:

The railroad brotherhoods as well as hundreds of thousands of sober, industrious working men in the American Federation of Labour, are opposed to drink because they know it never made any man a better citizen, a better worker, or a better husband or father. We do not believe the remarkable growth of labour cooperating banks in this country would have been possible if the working men were still putting their savings over the bar. We are further convinced that the progress of the American labour movement depends upon leaders with clear, cool heads and not upon those whose brains are addled by alcohol. Perhaps it is worth noting that the leaders of British labour, who have made much substantial progress economically and, politically, since the war are overwhelmingly dry.

The progress made by industry in the United States during the last five years toward the elimination of waste has brought about "one of the most astonishing transformations in economic history".

It is not my purpose to make the reader believe that prohibition in America has been wholly successful. I have read enough literature on the gigantic experiment to know that there is another side to the picture. But allowing for all the exaggerations on either side, there is little doubt that prohibition has been a great boon to that wonderful people. It is yet too early to state results with certainty.



The problem is much simpler in India, if only we have all the bars and distilleries closed.

*Young India*, 6-5-1926, p. 161

### 3. TEMPERANCE AND PROHIBITION

#### 141. JOIN IN SWEEPING OUT DRINK REVENUE

(From "To the Moderates")

I ask you to accept my evidence, that the country as a whole is sick of the drink curse. Those unfortunate men who have become slaves to the habit, require to be helped against themselves. Some of them even ask to be helped. I invite you to take advantage of the wave of feeling that has been roused against the drink traffic. The agitation arose spontaneously. Believe me, the deprivation to the Government of the drink revenue is of the least importance in the campaign. The country is simply impatient of the evil itself. In no country in the world, will it be possible to carry on this traffic in the face of the united and the enlightened opposition of a people such as is now to be witnessed in India. Whatever the errors or excesses that were committed by the mob in Nagpur, the cause was just. The people were determined to do away with the drink curse that was sapping their vitality. You will not be deceived by the specious argument that India must not be made sober by compulsion and that those who wish to drink must have facilities provided for them. The State does not cater for the vices of its people. We do not regulate or license houses of ill fame. We do not provide facilities for thieves to indulge their propensity for thieving. I hold drink to be more damnable than thieving and perhaps even prostitution. Is it not often the parent of both? I ask you to join the country in sweeping out of existence the drink revenue and abolishing the liquor shops.

*Young India*, 8-6-1921, p. 377

## 142. APPEAL TO INDIAN MINISTERS

(From "Notes")

If the Congress Committee's telegram to the *Chronicle* may be relied upon, there is little doubt that some unauthorized police officer has been panic-stricken and given the order to fire on an unarmed crowd. The persistent keeping open of liquor shops as if it was a right of the public to have liquor served to it by the State, is an open and immoral defiance of public opinion. I can only congratulate the families of those who have died. I can deplore the slightest show of force that may have been betrayed by the crowd, but I respectfully warn the Indian Ministers in charge of transferred departments, that they will belie the traditions of the great party to which they belong, if they do not courageously face the grave crisis that is overtaking the country, and summarily close every liquor shop and refund the money paid in advance by the poor licence holders. They may not dread the loss of revenue immorally derived from the twice-cursed traffic. It cannot stand in the face of an awakened and enraged public conscience. As it is, an education supported by a revenue derived from an immoral source is bad enough. Presently, it will stink in our nostrils when it is tainted with innocent blood. I do beseech the Ministers to be warned before it is too late. Let it not be said of them, that for the sake of revenue they remained callously indifferent to the signs of the times. They dare not wait for hours, much less for weeks. It will be wrong to wait for devising methods of tapping other sources of revenue before giving up the revenue from drink. It will be very like a man refusing to vacate a plague- infected house until another is ready for him. Most people in such circumstances will first vacate, and then search for another and uninfected shelter.

*Young India*, 6-7-1921, p. 209 at p. 211

### 143. PIERCE THE HOME OF THE DRUNKARD

(From "Notes")

Not till we pierce the home of the drunkard shall we make any real advance. We must know why he drinks; what we can substitute for it. We must have a census of all the drunkards of India.

*Young India*, 2-3-1922, p. 129

### 144. VIRTUE PENALIZED

(From "Notes")

The renter's explanation for not working the shop and for not tapping and drawing toddy from the trees for the shop is unsatisfactory. He is fined Rs. 50.

Such is the entry in the proceedings of the Revenue Divisional Officer of Namakal in the Madras Presidency. The reader knows that the shop is a drink shop. The renter's explanation was that the drinkers had decided not to drink and therefore he saw no use in keeping the shop open. He was however willing to pay the rent this explanation was not satisfactory. Nor was it enough that the abstaining villagers were ready to pay the Government the whole year's stipulated profits from the drink traffic for the luxury of indulging in their newly acquired virtue of abstinence. That was not to be, for the law was against them. If the whole of the proceedings were legally examined, it will probably be found that the officials concerned could give no other decision. They are not at fault. It is the system that is bad, for in that system revenue is the primary consideration, not the health of the soul or the body. Had it been otherwise, the drink and the opium traffic would have gone long ago. One blessing conferred upon the people by the reforms is that the drink and the - drug revenue is earmarked for the education of our children. I do hope that the villagers and the poor renter will have the strength to withstand all fines and other penalties for the reform they have inaugurated.

*Young India*, 22-5-1924, p. 169 at p. 171

### 145. SWEEP OUT THIS REVENUE

(From "Excise and Education")

It is no matter of pride to us that our children are being educated out of the revenue derived from this immoral source. I would almost forgive the Council entry by Congressmen, if they would boldly sweep out this revenue even though education may have to be starved. Nothing of the kind should happen if they will insist on a corresponding reduction in the military expenditure.

*Young India*, 26-12-1924, p. 427

### 146. NOT A MATTER TO TRIFLE WITH

(Originally appeared under the title "In Defence".)

(In an article Gandhiji had referred to the drink evil in the State of Travancore and giving some facts and figures had observed that the State was looking upon the increasing revenue with philosophic calmness, if not with pleasure. A correspondent wrote to Gandhiji that the above charge was not justified by facts. Gandhiji wrote the following note thereafter.)

I was not unprepared for some such defence. But I remain unrepentant. I have paid unstinted tribute to the Travancore administration. But the Abkari policy admits of no such defence. The extracts quoted read like pages from British Administration reports. Liquor is not a matter to trifle with. No soft and easy-going policy will cope with the tremendous evil. Nothing short of total prohibition can save the people from the curse.

*Young India*, 16-4-1925, p. 136

### 147. NO CONCERN OF THE GOVERNMENT!

(Originally appeared under the title "Terms of Prohibition".)

The Governor of Bombay has plainly told the Anjuman of Broach that if they want prohibition they must find fresh sources of revenue to replace the revenue derived from drink. In other words it is no concern of the Government to arrest the evil of drink. It is the duty of the reformer to supply the revenue lost by return to sobriety. Prohibitionists therefore if they want early prohibition, will have to make up their minds as to their reply to H. E. the Governor of Bombay which represents in this case the policy of the Government of India.

*Young India*, 11-2-1926, p. 59

### 148. TEMPERANCE REFORM

(From "Notes")

For some time past some Christians of Travancore have been earnestly striving to put down the drink habit by working from within, i.e., by seeing and speaking to the people given to the habit. They are trying to organize picketing with the intention of warning the visitors to the liquor dens. This simple procedure seems to have frightened the Travancore authorities. The District Magistrate at Kottayam has served a gagging notice upon Dr. T. M. Paret who is a well-known Christian in Travancore and so far as I know, whose non-violent spirit has never been questioned. This is the notice:

Whereas it has been made to appear to me from reports received from the District Superintendent of Police, Kottayam, that you are making speeches inciting people to do picketing before liquor shops and to commit other forms of lawlessness and that speeches are likely to cause breaches of the peace and bring the authority of Government into contempt, I do hereby strictly order and enjoin you under section

26 of the Regulation IV of 1095 not to make any speech, harangue or address from this day in any part of this District of Kottayam.

The notice begs the question by describing every speech advising picketing as an incitement. What "the other form of lawlessness" there can be is not made clear in the order. Thus in Travancore if the Magistrate's order correctly interprets its law, a premium is put upon the vice of drunkenness. Not only does a state provide facilities for drink but it also prevents reformers from resorting to the only effective and peaceful method of directly approaching the drunkards and appealing to them not to give way to temptation. I hope that the law of Travancore is faultless and that the District Magistrate has erred in his interpretation. The interpretation should be tested in a higher court. In any case, the reformers' duty is clear. If the law is at fault they must move for its repeal. And if all effort to set it right fails, then peaceful picketing must go on even at the risk of being imprisoned, taking care to avoid enlisting as volunteers persons who cannot restrain themselves under provocation. It is worthy of note that the gag is perpetual.

*Young India*, 18-12-1926, p. 400 at p. 401

### 149. SACRIFICE THE DRINK REVENUE

The Committee\* visited eighteen villages recording statements of witnesses from 47 villages in the Chikhli and Bulsar Talukas and in the State of Bansda. It reflects credit upon the Bansda State that the Committee is able to give a glowing account of the interest that the Maharaja Saheb of Bansda is taking in his people. But all the good that is undoubtedly being done by His Highness to his people, is really undone so long as he considers it necessary to derive an income from the drink traffic. No doubt the fact that the three neighbours adjacent to the Bansda territory, that is the British, the Gaekwad and Dharampur, have no prohibition makes it difficult for Bansda to carry out the policy of successful prohibition. But great things cannot be done without great sacrifice and great measures. Bansda cannot only lead the way by declaring out-and-out prohibition, but can then agitate for prohibition in the neighbouring States. The chief thing is to be prepared to sacrifice the drink revenue. An immediate beginning can be made by deciding not to use that revenue for any purpose however laudable it may be, save for that of carrying on an intensive anti-drink propaganda amongst the tribes given to drink. For, there is no doubt that any State that seriously wants its people to give up the evil habit cannot be satisfied merely with making it legally impossible to indulge in the evil habit, but to find out the causes of the habit and to educate the people to give it up. In the end, no State need suffer by depriving itself of the drink revenue. The inevitable outcome of any policy of prohibition carried out side by side with constructive work of the nature suggested by me must result in an ever increasing prosperity of the people and therefore of the State.

*Young India*, 16-6-1927, p. 200

\*The Raniparaj Inquiry Committee

## 150. THE PLACE OF VOLUNTARY EFFORT

### I

The work in connection with the liquor habit has got to be primarily done by us. The utmost that the Government can do or be made to do in this respect is to cease issuing toddy licences but it can hardly wean the drunkard from his ill habit. That part of the work will still have to be undertaken by private *effort*.

*Young India*, 13-9-1928, p. 311

### II

Although prohibition has been on the Congress programme since 1920, Congressmen have not taken the interest they might have taken in this very vital social and moral reform. If we are to reach our goal through nonviolent effort, we may not leave to the future government the fate of lacs of men and women who are labouring under the curse of drink and drugs.

Medical men can make a most effective contribution towards the removal of this evil. They have to discover ways of weaning the drunkard and opium-addict from the curse.

Women and students have a special opportunity in advancing this reform. By many acts of loving service they can acquire on addicts a hold which will compel them to listen to the appeal to give up the evil habit.

Congress committees can open recreation booths where the tired labourer will rest his limbs, get healthy and cheap refreshments and find suitable games. All this work is fascinating and uplifting. The non-violent approach to Swaraj is a novel approach. In it old values give place to new. In the violent way such reforms find no place. Believers in that way, in their impatience and, shall I say, ignorance, put off such things to the day of deliverance. They forget that lasting and healthy deliverance comes from within, i.e. from self-purification.

*Constructive Programme— Its Meaning and Place*, 1941, pp.6-7



## 151. ON TEMPERANCE

(Speech delivered at the meeting of Temperance Association in Bangalore.)

It is a matter of pleasure to me that you have invited me to meet you and say a few words on the subject of temperance. Some of you perhaps know that this is one of the matters that I took up before I was known to anybody and before I had conceived the thought of entering the political arena. When as a young man I went to South Africa, I observed that the coolies, indentured Indians, were fast going down owing to the drink habit. The law in South Africa made it a crime for indentured Indians to carry drink home. They could drink as much as they liked at the canteen. The result was that many women were found literally lying in gutters. It was not a thing of which any Indian could be proud. I pleaded with the Government, but mine was a voice in the wilderness. So the thing went on. But it made a lasting impression on my mind. I knew what I had to do when I came to India after a long exile.

I am not a temperance man. I am a prohibition man. I fought with my countrymen in South Africa and said, "We should not fight for an equal right to drink". I could not persuade them for a long time, but I did succeed in persuading a majority of them that to fight for rights was one thing and to fight for indulgence in vice was another. If the whites were not punished by the State for drinking, we could not plead for the same exemption. Here, in India, the Government are trading in liquor. I know from bitter experience of Harijans that they drink in spite of themselves. I have in mind an esteemed co-worker in Calcutta, namely Satish Chandra Das Gupta. He gave up a remunerative job. He was and is still considered the right hand man of Dr. Ray. He gave up his chemical work and today he lives near *Bastis*. He administered pledges to Harijans not to drink. These they broke again and again.

That broke his heart and he fasted for 15 days. It had a marvellous effect on the Harijans. They said they would not now go back on their pledges. Satish Babu had to go through that agony. It was a joy for him. A worker who fights drink tooth and nail has to go through this. Many Harijans have said to me, "Take away this temptation from us and we shall be all right. Do not put it in our way." When we are not able to control ourselves in so many things, how much less can the Harijans and the labourers control themselves? I have lived, eaten and drunk with them. They have no places of recreation. They live in wretched holes. They have no money to spend for creature comforts. What little they get, therefore, goes to canteens. I only give you the description to show you how keenly and bitterly I feel in connection with the drink evil. I have not the shadow of a doubt that we shall not be able to combat this evil successfully till prohibition comes. I have fixed views about prohibition. I have given you the result of my experience that, without prohibition, it is impossible to bring about sober habits among the labouring population in India. And I have observed that the Harijans are most addicted to this vice. India is a country in which total prohibition can succeed. People are not habitually given to drink. It is not a fashionable vice. The climate does not demand its use. But government revenue is touched by prohibition. Therefore they say, "Find other sources of income before you ask us for total prohibition." I say, "If you get revenue from impure sources and then say, 'Replace this revenue', you cannot be heard. There should be no bargaining about it."

*Harijan*, 19-1-1934, p. 5

## 152. LEGISLATION BEFORE EDUCATION

The Burma Women's Christian Temperance Union availed itself of the presence of Gandhiji in Rangoon to have him address a meeting of the Union that was held there in the Jubilee Hall. Miss May Mack, who was in the chair, while welcoming Gandhiji as "India's greatest temperance advocate," regretted the fact that often the bad example of the senior members of the family in the homes nullified to a large extent the effect of the temperance propaganda in the schools. Their organization, she said, had been more and more recognizing the fact that temperance education must precede temperance legislation in order that the latter must be effective. She therefore suggested that what was needed in Burma was an intensive educational campaign amongst adults of all races stressing the necessity for total abstinence on the part of individuals. For no shop could remain long open if it ceased to be patronized.

Gandhiji replying said:

Madam and Friends,

I feel not a little embarrassed in having to address this meeting especially as I do not possess any knowledge about your activities nor was I prepared to face this audience. I thought that I would have to meet all sorts of people who would come, some out of curiosity and others in order to know my views about temperance. But I see that I am in front of an audience, if I may so name it, of specialists. For I hope that you are all specialists in this work. You Madam, have suggested that if an educative campaign is carried on amongst the people, and as a consequence of that propaganda people who are in the habit of drinking cease to visit liquor shops, there would be no liquor shops in existence. I want to put before you my own experience without combating the view that has been suggested from the chair.

**CONDITIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

My work in connection with temperance began as early as 1893 when I went to South Africa. When I saw my own people, my own countrymen drinking and even women drinking who would never think of drinking in India and as a result leading a life of the gutter, I saw that the task was an uphill one. These men and women were not prepared to listen to any lectures on temperance, much less to any personal advice, I saw too that some of them were perfectly helpless or they thought that they were helpless. I adopted many measures, all such measures as were within the competence of a man who is without any authority. But I cannot claim any degree of visible success for those efforts. There was a kind of a 'Liquor Commission\*' appointed by the Union Government after South Africa became a Union. I gave evidence or rather wrote a note for that Commission, but I am again sorry to have to inform you that nothing came out of it. The position in South Africa was and still remains somewhat curious and anomalous. There are three different degrees of restriction on the possession, and drinking of liquor. Bantus and the Zulus are prohibited from carrying bottles with them or from being served in canteens, and yet they do drink. Indians may not possess bottles, but they may drink as much as they like in canteens, with the result especially to the women that I have described to you. The white man is of course free. There is no legislation in connection with him, but you may guess what I would like to say. It is that the source of all this evil comes from this freedom of the white men in South Africa. Some of them have amassed a fortune by exploiting the drink habit of the Bantus and the Indians.

#### **WHAT HAPPENED IN INDIA**

Then I came to India, and I found the position very different from the position in South Africa in one respect, but the problem essentially the same. There was as you are aware a hurricane temperance campaign in 1920-21. And you will not mind my saying to you that if we had then received whole-hearted support from all the temperance organizations throughout the length and breadth of India, we would have achieved complete success. If you are careful students of the temperance

movement in India you would gain the knowledge from the Government reports that we were within an ace of complete success, at least in some provinces. Many of the liquor dens were practically closed. Hundreds of opium dens in Assam were deserted. And then followed the tragedy. It consisted in Government repression. It was a shameful and sorry affair. I admit that the movement had a political colour. It was bound to have that political colour. But the political motive should not have deterred temperance organizations from helping a movement that was essentially moral. You will pardon me for taking you through this history which, if it is tragic, is also deeply interesting. The repression came about in this fashion. The Government revenue dwindled down at once in Bihar, in Assam, in the Central Provinces. There was an onrush of feeling, a desire, a yearning for self-purification. That yearning came, I do not know how, – we do not always know the mysterious ways in which God works. But there is the fact that the political movement became also a movement of self-purification, and in that onrush thousands of workers became volunteers to picket liquor shops and opium dens and the people also began to believe that it was their duty to desert the drinking booths. The Government started repression and thousands of volunteers were thrown into jail for the offence of picketing drink and drug shops with the result that to day all those canteens that were deserted and opium dens that were almost closed are, I am afraid, doing probably the same volume of business as they were doing prior to 1920-21.

#### **LEGISLATION MUST PRECEDE EDUCATION**

The moral that I would like to draw from this story is that in this connection in India and Burma – treating Burma as a separate entity for our argument – legislation has really to go hand in hand with educative propaganda if not to precede it. I have not been able to study as carefully as I would like to have done the drink habit of the Burman. I assure you that ever since I have come into touch with Burmese opinion I am trying to learn from Burmese friends about this drink habit of the Burman, but I can speak about it only from second-hand evidence as

against India about which I can speak from first-hand knowledge. And I am here before you to give my own evidence that drinking is not a habit with the aristocracy, certainly not with the middle class man; it is a habit confined to the labourers and especially to the factory hands. And this is an interesting piece of evidence that I am placing before you. Why do factory hands drink when they did not drink before they came to work in the factories, even as those men and women who went to work in South Africa were not drinking before they migrated there? The answer is that the conditions there are such and the temptations that are placed in their way are such that they become addicted to the habit of drink. But even these men who have become addicted to the habit of drink do not justify it. They have a sense of shame about it. If you speak to them about it, they will tell you they are helpless, they are labourers; they will tell you all sorts of falsehoods and try to deceive you, but they are ashamed of this habit. In Europe it will be ungentlemanly on my part if I do not stand a drink when you come to see me. When I was a student in England, I found myself in a most embarrassing position because I would not stand a drink to friends. But that is not the case in India, and therefore I suggest that it would be a wrong thing for you to say that education has to precede legislation. Education will never be able to cope with the evil. There is no prohibition because drink brings a large revenue. Even Indian Ministers say, "We cannot forego this revenue, but you must go on educating."

#### **A MISCHIEVOUS FLEA**

About this revenue also there is tragedy. The ministers—it applies to Burma equally with India—should never have been placed in that embarrassing position. Excise as you know is a transferred subject. It should never have been so made. Excise revenue should have remained as part of the central revenue, so that it should be open to the Government at any moment to forego this revenue and declare complete prohibition. In a mighty country like America where drink was so common they have been able to declare prohibition; how much more easy should it be in India or Burma where liquor is not the fashion, where the vast majority of

the people do not want liquor, where if you take a referendum you will get millions of signatures in favour of any representation for the introduction of prohibition legislation? The excise revenue is 25 crores. It is not a revenue on which any government should take pride in conducting its administration. It is a revenue which must be sacrificed and whilst it lasts, it should be held as sacrosanct and be wholly dedicated to the purpose of eradicating the drink evil. But today it is being utilised for educating our children with the result that a tremendous barrier has been put against this necessary temperance legislation. People are made to think that they will not be able to educate their children if this revenue stops. If things go on unchecked like this a whole nation might have to perish. If the evil spreads, it may be too late to undertake legislation. In America it has been possible to educate public opinion in favour of prohibition because there is universal education there, but it may not be possible to mobilize public opinion like that in a country like India where there is illiteracy on such a vast scale and its handmade superstition. I would therefore appeal to you, especially the women, who are concerned with temperance work to take courage in both your hands. I do not ask you to take as gospel truth what I have told you. Test the truth for yourselves and if you find that what I have told you is more than confirmed by your investigations, then I suggest that you will make it your sacred duty to carry on a whirlwind campaign for total prohibition. The task is difficult only because the rights that have been created through the drink evil belong to the ruling race.

#### **THE REFORMER'S POSITION**

If you discuss this problem with the administrators, they will tell you all sorts of stories and put all manner of difficulties in the way of carrying this legislation through.

Do not believe these difficulties at all. There is no difficulty at all beyond the difficulty of making up the deficit of revenue. If you and I have made up our minds that this evil has got to be eradicated and if it can be eradicated only by

prohibition legislation, then it is for the Government to find a way not of the deficit difficulty. It is not open to it to ask you to suggest ways and means for making up that deficit. That would be like the conduct of man who comes to you with unclean hands and asks you to help him to clean them. However there is the question of picketing. When the psychological moment comes—and I am praying for that moment—when every liquor shop and opium den is picketed I will expect you to lend a helping hand and not to say, 'How can we help him? He is an agitator.'" Even now an intensive agitation for temperance is being carried on in the Surat District and that has been possible because there is a band of workers including women belonging to cultured families, self-sacrificing and brave. When we have got a compact body of reliable and unimpeachable workers we shall carry on this campaign over the whole country. And when that time comes you will find the whole of India dotted with pickets and I hope that that influence will percolate through the Bay of Bengal to Burma. Burmese ladies and gentlemen too may then, if they so choose, carry on picketing and thus save a noble race from extinction which so far as I can see stares them in the face — as much as it does India — if they are not weaned from this curse in time.

*Young India*, 18-4-1929, p. 121



### 153. REDECLARATION OF MY FAITH

(Originally appeared under the title "A Gentle Rebuke".)

C. Rajagopalachari's eagle eye sees everything that appears in print about the drink evil. He saw a report of my very innocent speech at the village of Maroli\* where the other day I laid the foundation of a weaving institute. I had there attempted to show the connection that exists between factory labour and drink and said how Mithuben Petit had, whilst doing prohibition work, discovered that if the people who ceased to visit the liquor shops she picketed were to be permanently weaned from drink, they should have some ambition provided in life, some work found for them during their idle hours. I then showed how she found such occupation in hand-spinning and weaving. I further went on to show that if people had to do excessive labour, they would want some stimulant and illustrated it by an experience from my own life when during the Boer War I had to issue from the commissariat rations of rum for those bearers who were used drink and who pleaded with me for rum which, they said, would enable them to bear the fatigue and resume next day's march. Of course, this was a superstition. But superstitions die hard.

Rajagopalachari feared that the report that he had read would be distorted to yield all kinds of meanings favourable to the opponents of prohibition. His fear has been justified. I have received embarrassing congratulations on my conversion to sanity. They embarrass me because I am not conscious of the conversion imputed to me. I feel like a man who falsely reported to have died reads his obituary notices and blushes to have the virtues he never knew he had possessed.

Let me therefore redeclare my faith in undiluted prohibition before I land myself in deeper water. If I was appointed dictator for one hour for all India, the first thing I would do would be to close without compensation all the liquor shops, destroy all the toddy palms such as I know them in Gujarat, compel factory owners

to produce humane conditions for their workmen and open refreshment and recreation rooms where these workmen would get innocent drinks and equally innocent amusements. I would close down the factories if the owners pleaded want of funds. Being a teetotaler I would retain my sobriety in spite of the possession of one hour's dictatorship and therefore arrange for the examination of my European friends and diseased persons who may be in medical need of brandy and the like at State expense by medical experts and where necessary they would receive certificates which would entitle them to obtain the prescribed quantity of the fiery waters from certified chemists. The rule will apply *mutatis mutandis* to intoxicating drugs.

For the loss of revenue from drinks, I would straightway cut down the military expenditure and expect the Commander-in-Chief to accommodate himself to the new condition in the best way he can. The workmen left idle by the closing of factories I would remove to model farms to be immediately opened as far as possible in the neighbourhood of the factories unless I was advised during the brief hour that the State could profitably run the factories under the required conditions and could therefore take over from the owners.

*Young India*, 25-6-1931, p. 155

\*Maroli is a small village about 12 miles from Surat in the South.

#### 154. AN APPEAL

The reader will find something about Kali Paraj in my usual weekly notes. Many outside Gujarat may not know the meaning of Kali Paraj. It literally means black people. The name seems to have been given to a portion of the people of Gujarat by those who regarded themselves as superior to them. So far as colour is concerned the Kali Paraj are no blacker than or different from the rest. But today they are downtrodden, helpless, superstitious and timid. Their great vice is drink. By far the largest number of them belong to the Baroda State.

It was among these people that a great awakening came three years ago. Thousands left off drink and even flesh-eating. This proved too much for the liquor dealers. Most of these were Parsis. It is said they tried all the means possible to induce the teetotallers to revert to drink and that they succeeded to a great extent. The officials too are said to have conspired against the reformers. And now whether as a result of these efforts or otherwise there has sprung up among these people a party who teach them to regard temperance as a sin and by ostracism and other means seek to break the spirit and the zeal of those who are battling against themselves and an evil habit handed down from generation to generation.

One of the resolutions passed at the meeting of which I have taken a fairly long notice elsewhere was to ask the States of Baroda, Dharampur and Bansda and also the British Government to close down all liquor shops. This is a big order, it will be said. The attempt of a whole nation to bring about total prohibition, it will be added, failed miserably. How then can the ineffective appeal of a handful of helpless men and women succeed? There is a great deal of force in the argument. And yet the two attempts stand on a different footing. The attempt of 1921 was directed against the British Government by non-co-operators who were bent on wresting power from the Government. It was moreover directed by those who had

not themselves suffered from the existence of liquor shops. Now the appeal comes from those who have been a prey to the evil. It is an appeal from the powerless to the powerful. It is addressed to all the Governments concerned and not merely to the British Government. These men are no non-co-operators. They do not know the difference between co-operation and non-co-operation. They slave for others unwillingly, almost unknowingly, and often under fear of oppression. They do not know what Swaraj is. To them giving up drink and removal of the temptation in the shape of liquor shops is Swaraj. Their appeal therefore is on humanitarian grounds and should prove irresistible.

As President, I am bound to give effect to their resolution addressed to Governments concerned. The appeal to the British Government can only be through the Legislators. It is open to the councillors to forego the liquor revenue even though they may have to run the risk of starving the education department. I invite them to see the people themselves and have an ocular demonstration of the evil that is corrupting a whole race of men and women. They must dare to do the right thing if they will save their contrymen.

It is different with the States of Baroda, Dharampur and Bansda. They can, if they will, shut up the liquor shops and save their people and themselves from destruction. I use the pronoun "themselves" deliberately, because the destruction of a large body of people in small states means their own destruction. Will they not listen to the appeal of those who want to be helped against themselves?

And of the Parsi liquor dealers? I know that with them a question of livelihood. But they belong to one of the most enterprising of races among men. They are resourceful and intelligent. They can easily find other honourable means of livelihood. Men and women have been known before now to give up questionable callings and take up work or profession conducive to the moral growth of society. I claim the right to speak to the Parsis, for I know and love them. Some of the best of my associates have been and are Parsis. They have done much for India. They have given Dadabhai and Pherozeshah Mehta. More is expected of those who do

much. Let the Parsi liquor dealers commence by abstaining from interference (assuming the truth of the charge) with the reform.

*Young India*, 22-1-1925, p. 28

## 155. THE DRINK CURSE IN TRAVANCORE

(From "All about Travancore")

The one thing most deplorable next to untouchability is the drink curse. The total excise revenue of the State was in 1922 Rs. 46,94,300 against Land Revenue Rs. 38,18,652 and out of the total revenue of Rs. 1,96,70,130. This I regard as a most serious blot upon the administration. That so much of its revenue should be derived from intoxicants affords food for serious reflection. The excise revenue subdivides itself thus:

<i>Abkari</i>	Rs. 26,82,367
Opium and Ganja	Rs. 3,11,635
Tobacco	<u>Rs. 17,00,298</u>
Total	<u>Rs. 46,94,300</u>

Thus the liquor revenue is a terrific item. I was told that the drink was most prevalent among the Christians and that it was decimating hundreds of homes and bringing poverty and disgrace upon thousands of men otherwise able and intelligent. From all one can see the State is looking upon the increasing revenue with philosophic calmness, if not pleasure. The communities are playing with the evil and playing at temperance. It is necessary to stamp out the evil before it is too late. The most effective method no doubt is to make the getting of liquor impossible except upon a medical prescription. How to give up the largest source of revenue is the question. If I was the autocrat able to impose my will upon Travancore I would remove that source of revenue altogether and close every liquor shop, take a census of those who are addicted to the habit and find out means of giving them healthy refreshments and healthy amusement or employment as the case may be and rely upon the people turned sober contributing to the revenue more by their increased efficiency than by drinking. But the days of autocracy are over. Democracy is the autocrat. The Legislative Council and

the Popular Assembly can do the whole thing. It would be wrong to fling one stone at the Maharani Regent and another at the Dewan and say that the duty was done. The people are having a daily increasing share in the administration of the State. They are extremely well-educated. They can force the State to use the whole of the revenue while it is being received, towards the eradication of the evil and insist upon closing the nefarious traffic in a year's time. But whether it can be done in a year or it must take longer is for the people to decide. Let them know that there is a snake in the grass. And I respectfully ask once more, who can lead in this matter if not the Christians? My importunity to the Christians does not absolve either the Hindus or the Musalmans. But in such matters the first appeal must be to the stronger party.

*Young India*, 26-3-1925, p. 101 at p. 103

## 156. PROHIBITION AND MADRAS GOVERNMENT

(From "Notes")

Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari has unearthed a Government order which is simplicity itself but which conveys a world of meaning. In a note accompanying a copy of the order Sjt. Rajagopalachari writes to the press:

Among the many post-Reform additions to our recurring charges are the new Health Officers and their staff. They are expected to educate the people about cholera, malaria etc.

Some of the members of the staff seem to have enquired whether they should carry on propaganda against the drink habit also and the laconic reply received was:

The Government consider that the Public Health Staff should not carry on anti-drink propaganda.

It is to be noted here that there is no reason assigned for the ban on anti-drink propaganda. On the contrary, one would expect explicit instructions to these conservators of health to instruct the people about the evil effects of drink on the body under a popular Government. They would be required to tell the people how deadly the effect of alcohol is upon the human body and show by magic lantern slides in a graphic manner the ruin that alcohol brings wherever it finds a place. But it is madness to expect the existing Government to do any such thing. One may as well expect the keeper of a public house to warn its visitors against running into the death trap. Is not the Government the keeper of all the public houses of India? It is the 25 crores revenue that enables us to give University education to our children. It enables the Government to impose *pax Britannica* upon us. Not till the people realize their duty and develop strength to resist the Government in its pro-drink policy will it be possible to have a dry India.

*Young India*, 6-5-1926, p. 161



### 157. A WRONG VIEW OF PROHIBITION

(Originally appeared under the title "Total Prohibition")

I ask you to realise the fact that the alteration of the present *Abkari* Act with regard to making, manufacture and possession of liquor etc. must necessarily, to a large extent, lead to harassing of the people. You must be prepared for such a harassment which is an inevitable concomitant of the policy of prohibition. I must count then upon your unstinted support. I do not want your support for picketing shops, to preach about the evils of drink and other kindred work. But I want your help in the matter of putting down illicit manufacture of liquor and kindred crimes.

This is an extract from the speech of the Madras Minister for Public Health and Excise reported in the *Hindu*. There is one more assistance the Minister has asked the people to render, i.e., submit to increase taxation. Of this I do not propose at present to say anything except that where the people are able, they should submit to further taxation on proof of necessity. No monetary cost is too great to pay for achieving total prohibition.

But at the present moment, I would confine myself to the extract quoted by me. I fear that the Minister has taken a wrong view of prohibition. In my opinion, it has not to be taken piece-meal. To be successful it should be taken as a whole. It is not a one-district question but it is an all-India question. I have not hesitated to give my opinion, that it was a wicked thing for the Imperial Government to have transferred this the most immoral source of revenue to the provinces and to have thus made this tainted revenue the one source for defraying the cost of the education of Indian youth.

But what pains me about the Minister's speech is his superficial treatment of a question which affects the well-being of the masses. Surely he is not serious about his scheme if he expects the people to do his police work.

And why does he frighten the people by saying *that there must be* harassment if prohibition is tried? Is there harassment of the people because theft or manufacture of gunpowder are classed as crimes? Is not unlicensed distillation even now a crime? What the minister implies therefore is, that the men who today hold licenses to manufacture or sell liquor will after the prohibition distil surreptitiously and that therefore they will be harassed. There need be in this no harassment of the people.

But it betrays want of imagination and lack of sympathy with the people, if the Minister believes that as the prohibitionist he has nothing more to do but to declare prohibition and prosecute those who will break his laws. I venture to submit that prosecutions are the smallest and the destructive part of prohibition. I suggest that there is a larger and constructive side to prohibition. People drink because of the conditions to which they are reduced. It is the factory labourers and others that drink. They are forlorn, uncared for, and they take to drink. They are no more vicious by nature than teetotalers are saints by nature. The majority of people are controlled by their environment. Any minister who is sincerely anxious to make prohibition a success will have to develop the zeal and qualities of a reformer. He will then require precisely the help that the Madras Minister is reported to have scorned. In my humble opinion, he does need pickets and men and women who would "preach about the evils of drink" and do "other kindred work". It is just in these very things that he will want an army of volunteers who will be associated with him in reforming the life of the drunkard. He will have to convert every drink shop into a refreshment shop and concert room combined. Poor labourers will want some place where they can congregate and get wholesome, cheap, refreshing, non-intoxicating drinks, and if they can have some good music at the same time, it would prove as a tonic to them and draw them. These can by judicious management and association of the people become paying concerns for the State. He who will handle the problem of temperance will have to give a more serious study to it than the Minister seems to have done. Let him

study the methods adopted in America and tried by the great temperance organisations of the world. This study will give but limited help. For the Western conditions are widely different from the Indian. Our methods too, will have, therefore, to be largely different. Whereas total prohibition in the West is most difficult of accomplishment, I hold that it is the easiest of accomplishment in this country. When an evil like drink in the West attains the status of respectability, it is the most difficult to deal with. With us drink is still, thank God, sufficiently disrespectable and confined not to the general body of the people but to a minority of the poor classes.

*Young India*, 8-9-1927, p. 296

#### **158. THE PRICE I AM WILLING TO PAY FOR PROHIBITION**

(From a speech at a meeting of prohibitionists held in Madras a gist of which appeared in "Weekly Letter" by M.D.)

I would rather have India reduced to a state of pauperism than have thousands of drunkards in our midst. I would rather have India without education if that is the price to be paid for making it dry.

*Young India*, 15-9-1927, p. 306

### 159. WHEN SATAN BECOMES IRRESISTIBLE

(Originally appeared under the title "Prohibition")

Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari who has been entrusted with the prohibition propaganda by the Working Committee has issued the first number of the monthly *Prohibition* the official organ of the Prohibition League of India. Its price is 2 annas postage extra, and can be had at Gandhi Ashram, Tiruchengodu. The contents are interesting. They show how the Government thwart prohibition by every means at their disposal. Damoh is a district of the Central Provinces. It carried prohibition in the teeth of opposition. I must ask the curious to read the history of the campaign in the pages of the journal. I cannot however resist quoting the following tragic story of damages claimed by a liquor vendor:

Perumal Naidu, Village Munsiff of Singarapet, Dt. Salem, Madras, was tried departmentally by the Divisional Revenue Officer on the following charges:

1. That he proclaimed by beat of drum that none in the village should drink toddy;
2. that he took pledges from Adi-Dravidas not to drink;
3. that he organized caste discipline against drink and levied fines from those who broke the rule; and
4. that he beat one Nollayan for having got drunk.

Perumal Naidu did not admit the charges but pleaded that he always assisted Government. In his own picturesque language, "It was his end and aim and bounden duty to support the Government and render all assistance to it to realise good income in such matters, and that he had been doing so and never went amiss."

The man's plea was however not believed and he was suspended for one year by the Divisional Officer. Said this officer in the concluding para of his order, which is the only para of which copy was given, the rest being "Confidential":

"In conclusion. I hold that it has been proved beyond any doubt that there was a campaign against drink in the village and that it was tom-tomed in the village that nobody should drink toddy: that the village Munsiff failed in his duty in not having reported it to the authorities. There are strong reasons to suggest that he connived at this campaign, if he did not actively participate in it. His antecedents show that he is apt to do very high-handed actions. Still in consideration of his 25 years' service I give him a chance to improve. I suspend him for one year from the date on which he was relieved with severe warning that if he gives room to any complaint hereafter he will be dismissed from service." (D.No.3469 of 26–5th April 1927)

Not content with the infliction of this departmental punishment the local toddy shop renter filed a suit for damages for Rs. 300 on the ground that by reason of the defendant's dissuasion, he lost all custom for full three months, January to March 1926, and that the defendant was bound to make good the loss. The Munsiff framed the following issues:

1. Whether the suit should not have been brought within one year from the date of accrual of cause of action;
2. Whether the defendant did the acts attributed to him and caused any loss to the plaintiff of which the law should take notice;
3. If so, to what extent is the defendant bound to make good that loss.

The suit is pending.

Is it any wonder if I call a system satanic under which such things are possible? I need not be told that there may be other systems more satanic than this. It would be time enough to consider such a retort if I had to make a choice between satanic systems. The pity of it is that many educated Indians who lead public

opinion are drawn into this satanic net as witness what Mahadev Desai said about the recent dinner to the Viceroy at the Chelmsford Club. All but one or two Indians drank champagne to their fill! When Satan comes disguised as a champion of liberty, civilization, culture and the like, he makes himself almost irresistible. It is therefore a good thing that prohibition is an integral part of the Congress programme.

*Young India*, 11-7-1929, p. 229

## 160. ENDORSING MODERATE USE OF FORGE

(Originally appeared under the title “Correspondence— Prohibition Campaign”)

To,

The Editor, *Young India* Sir,

Surely Mr. Rajagopalachari's scheme on p. 112 of your issue for the 4th April is inconsistent with Mr. Gandhi's dogma of non-violence. Prohibition is force, and force is no remedy for anything, least of all for intemperance, especially among those who repudiate the use of force (violence) in any shape. "Non-violent" prohibition is self-contradictory. Could one frame a section of the Penal Code to the effect that any one drinking a glass of toddy (or beer) in his own house shall be liable to fine or imprisonment? I am altogether in favour of real temperance, but equally opposed to tyranny, and the prohibition of moderate (quite temperate) drinking is nothing but tyranny.

Yours truly,

6-5-1929

J. B. Pennington

I am unable to subscribe to the opinion that prohibition is always force. If I prohibit my children from doing some wrong and for a breach of that prohibition I punish not them but myself either by fasting or otherwise as I have often done with excellent results, I use no force in Mr. Pennington's sense. I use the force, that is to say, not of the body but of the spirit, not of the brute but of love. But I am free to confess that Sjt. Rajagopalachari's prohibition is not spiritual but physical, not lovely but brutal, nevertheless I must plead guilty to having endorsed it. Unfortunately for me I have to confess that my non-violence is very imperfect, inconsistent and primitive. Only it is still miles ahead of what Mr. Pennington is likely to conceive. I hold drinking spirituous liquors in India to be more criminal than petty thefts which I see starving men and women committing and for which they are prosecuted and punished. I do tolerate, very unwillingly it is true and

helplessly because of want of full realization of the law of love, a moderate system of penal code. And so long as I do, I must advocate the summary punishment of those who manufacture the fiery liquid and those even who will persist in drinking it notwithstanding repeated warnings. I do not hesitate forcibly to prevent my children from rushing into fire or deep waters. Rushing to red water is far more dangerous than rushing to a raging furnace or flooded stream. The latter destroys only the body, the former destroys both body and soul.

*Young India*, 8-8-1929, p. 264



### 161. IS THE INFERENCE JUSTIFIED?

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "A Vicious Inference".)

"The estimated, drink and drug bill paid by Madras in 1928-29", according to the statistics collected by Sjt. G. Rajagopalachari, was Rs. 16,83,00,000 i.e., seventeen crores in round figures. The revenue got out of this was Rs. 5,10,00,000 i.e. a little over five crores. The net waste was, therefore, say 11-3/4 crores. This is more than the land revenue by over four crores. These figures are startling enough to make a reformer think. But the worst is yet to follow. The same vigilant eye has observed that the drink bill increases year after year as also crime against *Abkari* laws. From these statistics the Madras Government is reported to have drawn this vicious inference:

The continued increase of crime against *Abkari* laws and its appearance in all parts of the Presidency must give pause to any immediate drastic action in the way of cutting off the supply of licit liquor lest the result should prove more serious to the general morality than are the present conditions.

This is the same as saying that because the crime of thieving is on the increase there should be a progressive relaxation of the laws against thieving. The inference is based on the assumption that drinking intoxicating liquors is not a disease or an evil in the same sense as thieving. The fact however is that the drink habit has been demonstrated to be a parent of thieving as of many other crimes. The proper inference to be drawn from the increasing crime is that the existence of liquor shops is a fatal trap for poor humanity and that therefore the true method is forthwith to declare total prohibition without counting the cost. Crime there will still be against the prohibition laws as there is and always has been against laws prohibiting thieving, etc. If there is no licensed thieving, there may be no licensed drinking. For an unsophisticated mind that is the only inference possible and that is the straight and simple logic. A Government which wants a

revenue anyhow to run an expensive foreign administration manufactures logic to suit its evil purpose.

*Young India*, 26-12-1929, p. 417

## 162. A VALUABLE SUGGESTION

(Gandhiji's note to an article on Prohibition by "A Medical Friend" is given below. The article is not reproduced herein)

This is a valuable contribution to the discussion on prohibition. Whilst there are things which cannot be accepted, there are suggestions which are worthy of consideration. The writer adopts the slippery road of gradualness for the sake of revenue. That way lies utter failure. But the suggestion about State monopoly of manufacture and sale of intoxicants and about unfermented toddy is perfectly sound.

*Harijan*, 13-11-1937, p. 331 at p. 337

### 163. TOTAL PROHIBITION—I

(From "Notes")

Sjt. G. Rajagopalachari has issued a very brief but telling manifesto, recommending total prohibition as a constructive single item in the Congress as it will be constituted, when and if it endorses the Patna Resolution. In a private letter he says that total prohibition can be, should be and is "the only unifying political force." It can bring together Brahmins and Non-Brahmins. It can weld all political parties and it can also appeal to the masses who are directly concerned in and are to be affected by total prohibition. There is not a shadow of a doubt that total prohibition is a crying need and that without it the ruin that the drink curse has brought to thousands of happy homes must continue its deadly course at an ever increasing pace. It is therefore to be hoped that the suggestion made in the manifesto will be taken up by all concerned.

*Young India*, 24-12-1925, p. 451

#### 164. TOTAL PROHIBITION—II

The Swaraj Party in Madras deserves the congratulations of all friends of the poor for having included total prohibition in their programme. Were it not for the very potential force of inertia we would long since have done away with this evil. It is sapping the vitality of the laboring classes, who need to be helped against themselves. There is no country in the world which is so well- fitted for immediate prohibition as India. Public opinion has always been on the right path. No referendum is necessary as it would be in European countries, for the simple reason that in India the intellectual classes do not drink as in European countries. The Rev. W.L. Ferguson of Madras has brought out a pamphlet clearly showing the need for prohibition. Of the financial burden the reverend gentleman says:

"No country, however rich and prosperous, can really afford to drink, for drink brings nations to the verge of ruin and sometimes topples them over the brink. India is a poor country as yet. She is poor in her capital wealth; she is poor in education; she is poor in sanitation and public health; she is poor in housing; she is poor in agriculture and manufacturing; she is poor in means of communication in rural areas; and if there is any department of her life in which she does not need more of good than she possesses, let some knowing one inform us, for we do not know what or where it is. India cannot afford the use of intoxicants. Financially the drain is too heavy. Just what the cost is in rupees we are unable to say; but some idea of it can be obtained from the revenues derived by the Government in the Excise Department. In round numbeis this is Rs. 20,00,00,000 per annum. Some estimate that the total drink and drug bill of India for a year amounts to five times this sum received by Government; and others place it at three times that figure. I do not believe that we shall err very far if we take a figure half way between these two and place the amount at Rs. 80,00,00,000. Now of this vast sum the greater part comes from the earnings of the labouring classes, —the very people who need it most for promoting the welfare of themselves, their families

and their communities. If we assume that three-fourths of the drink and drug bill of India is paid by the poor and the labouring classes, some Rs. 60,00,00,000 is the burden they are bearing. And what could be done towards putting India's poor on their feet, if this vast revenue annually were saved from intoxicants and used for home-building and nation-building enterprises! It would not be long before thrift would replace squalour in our great cities and prosperity begins to attend the humble dwellings of our villages."

The moral loss is even greater than the financial. Drinks and drugs degrade those who are addicted to them and those who traffic in them. The drunkard forgets the distinction between wife, mother and sister and indulges in crimes of which in his sober moments he will be ashamed. Any one who has anything to do with labour knows to what state the labourers are reduced when they are under the satanic influence of drink. Nor are the other classes better off. I have known the captain of a ship forgetting himself in his drunken state. The ship had to be entrusted to the care of the chief officer. Barristers having drunk have been known to be rolling in gutters. Only these better-placed men are protected by the police all over the world whereas the poor drunkard is punished for his poverty.

If drink in spite of its harmfulness was not a fashionable vice among Englishmen, we would not find it in the organized state we do in this pauper country. If we were not hypnotised we would refuse to educate our children out of the proceeds of vice, which the drink and the drug revenue undoubtedly is.

Mr. Ferguson suggests fresh taxation to replace this vice-begotten revenue. In my opinion no taxation is necessary, if only the Government will reduce the frightful military expenditure not required for defence against aggression but manifestly imposed to suppress internal commotion. The demand therefore for prohibition must go hand in hand with the demand for a corresponding reduction in military expenditure. The missionary bodies if they will range themselves along side of public opinion and will insist on prohibition, must study the question of military expenditure and if they are satisfied that much of the expenditure is due to a

false fear of internal trouble, must demand reduction in military expenditure at least to the extent of the drink and drug revenue.

The duty before the Swaraj and other political parties is quite clear. They owe it to the country to demand total and immediate prohibition with one voice. If the demand is not granted the Swaraj party has an additional count in the indictment against the Government. Prohibition as Mr. G. Rajagopalachari has so aptly shown, is an item of first class political education of the masses. And it is one item on which all parties, all races and all denominations can be easily united.

Since writing the foregoing, I have seen the report of the proceedings of the Prohibition Convention held at Delhi under the chairmanship of Dewan Bahadur M. Ramchandra Rao. The convention has passed what I would call a timid resolution. After avowing the imperative need for total prohibition it "urges upon the Government of India and the Local Governments to accept total prohibition of alcoholic liquor as the goal of their excise policy". This I suppose neither the Government of India nor the Local Governments would have any difficulty in accepting. Swaraj is the accepted goal of all parties including the Government of India, but it is the immediate thing for the Congress to attain, a distant goal for the Government to cherish, though unattainable. So will total prohibition be an unattainable goal with the Government. Quite in keeping with this resolution is the advice of the Convention to the Government to "afford adequate facilities for ascertaining the will of the people with regard to this question, the introduction of the local option laws being in the opinion of the Convention the best means of ascertaining the wishes of the people in this matter". As I have already stated, there is no question of ascertaining the wishes of the people, for they are already known. The question is one of the Government foregoing the drink and drug revenue. I wish the Convention had taken up a stronger, more enlightened and more consistent line of action. The Convention has now become a National Prohibition Party called the Prohibition League of India. Let me hope that this League will adopt a more forward policy and not treat total Prohibition as a goal

to be realised in the dim and distant future, but a national policy to be immediately adopted and enforced without the cumbersome process of taking a referendum.

*Young India*, 4-2-1926, p. 49

### 165. TOTAL PROHIBITION—III

A correspondent writes:

Ever since the advent of non-co-operation movement for the past five or six years steps were continually being taken by the people of these villages – Illur-Kallamadi--Tarimela group, for the permanent closure of intoxicating drink shops in these villages. It will occupy many columns to trace the history. Suffice it to say that this year it has been notified by the authorities to the great satisfaction of the villages that the arrack shops of these villages have been permanently closed and the names removed from bid-lists.

"This information having been received only yesterday, today (11th *Mafia Shiiaratri*) the people of this village i.e. TarimeJs, went in a procession attended by music and *Bhajan* to all the main temples of the village and offered cocoanuts to Gods. To perpetuate this incident in the memory of the villagers *sherbet* (out of 5 maunds of jaggery) was prepared and served among the villagers. 64 seers of green gram was also cooked and served to the Sudra and other classes of people from 4 O'clock in the evening till late in the night. After this *Harishchandra* drama was enacted by the actors of this village.

I congratulate the villagers on the closing of their liquor shops. But if there had been a referendum probably very few, as in the Punjab, would have taken the trouble of registering their votes unless there had been personal canvassing.

*Young India*, 29-4-1926, p. 158 at p. 159



## 166; TOTAL PROHIBITION –IV

National Provincial Governments are now in full swing in India. Happily on the question of prohibition, there can be no differences of opinion between the Congress and the Muslim League. And if we all followed a concerted policy and the States too joined in, India would be dry in no time and earn the blessings of lakhs of homes. To the discredit of the Governments under virtual martial law, Governors and their advisers had the shamelessness to reverse the policy which had been already adopted in some provinces and misappropriate the revenue which was raised by the provinces in question. Let them now take up prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Let them, too, not rest content with prohibition legislation. They have to devise methods of educating the drinking public in the harm that drink does and provide them with innocent recreation and health-giving drinks. Every bar or, failing that, a place next door to it should, so far as possible, be utilized as a refreshment and recreation room. If this constructive activity is taken up, it must prove a source of revenue for the State besides prohibition benefiting and reconstructing thousands of ruined homes.

Moreover, toddy tapping should be replaced by *nira*-tapping for the purpose of converting *nira* into *gur*, much to the advantage of the nation which needs cheap sugar. These columns have shown how in some ways *tad-gur* is preferable to *canc-gur*.

These reflections are suggested by the following paragraph from a circular letter addressed by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (Fyzabad Road, Lucknow) to the Press. From it, I take the following items addressed to the students under the heading "What Can Youth Do?"

1. Pledge themselves to total abstinence from all intoxicants and habit-forming drugs, which include tobacco. It helps to sign the pledge.

2. Demand a thorough Alcohol and Narcotic Drugs Education, to be a part of the school curriculum.
3. Demand while under training a part in social service, including temperance work, educating the public of the harm done to them through the use of the intoxicants.
4. Recommend that in the Scheme for Small Savings Campaign for rural population, total abstinence from all intoxicants be stressed.
5. Ally themselves against the awful waste of precious food-stuffs for liquor in breweries and distilleries to feed the nation.
6. Join up with a Temperance Society. The W.C.T.U. has been in this struggle for the last 59 years in India. It needs your encouragement and support. Their motto is; "For God, for Home and Every Land".
7. Make use of temperance literature. Rs. 2/- a year will bring to you a 100 leaflets a month either in Hindi or Urdu, also in some other vernaculars to give away. The monthly magazine, the *Indian Temperance News* in English can be placed in any library (not personal) for a rupee a year. If students wish to subscribe to it, it might have the same reduction.
8. Holidays, a good time for this service.
9. As true patriots, to learn the lesson of how much they can give to the country rather than how much they can get out of it for themselves.

Simla, 7-5-1946.

*Harijan*, 19-5-1946, p. 140

## 167. AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD

(Originally appeared under the title "Prohibition".)

The following extracts from Rev. E. Gordon's writing provoke thoughts on total prohibition:

With famine facing the country, we cannot very well quarrel with sincere efforts for combating the menace, but why prohibition of foodstuffs such as, pastries, ice-cream etc. which have real food value, and why talk of prohibition or severe reduction of supply of sugar to aerated water and other mineral water manufacturers and yet keep absolutely silent about the prohibition or severe reduction of cereals and sugar to the distilleries and breweries? Is the drinking of alcoholic liquors any less of a luxury than the eating of pies, pastries and cakes? Can even the most astute and ardent lovers of alcoholic beverages argue that these drinks are so essential to life that no reduction can be made in the amount of cereals and sugar required to make whisky, beer etc.?

Granted that there is a certain amount of food value in beer, is it equal in value to the barley that could be used in making bread or cakes?

The President of the United States has ordered a drastic cut in the quota of wheat to be issued to distilleries in the U.S.A. How can we from India plead with America to send us large quantities of grain to save millions from death by starvation, when no published statements assure us that grains, whether imported or grown in this country, will not be used for intoxicating drinks?

We give our whole-hearted approval to the Congress Ministry of Madras in their desire to introduce prohibition as soon as possible. Notwithstanding all that anti-prohibitionists say about the failure of prohibition in the United States, if they would honestly look at the other side of the picture, they would find that the drinking is far worse now than it was then and the amount of spirituous liquors is increasing year by year. Other things being equal, we sincerely believe that under

prohibition, India will forge ahead much quicker and more rapidly than she could without prohibition. Honestly tried and courageously and indefatigably enforced, she will prove to the world the extent to which liquor has dragged and is dragging down the nations of the world.

The Reverend gentleman is right. India has the capacity and the opportunity to lead the world in the matter of prohibition. Can she forgo the revenue derived from this degrading drink? She must, if she is to live. I have a hideous tale from South Africa, related to me by Satya- grahi Cachalia Junior, a worthy son of his deceased father who was a hero of the first Satyagraha campaign in that country. He tells me that a thoughtless agitation has brought to the Indian community, the freedom to drink, with the result that it is sapping their moral strength. I know what this deadly freedom means. On this issue there is no difference of opinion between Indians, Musalmans and, shall I say, others in India, save the liquor interest.

I have no doubt that the loss of revenue which drains the moral and material means of the poor drinkers, will be more than balanced by the gain accruing to them from prohibition. Moreover, the military burden in defence of which the argument for the maintenance of the excise revenue has so far been used, cannot hold water in the New India, where that burden will no longer exist. The excise revenue must, therefore, be sacrificed without delay and without hesitation. No thought of the loss of this revenue, should interfere with the progress of this much- needed reform. Whether the happy conjunction between the Congress and the League takes place or not, the Congress Provinces should dare to do the right.

The positive side of prohibition must run side by side with the negative. The positive consists in providing the drinker with counter-attractions giving him health and innocent amusement.

New Delhi, 7-9-1946

*Harijan*, 15-9-1946, p. 313

## 168. PROHIBITION OF INTOXICANTS

(From the original in Gujarati)

This is the fittest time for this reform. There is a people's Government. Both parts of India including the Indian States are ready for the reform. All over the two parts there is a shortage of foodstuffs and clothing. Dare one think of indulging in intoxicants – drinks or drugs—when people are on the borderland of starvation and nakedness? The money spent on wines and opiates is not only a waste, but it adds to it loss of self-control. One labouring under the influence of intoxicants will do things which he will never do in a sober state. Thus from every point of view prohibition is a vital necessity.

We cannot eradicate the evil merely by passing laws. The addict will manage to satisfy his craving anyhow. Those carrying on the black trade will not readily give it up.

Therefore, the following steps will have to be taken simultaneously in order to make a success of the reform:

1. Passing of the requisite law.
2. Educating public opinion.
3. Opening at the same place as grog shops refreshment rooms selling harmless drinks and providing innocent entertainment in the form of books, newspapers, games, etc.
4. The income from the sale of intoxicants should be spent on cultivating public opinion in favour of prohibition.

It is criminal to spend the income from the sale of intoxicants on the education of the nation's children or other public services. The Government must overcome the temptation of using such revenue for nation-building purposes. Experience has shown that the moral and physical gain of the abstainer more than makes up for

the loss of this tainted revenue. If we eradicate the evil, we will easily find other ways and means of increasing the nation's income.

On the train to Delhi, 8-9-1947

*Harijan*, 21-9-1947, p. 333

#### 4. PROHIBITION UNDER PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY: 1937-39

##### 169. TOTAL PROHIBITION IN THREE YEARS

(From "Criticism Answered")

How can total prohibition be brought about immediately if at all? By "immediately" I mean an immediate planned declaration bringing about total prohibition not later than three years from 14th July 1937, the date of the taking of office by the first Congress Ministry. I imagine that it is quite possible to bring it about in two years. But not being aware of administrative difficulties I put down three years. I count loss of this revenue as of no account whatsoever. Prohibition will remain a far cry, if the Congress is to count the cost in a matter of first-class national importance.

Let it be remembered that this drink and drugs revenue is a form of extremely degrading taxation. All taxation to be healthy must return tenfold to the tax-payer in the form of necessary services. Excise makes people pay for their own corruption, moral, mental and physical. It falls like a dead weight on those who are least able to bear it. The revenue is largely derived, I believe, from industrial labour which together with field labour the Congress almost exclusively represents.

The loss of revenue is only apparent. Removal of this degrading tax enables the drinker, i.e., the tax-payer to earn and spend better. Apart, therefore, from the tremendous gain, it means a substantial economic gain, to the nation.

I put this prohibition in the forefront because its result is immediate; Congress and especially women have bled for it; national prestige will rise in a manner it cannot by any single act that I can conceive, and the other five provinces are highly likely to follow the six. The Musalman non-Congress Prime Ministers are equally interested in seeing India sober rather than drunk.

The cry of great expenditure in preventing illicit distillation is thoughtless where it is not hypocritical. India is not America. The American example is a hindrance rather than a help to us. In America drinking carries no shame with it. It is the fashion there to drink. It reflects the greatest credit on the determined minority in America that by sheer force of its moral weight it was able to carry through the prohibition measure however shortlived it was. I do not regard that experiment to have been a failure. I do not despair of America once more returning to it with still greater fervour and better experience in dealing with it. It may be that if India carries out prohibition it will hasten the advent of prohibition in America. In no part of the world is prohibition as easy to carry out as in India for with us it is only a minority that drinks. Drinking is generally considered disrespectful. And there are millions, I believe, who have never known what drink is.

But why should prevention of illicit distillation cost any more than prevention of other crimes? I should make illicit distillation heavily punishable and think no more about it. Some of it will go on perhaps till doomsday as thieving will. I would not set up a special agency to pry into illicit distilleries. But I would punish anyone found drunk though not disorderly (in the legal sense) in streets or other public places with indeterminate imprisonment to end when the erring one has earned his or her keep.

This, however, is the negative part. Voluntary organizations especially manned by women will work in the labour areas. They will visit those who are addicted to drink and try to wean them from the habit. Employers of labour will be expected by law to provide cheap, healthy refreshment, reading and entertainment rooms where the working men can go and find shelter, knowledge, health-giving food and drink and innocent fun.

Prohibition should begin by preventing any shop from being licensed and closing some that are in danger of becoming a nuisance to the public. How far the latter is possible without having to pay heavy compensation I do not know. In any case, generally, licenses that lapse should not be renewed. No new shops should be



opened on any account. Whatever immediately is possible in law should be done without a moment's thought so far as the revenue is concerned.

But what is the meaning or extent of total prohibition? Total prohibition is prohibition against sales of intoxicating drinks and drugs, except under medical prescription by a practitioner licensed for the purpose and to be purchasable only at Government depots maintained therefor. Foreign liquors in prescribed quantity may be imported for the use of Europeans who cannot or will not do without their drink. These will also be sold in bottles in select areas and under authorized certificates. Hotels and restaurants will cease to sell intoxicating drinks.

*Harijan*, 31-7-1937, p. 196

#### 170. AGAINST AHIMSA AND TRUTH?

A frined writes:

The following sentence in your article "Criticism Answered" (31st July) seems to me to offend against the spirit of truth and non-violence as also against good logic.

"Foreign liquor in prescribed quantity may be imported for the use of Europeans who cannot or will not do without their drink."

The Congress Governments must feel as much concerned for the welfare of the European community within their provinces as for the Indian communities. I assume that the Congressmen, as prohibitionists, are all agreed that drink is as bad for the European as for the Indian. In that case the mere whim of the drinker cannot count. If drink is to be allowed to the European—although it is bad for him—because he "cannot or will not do without it", the Japanese, the Americans and several other foreigners in India may seek the same permission; and if they are to be allowed to continue their evil habit on that ground, why should an Indian in his own country be not allowed to ruin himself in the same way?

I think, therefore, that if drink is to be prohibited by the Congress Ministries, they would be unjust towards the Europeans if their welfare is thus sacrificed out of, apparently, a regard for their mental idiosyncracies. Surely the permission to drink ought not to assume the form of a privilege to be conferred upon an individual, far less upon a community as a whole. If anyone is to be permitted to take (not take to) alcohol, it must be entirely on medical or some other universally applicable ground. There cannot be under the Congress regime a discriminatory legislation for or against a community.

History records that when the first Parsi settlers came to India, they agreed not only to respect but also to adopt certain of the Indian customs then prevailing. The European merchants had to respect the manners and customs of the Moghul court. A foreigner domiciled in India would be equally obliged to do so. A foreigner residing in India for a period only ought not to be exempt from the same obligation. Thus, even for those who feel that total abstinence is not absolutely necessary, it must be obligatory to give up drink during their stay in India if the nation has declared itself against it. They must be deemed to reside in India on the understanding that they will respect the laws, customs and rules of decent conduct of the people amongst whom they have come to reside.

I have no difficulty generally in following and often adopting this writer's criticism. But I must confess that though I have read the letter three times, I have failed to understand the argument.

Why is the proposed exemption against the spirit of ahimsa or truth? I fail to see even the bad logic the writer sees in it. In dealing with living entities, the dry syllogistic method leads not only to bad logic but sometimes to fatal logic. For if you miss even a tiny factor—and you never have control over all the factors that enter into dealings with human beings,—your conclusion is likely to be wrong. Therefore you never reach the final truth, you only reach an approximation, and that too if you are extra careful in your dealings.

Indeed it was my regard for Ahimsa and truth that made me think of exempting Europeans. For I am unable to lay down a universal law for all human beings and for all climes that drink is an evil. I can well regard it as a necessity in the frigid zone. I would, therefore be chary of imposing prohibition against Europeans who not only do not regard measured quantities of alcohol at each meal an evil but consider it a necessity. Drink is not regarded as a vice in European society as it is generally in India. I would, therefore, even from the point of view of courtesy (a phase of Ahimsa), leave it to their honour to respect the usage of the country of their adoption.

I would gladly accept the logic of allowing other nationals, if the necessity is proved, the modified freedom the Europeans will enjoy. Indeed it might be necessary to bring in a large number of Indians too under the medical certificate clause.

For me the drink question is one of dealing with a growing social evil against which the State is bound to provide while it has got the opportunity. The aim is patent. We want to wean the labouring population and the Harijans from the curse. It is a gigantic problem, and the best resources of all social workers, especially women, will be taxed to the utmost before the drink habit goes. The prohibition I have adumbrated is but the beginning (undoubtedly indispensable) of the reform. We cannot reach the drinker so long as he has the drink shop near his door to tempt him. One might as well prevent an ailing child, nay man, from touching sweets so long as he does not remove the open box in front of them.

*Harijan*, 14-8-1937, p. 212

### 171. THE GREATEST ACT

In as much as prohibition has been one of the chief planks of the Congress since the inauguration of the non-co-operation movement in 1920, and thousands of men and women have had to suffer imprisonment and physical injury in furtherance of this cause, the Working Committee is of opinion that it is incumbent upon the Congress Ministries to work for this end. The Committee expects them to bring about total prohibition in their respective provinces within three years. The Working Committee appeals to the Ministries in other provinces, and to the Indian States also, to adopt this programme of moral and social uplift of the people.

I regard this resolution as the greatest act of the Working Committee at any time of its chequered career. The cry of prohibition has been always fashionable. In 1920 it became one of the chief constructive items of the Congress. The Congress, therefore, could not but go in for total prohibition immediately it came into power in any part of India. The Ministers had to have the courage to sacrifice nearly rupees eleven crores of revenue in the six provinces. The Working Committee has taken the risk for the sake of redeeming its pledge and conserving the moral and the material welfare of those who are addicted to intoxicants and narcotics. It is my fervent hope that five provinces which have non-Congress majorities will not hesitate to follow the example of the six provinces. It is less difficult for them than for the six provinces to achieve prohibition. And is it too much to expect the States to fall in with British India?

I know that many are sceptical about prohibition being achieved. They think that the financial lure will be too strong for them to resist. They argue that the addicts will procure their drinks and drugs anyhow, and that when the Ministers discover that prohibition means mere loss of revenue without any appreciable diminution in

the consumption, though illicit, of drinks and drugs, they will revert to the tainted revenue and the then state will be worse than the present.

I do not share any such fear. I believe there is the requisite moral momentum in the nation to achieve the noble end. If prohibition is to be a reality, we shall begin to see the end not with the end of the three years but inside of six months. And when the reality dawns upon India, those provinces or States that have lagged behind are bound to bow to the inevitable.

We have the right therefore to expect the sympathy and support not only of all the parties in India including the Europeans but the best mind of the whole world in this, perhaps, the greatest moral movement of the century.

If then prohibition is to mean a great moral awakening in India, the closing of liquor shops should merely mean the indispensable beginning of the movement ending in the complete weaning from drink and narcotics of those poor people and some rich people whom the habit has ruined, body and soul. Such a consummation cannot be brought about by mere State effort. At the risk of repetition of what is stated by Mahadev Desai in his notes let me summarize what should, in my opinion, be the comprehensive programme:

1. A drink drug map showing the locality of liquor and opium shops in each province.
2. Closing them as liquor shops on the expiry of the licences.
3. Immediate earmarking of liquor revenue, whilst it is still being received, exclusively for the purposes of prohibition.
4. Conversion, wherever possible, of the liquor shops into refreshment and recreation rooms in the hope that the original visitors will continue to use them, liquor contractors being themselves persuaded to conduct them if they will.

5. Employment of the existing excise staff for detection of illicit distillation and drinking.
6. Appeal to the educational institutions to devote a part of the time of teachers and students to temperance work.
7. Appeal to the women to organize visits to the persons given to the drink and opium habits.
8. Negotiation with the neighbouring States to undertake simultaneous prohibition.
9. Engaging the voluntary or, if necessary, paid assistance of the medical profession for suggesting nonalcoholic drinks and other substitutes for intoxicants and methods of weaning the addicts from their habit.
10. Revival of the activities of temperance associations in support of the campaign against drink.
11. Requiring employers of labour to open and maintain under first class management refreshment, recreation and educational rooms for the use of their employees.
12. Toddy tappers to be used for drawing sweet toddy for sale, as such, or conversion into *gar*. I understand that the process of collecting sweet toddy for drinking, as such, or for making *gur* is different from the one for fermenting toddy.

So much for the campaign against drink and drugs. Now as to how to make up for the loss of revenue in some provinces to the extent of one-third? I have unhesitatingly suggested cutting out the educational budget for which purpose mainly the excise revenue is used. I still maintain that education can be made self-supporting. With this I must deal elsewhere. It cannot be made so in a day even if the possibility of its being made self-supporting is accepted. Existing obligations have to be met. Therefore, fresh sources of revenue have to be

tapped. Death duties, tax on tobacco including *bidis* have already been given as some suggestions. If these are considered impossible of immediate accomplishment, short-term loans may be devised to tide over the deficit; and if even that fails, the Central Government should be approached to curtail the military budget and give the provinces the proportionate grant. The demand would be irresistible especially if it is demonstrated by the Provincial Governments that they do not need the military, at any rate for their internal peace and tranquility.

*Harijan*, 28-8-1937, p. 228

## 172. A STUPENDOUS TASK

(From "Notes" by M.D.)

Gandhiji who, since the Congress resolved to accept offices, has been burning the candle at both ends, may now be said to be devoting all his waking hours to the problem of prohibition and mass education, and the more he is consulted on these problems the more readily he comes out with fresh ideas and fresh proposals.

\* \* \*

"What are the most effective agencies for the creation of a sober India?"

"I have said already that the existing excise force may be used to advantage. Up to now they had no belief in the Government's bonafides to achieve prohibition at even a distant date. They now know well enough that the Congress will not rest in peace and will not let others rest in peace until it has achieved prohibition, and they will gladly fall into line with the new policy and programme. But the voluntary agencies will be more effective. There are our professors and teachers, and students of colleges. They may well be called upon to devote a couple of hours each day to the task. They should go to the areas frequented by the drinkers, associate with them, speak to them and reason with them and do peaceful picketing of an educative character. I look to the medical profession to put their heads together to find out why people drink, how they can be weaned from drink, find out effective, wholesome and healthful substitutes of drink. Then there are our sisters. They did great work during the non-co-operation days. They should be organized again to revive the work under better auspices now. Whilst their presence will be a sure deterrent, they will have few difficulties in the way. Before, the police looked indifferently on, and even helped the ruffians in the days gone by. Now, women can count on their help in their holy crusade. Then there are the temperance associations. Most of them have been up to now inert and inactive. We should now ask them to pull themselves together and



engage actively in the crusade. We might well have a Prohibition League under which all these agencies may work in a regular and systematic manner. The revenue drawn from excise may rightly be used for the prohibition campaign. That will be no forbidden use of tainted money, but something like turning a channel of foul water into the holy Ganga and making it pure.

"Above all find out the plague spots, concentrate your forces on them. Have meetings of the liquor contractors and liquor dealers, teach them how to turn an honest penny by converting their liquor booths into recreation centres. I have already described how these places may be turned into centres of harmless recreation and even of educative amusement."

It has been suggested that drink is a necessary accompaniment of the factory system, in fact all labour, involving arduous and cheerless toil. Farmers working in the rain or in wet paddy fields, we are told, need something to warm themselves up. The medical friends who sit down to suggest measures to meet all these difficulties and many others have a tough task before them, but it should not be difficult for them to cope with it. Thus I have seen with my own eyes that where liquor is forbidden even among the agricultural labourers, a quarter of a pound of *gur* and an equal amount of onions are considered to be the best possible food during the wet season. There is the *mahura* flower which by itself is a very good energizing food. We should be able to find out how the flower can be made available to the people without exposing them to the temptation of illicit distillation. A correspondent has made suggestions about changes in the conditions and hours of work of the worker in the city and in the village, which are worth consideration:

"In cities (1) there should be limitation of hours of hard work; (2) the barrow drawers' and rickshaw drivers' loads should be limited; (3) handling of heavy loads should be done more in mornings and evenings; (4) in summer at least, between 12 .and 2 p.m. there should be rest and light labour.

"In villages during harvest time peasants working in the hot periods easily get tired and crave for stimulants. Their working hours should be limited to eight, between two periods, from 5-30 to 10-30 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. I hear this system is followed in Straits Settlements. I have seen in Namakkal people going for harvest in the cool hours of the night. When the paddy is being beaten they expose themselves to the hot sun. A pandal above their heads in the *kalam* (the place where paddy is beaten off) will be helpful. As the paddy liberates dusty and irritating particles and these settle down on the naked body, the peasants wish to forget the irritation through drink. They should be encouraged to wear shirts.

"As a very good substitute for drink, I suggest the ancient practice of drinking *panagam* be revived. It is made of cold water, jaggery, lime juice and *sabja* seeds. This will give energy and also cool the system. Sour buttermilk may also be suggested."

*Harijan*, 28-8-1937, p. 227

### 173. NOT IMPRACTICABLE

Sardar Sir Jogendra Singh is a great social reformer, a man of letters and a politician. Whatever, therefore, he writes commands attention. He has contributed an article on Total Prohibition to the *Times of India*. Having read it with the care his writings demand from me, I must confess that I left the article with a sigh. How could such a reformer accept defeat on grounds that do not bear examination? His only argument seems to be, "There is bound to be illicit distillation and secret drinking, therefore do not attempt prohibition." In the Punjab there was local option but nobody applied it. "Therefore," he says, "my conclusion is that prohibition by compulsion will fail, and provinces will lose revenue which they need for rural reconstruction." By linking prohibition to revenue the Sardar has precipitately given up his case and contra-dicted himself. For in the fourth paragraph of his article he says: "I expressly declared that considerations of revenue would not weigh with me in carrying out a policy of controlling drink." Thank God Congress Ministries have cut their way through the revenue snare by debarring themselves from the use of liquor revenue. Once the loophole is left, the temptation to make use of this immoral gain will be too irresistible, for nobody denies the difficulty of making the drunkard sober in a moment.<sup>4</sup> Old Ministers, with whom I used to plead for prohibition, did not put forth the plea of impracticability. But they pleaded inability to forego the rich revenue received from the traffic. They wanted it for education. Is education paid for by a questionable source of revenue worth having? Has it intrinsic merit? Has India got her money's worth from those who have received the education of the type that the schools and colleges of India provide?

Thieving will abide till Doomsday. Must it therefore be licensed? Is thieving of the mind less criminal than thieving of matter? Illicit distillation to an extent will no doubt go on. Its quantity will be the measure of the Government's effort assisted by a vigilant public in the shape of continuous and sympathetic treatment of the

drinker and the opium eater. Moral elevation demands a price no less than material or physical elevation. But my submission is that this constructive effort is doomed to failure if it is not preceded by total prohibition. So long as the State not only permits but provides facilities for the addict to satisfy his craving, the reformer has little chance of success. Gipsy Smith was a powerful temperance preacher. It was a feature of his huge gatherings that several people took the vow of total abstinence under the spell of his song and precept. But I say from my experience of South Africa that the majority of the poor addicts could not resist the temptation to enter the palatial bars that faced them, no matter where they wandered in the principal thoroughfares of cities, or the wayside inns when they strayed away from cities. State prohibition is not the end of this great temperance reform, but it is the indispensable beginning of it.

Of the local option the less said the better. Was there ever opposition to the closing of these dens of vice? Option has a place where a whole population wants to drink.

God willing, prohibition has come to stay. Whatever other contribution may or may not be made by the Congress, it will go down to History in letters of gold that the Congress pledged itself to prohibition in 1920, and redeemed the pledge at the very first opportunity without counting the cost. I doubt not that the other provinces will follow. I invite Sardar Jogendra Singh not to caution the Congress against the much needed reform, but to throw in his full weight in favour of it in his own Province and among the stalwart Sikhs.

*Harijan, 25-9-1937, p. 272*

### 174. CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

Bhauasaheb Lavate has been honouring me with a visit in the interest of prohibition which is as dear to him as to me. We came to the following conclusions:

1. Strict non-use from now of all Excise Revenue for any but prohibition purposes.
2. Non-renewal of all licences on their expiry and immediate closing of all liquor shops, where there is a clear demand for closing on the part of at least 75 cent of those who have been visiting these shops.
3. Liquor, whenever it is necessary to sell it, should be sold only through direct Government agency.
4. All existing liquor shops should be, wherever possible, converted into refreshment and recreation rooms.
5. Causes of the habit in typical areas should be carefully investigated and dealt with.
6. Absolutely peaceful, silent and educative picketing by recognized individuals or groups should be undertaken, the object being to establish intimate personal contact with the addicts so as to help them to give up the habit. Personal visit to the addicts in their own homes would be a feature of scientific picketing. Voluntary agency for this work should be invited by the Government and encouraged to do this philanthropic work.

*Harijan*, 9-10-1937, p. 291

### 175. MONSTROUS IF TRUE

A correspondent writes:

Here in Nasik there is a Police Training School. Police Officers are made in this school. They are expected to have their meals in a common mess and they are obliged to partake of flesh-meat and wines. Let alone meat-eating, how far is it consistent with the prohibition policy of the Government to train its police officers in wine drinking? These officers may well be required to take part in the prohibition drive. Perhaps you do not even know that meat eating and wine drinking is compulsory in this school.

I must confess my ignorance of the compulsion. It is only the assurance with which the correspondent writes that has induced me to publish this letter. If the information is true, it is surely monstrous that meat-eating and wine-drinking should be considered a necessary part of a police officer's training. This rule excludes vegetarians and non-drinkers from training as police officers. The rule is a grave injustice in a country in which tens of thousands are vegetarians by religion. I can only hope that the information is incorrect and that if it is true, the glaring wrong will be redressed without delay.

*Harijan*, 5-11-1938, p. 316

### 176. IS ANY COST TOO MUCH?

(Originally appeared under the title "Prohibition.")

Prohibition in the Congress provinces is not going on in the spirit in which it was conceived. It is perhaps no fault of the Ministers. Public opinion is not insistent. Congress opinion is equally dormant. Congressmen do not seem to see that prohibition means new life for many millions. It means new and substantial accession of normal and material strength. They do not realize that honest prohibition gives a dignity and prestige to the Congress which perhaps no other single step can give. They do not see that prosecution of prohibition means identification with the masses and a resolute determination to refuse to have anything to do with the drink revenue. Even such a confirmed prohibitionist like Rajaji has not had the daring to set apart the drink revenue purely for the purpose of fighting the drink evil. He has proved in this matter too cautious for me. Congressmen have learnt to count no cost too dear for winning freedom. Our freedom will be the freedom of slaves if we continue to be victims of the drink and drug habit. Is any cost too much to establish complete prohibition in all the provinces?

And yet one finds ministers drawing up prohibition programme in a proper *bania* spirit. They think of their deficits. I wonder what they will do if all the wine-bibbers and opium-eaters suddenly give up their drinks and drugs! They will manage somehow, it may be answered. Why will they not do so voluntarily? Surely, merit lies in doing the right thing voluntarily not compulsorily! The Bihar Government did not come to a standstill, when the earthquake swallowed more than their annual income. What do the Governments all over India do, when famines and floods ruin people and materially reduce the state revenue? I maintain that the Congress Governments break the spirit, if not the letter, of their pledge, when they delay prohibition for the sake of revenue.

They can and must make an honest attempt to raise money by fresh taxation. The drink curse is most prevalent in urban areas. It is in these areas that they can resort to fresh taxation. Prohibition gives direct help to the employers of labour. They can surely afford to bear the loss of revenue caused by prohibition. The few months of prohibition in Ahmedabad have put money into the pockets both of the employers and the labourers. There is no reason whatsoever why the employers should not pay for this inestimable service. Many similar sources of revenue can easily be thought of.

I have not hesitated to suggest a grant or at least a loan without interest from the Government of India where it can be proved that the raising of additional revenue is not a practical proposition.

The only valid reason for not having immediate prohibition is want of previous experience and hence the need for caution. I viewed the Salem experiment in that light. The Madras Government wanted to take the first step with great deliberation and did not want to take any risk of failure. The success of the Salem experiment would be sufficient encouragement to go on with the whole scheme. But it is not impossible to understand the desire of each Government to go in for prohibition in stages so as to have local experience. It was for that reason that the Working Committee fixed three years as the period to bring about complete prohibition. The time is running fast. And if India is to be free of the curse within the period fixed, there should be no delay for want of money or for fear of deficit in revenue. And if the programme is prosecuted with single-minded zeal, there is no doubt that the other provinces and the States will follow.

Segaon, 19-12-1938

*Harijan*, 24-12-1938, p. 396



## 177. PROHIBITION IN BOMBAY

(Originally appeared under the title "Bombay the Beautiful".)

"Handsome is that handsome does" is a neat proverb. I have often said that it is wrong to call Bombay beautiful only because of the fine approach to the harbour or for its many beauty spots so long as it contains dirty chawls, overcrowded lanes and uninhabitable hovels which serve as dwelling places for its Harijans. But when Bombay goes dry, as it will very soon, it will become truly beautiful even for this one singularly beautiful act and it will deserve the title inspite of the blemishes I have mentioned. For when its labouring population has the temptation of drink removed from them, with the improvement in their condition which always follows the exorcism of the drink devil, it must become easier for the Bombay Municipality to deal with the problem of providing better habitations for the poor classes. The Bombay Government, and especially Dr. Gilder, deserve thanks of the citizens of Bombay, nay of the whole province, for the courage with which they have approached their task. I know that many Parsis who depend upon drink traffic for their living will be affected. Bombay is the stronghold of the Parsis. Then there are its fashionable citizens who think they need their spirituous drinks as they need water. I have every hope that they will rise to the occasion, think of their poor brethren, even if they do not appreciate abstinence for themselves, and set an example to all India and make good the claim of Bombay not only to be beautiful but also the first city in India.

Prohibition in Bombay will mean a big fall in revenue. The Finance Minister has to balance his budget. He has to find money. He has to levy new taxes. Let there be no complaint from those who will have to bear the burden. Dislike of taxes, be they ever so reasonable, is proverbial. I understand that the Finance Minister has met all just objections. Why should those who will have to bear introduced by Governments that are responsible to the people. It has been a plank in the

national programme since 1920. It is coming, therefore, in due fulfilment of the national will definitely expressed nearly twenty years ago.

New Delhi, 26-3-1939

*Harijan*, 1-4-1939, p. 69

### 178. MEANING OF PROHIBITION

His Grace the Archbishop of Bombay has been kind enough to send me a letter and a copy of his address to the Rotary Club against prohibition. I have read both with the respect and attention their author deserves.

My study of His Grace's letter and address at once revealed a serious flaw for which I must be held primarily responsible. The word prohibition is a misnomer for what the Bombay Government and the other Provincial Governments where the Congress controls the Ministries are doing regarding the liquor trade. What the Governments are in reality doing is not prohibiting drink but they are closing liquor shops which are absolutely under Government control. The shop-owners have no statutory protection save what they get from year to year. Every owner of a liquor shop knows that his licence may not be renewed next year. He may be even outbidden if he possesses a country liquor or toddy licence as these are auctioned every year. Therefore the licensees have no vested interests in their licences beyond the year for which they are held and then too subject to the observance of the stringent conditions laid down for them. Therefore I claim that the law for the abolition of liquor licences "is an ordinance of reason for the common good made and promulgated for the community by the competent authority." All that the State is doing is to remove from the drinker the temptation or the facility which the State considers is harmful to him except for medical purposes.

The Archbishop says, "To win the allegiance of body, of mind and of heart needed by any law... that law must be just," that is to say, "the conscience of millions must say this is just." I have no difficulty in endorsing the proposition. Viewed in the manner indicated by me the State does not need to carry with it the conscience of millions. But I hold that India is the one place in the world where the conscience of the millions would justify the law of abolition of the State trade in intoxicating liquors and drugs. There is no need to take any referendum. It

consists in the overwhelming number of legislators approving of the law. Let me remind His Grace of the past history of this great reform movement. It began with the G.O.M. Dadabhai Naoroji. In 1920 it became an integral part of the Congress constructive programme. In the absence of political power the Congress arranged an elaborate programme of picketing liquor and opium shops. In this programme thousands of men and women took part all over India. All communities including Parsis took part in the picketing programme. Attempts were made even in the days of non-co-operation to induce the authorities to undertake the abolition legislation. Without exception they pleaded financial inability, never the impropriety of so-called interference with the right of the people to be supplied with liquor by the State. Indeed one Minister told me that if I would help him to raise the revenue needed to make up for the loss caused by the drop in the drink revenue, he would introduce prohibition at once. It is an open secret that the reform has been delayed simply for the sake of the revenue. In other words, the people have been tempted to drink for the sake of raising the revenue. The black history of the opium trade bears out the truth of this statement.

Those who speak in the name of individual freedom do not know their India. There is as much right of a person to demand drinking facilities from the State as there is to demand facilities for the supply of public women for the satisfaction of his animal passion. I hope that those who pride themselves on their moderation in drinking will not feel hurt by the illustration I have taken. In this country we are not used to legislation for the regulation of vice. But in countries like Germany the houses of women who sell their virtue are licensed. I do not know what will be more resented in those countries, the stopping of the licences for the houses of ill fame or the houses of drink. When woman realizes her dignity she will refuse to sell her virtue and those members of the sex who are jealous of its honour will move heaven and earth to have legalized prostitution abolished. Will it be then contended that such abolition will go hard with the prostitutes and their dependents whose only means of livelihood depended upon this calling?

I plead that social workers cannot work effectively so long as licensed liquor dens continue to lure the drinkers to enter them. It is curious that in all India any opposition to prohibition comes from the Parsis. They pride themselves on their temperance and present what they call encroachment upon their personal liberty. They also make it a grievance that the Europeans have been given facilities, thus constituting a bar sinister against Asiatics. I have already pleaded with the Parsis that they should rise superior to their habit and allow the great reform to proceed with their active co-operation. As to the alleged bar sinister let me point out that a bar sinister is imposed from without. In the case in point we the Asiatics voluntarily recognize the limitations of the Europeans. But even they have to secure exemption and submit to regulations. The proper course for the Parsi friends would be to agitate, if they wish, for the removal of the discrimination, not use it for securing similar exemption for themselves.

His Grace has further argued that if the price to be paid for removing the temptation of drink from the drunk- kard "is out of all proportion to the good attempted", the reform is harmful. The proposition is well stated, but it is a matter of opinion whether the price to be paid is out of all proportion to the good attempted. I have endeavoured to show that the whole of the excise policy- has been not to supply any felt want but to increase the revenue. I would invite the Archbishop to study the history of the excise administration. He will find that all the advanced legislators have condemned the policy in unmeasured terms. The price that is being paid for the attempted reform is insignificant if the history is borne in mind. And even the insignificant price will not have to be paid, if the Archbishop and the influential Parsi friends will lead an agitation for the reduction in the wholly indefensible army expenditure and free the money thus saved for the purpose of bringing about all-India abolition of the liquor traffic. It is an overdue reform. They should congratulate the Bombay Ministers on their courage in levying a tax which was the easiest to be borne. But I have no doubt that the Ministry will gladly remit the tax, if they are helped by the Central Government. Only they

could not delay the reform whilst they were fighting the Central Government single-handed. Let all the parties recognize the necessity of the reform and demand justice from the Central Government and the hardship referred to by the Archbishop will be reduced almost to a nullity.

There is a curious question asked of Dr. Gilder. To do the Archbishop justice I must copy the question in his own words:

Does he admit that there are several kinds of intoxication which have nothing at all to do with drink? Drunkenness paralyses the reason and wrecks homes. But the intoxication of false ideals is now wrecking whole nations and the world itself. Moreover, does Dr. Gilder admit that such intoxication is highly infectious? He will hardly deny it, knowing as he does the recent history of the nations. Then will he tell us, "Is India necessarily immune from the infection of false ideals which intoxicate?"

This suggests that the exercise by the State of the undoubted discretion to stop the issue of drink shop licences is a false ideal which intoxicates and which has infected Dr. Gilder. Of course everything is possible in this world.

But I venture to suggest that this abolition being a half century old national cry is not likely to be a false, intoxicating and infectious ideal. An ideal that is false and intoxicating and highly infectious must in its nature be temporary.

The last paragraph of the address is a question addressed to me. The half dozen lines are packed with suggestions which hardly answer known facts. Thus His Grace suggests, among other things: "Prohibition tends to be regarded by its advocates not as one possible course but as the only possible religion." Nobody has called it a religion. After having stated the proposition His Grace ends: "The author of the creed of truth and non-violence will not resent this last question: 'Is he still quite certain that all religions are true?'" In any other mouth I would consider the question to be unpardonable. But I do not expect a busy administrator like the Archbishop of Bombay to study all a man like me may say or

to verify his quotations. His questions to tally with what I have said should have been: "Is he still quite certain that all the known great religions of the earth are equally true?" My answer to this revised question would be, "*Emphatically yes*". Only the revised question is obviously irrelevant to the Archbishop's thesis.

His Grace has propounded a conundrum in his letter which now hardly needs a separate answer. So far as I know the Ministers have no qualms of conscience. They are robbing no one. All trade is precarious. Liquor trade is doubly so everywhere. The Bombay Government are straining every nerve to see that poor traders do not suffer avoidable hardships.

There is one sentence in the letter which makes me pause: "The last few months have convinced me that the cause of charity in Bombay is threatened with a shattering blow." All the Archbishop's beliefs have been based, as I think I have shown, on improved assumptions. I should want proof for this unqualified assertion. If the cause of charity is threatened as stated, I would request him to produce the proof before the Ministers and I doubt not that they will soon set the thing right.

The Archbishop's last paragraph in his letter is worthy of his high office. Only his offer appears to be conditional. Let him and his assistants and disciples unconditionally become total abstainers and help the noble cause of temperance. They will lighten the task of the law giver and help to make of the abolition of liquor traffic the success that it deserves to be in this land where the public conscience, i.e. the conscience of the dumb millions, is undoubtedly in favour of the abolition.

Segaon, 11-6-1939

*Harijan*, 17-6-1939, p. 164

## 179. THE BRAVE REFORM

(From "Notes")

Gandhiji sent the following message in connection with the introduction of prohibition in Bombay on August 1st: I hope that good sense for which Bombay is famous will ultimately prevail and all will combine to make the brave reform undertaken by the Bombay Ministry the success it deserves to be. I am quite sure that the removal of the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs will confer lasting benefit on the country.

Abbottabad, 23-7-1939

*Harijan*, 5-8-1939, p. 225



### 180. A DANGEROUS GAME

I have read Subhas Babu's statement on the Bombay prohibition with pain and sorrow. He had discussed the question with me when I was in Bombay. I had told him to confer with the Bombay Ministers. I do not know whether he did so. But I was unprepared for his public statement. He has used the arguments of the opponents of prohibition. He was President of the Congress last year, and having been duly elected for the second year he chose to resign owing to differences with his colleagues. He is still head of the Bengal Congress executive. He is identified with the prohibition policy of the Congress. His responsibility has not ceased because he is no longer in the Working Committee. Had he been a member, he could not have spoken as he has done. His statement because of his position is calculated to discredit the Bombay Ministry in a manner the avowed opponents of prohibition could never hope to do. I can only hope that in this matter Subhas Babu does not reflect the opinion of any other responsible Congressman, and that the general public will continue to support the Bombay ministerial policy with as much enthusiasm as hitherto.

The Ministers' duty is plain. They have to pursue their programme undeterred by any opposition, if they have faith in it. Prohibition is the greatest moral reform in the Congress programme. Previous Governments too had given their lip assent to it, but having been irresponsible they had neither the courage nor the will to carry it out. They were not willing to forego revenue which they could get without effort. They did not stay to examine its tainted source. The Congress Governments have the backing of public opinion. The Working Committee after very careful deliberation issued its mandate on prohibition. The Ministers have all over taken it up to the best of their ability. The manner of execution was naturally left to the respective Ministries. The Bombay Ministers have been courageously pursuing their programme with every prospect of success. Theirs is a difficult position. They were bound to tackle Bombay some day or other. They would be faced with the

same opposition as today from the interests directly affected by the prohibition policy. It is not open to any Congressman to embarrass the Ministers as Subhas Babu has done.

The communal question does not arise at all. Subhas Babu has rendered a great disservice to the Congress by raising the communal cry and the cry of minorities. Independence of India is impossible if causes great or small are to be discredited and ruined on the alter of the minority cry. Subhas Babu has played a most dangerous game by mixing up the communal question with such a purely moral reform as prohibition. It is as much the concern of a Muslim or a Parsi or a Christian as of a Hindu to look after his less fortunate countryman who happens to be a labourer and falls a victim to drink. The Bombay property-owners will pay one crore rupees as additional tax not because they are Parsis or Muslims but because they are property-owners. It is altogether misleading to suggest that the tax-payer himself a non-drinker will pay the tax for saving the drunkard. He will pay the tax for the education of his children whereas hitherto the drinker has been made by him to pay for that education. The additional tax will be a tardy but very small reparation for the wrong done by monied men to the poor. And the poor have no class. They irrespective of their caste and creed make by themselves a downtrodden class. Their enforced creed is wretched poverty.

Parsis are philanthropists of the world. Why should they be behind hand in this the greatest philanthropy? And if theirs is the greatest contribution, it is but in accordance with their best tradition. And they will be thrice blessed. Many of them will be weaned from a trade which corrupts the morals of their countrymen less fortunately placed than they. They will themselves be weaned from the drink habit. However mild it may be for them, I know, from having lived in intimate contact with them, that the drink does leave an indelible mark on them. Thirdly, monied men amongst them will have paid for the long delayed reform. The cry of minorities is a calumny. It is a Parsi Minister to whose lot has fallen the privilege of introducing prohibition. Dr. Gilder's is a job which brings him no money and it

brings him drudgery and loss of a princely medical practice. Another equally disinterested physician is the Sheriff of Bombay. A third learned Parsi is Vice-Chancellor of the University, and a fourth businessman is the Mayor of Bombay. I do not know that there has been such a happy conjunction before in the history of Bombay. If the Congressmen and the Congress Ministry of Bombay were communally-minded and were indifferent to the minorities, this unique event would not have taken place.

And I suggest that without the willing co-operation of the Muslim population of Bombay the movement in Bombay could not have been introduced. I am quite sure that the best Muslim mind in all India is with the Congress in this Bombay project.

The piecemeal solution flung by Subhas Babu would not work. For one thing it would lack the psychological background. I, therefore, invite Subhas Babu to retrace his step and join me in making an appeal to the great Parsi community and those others who may oppose the reform to help it to become the success which it deserves to be. It is his duty as Rajen Babu's immediate predecessor to help the Bombay Ministry which is bravely pursuing the policy laid down for it by the Congress.

Abbottabad, 13-7-1939

*Harijan*, 22-7-1939, p. 207

### 131. WELL DONE BOMBAY!

From all the accounts I have received it seems that Bombay surpassed itself on the 1st of August. An eyewitness of the demonstrations tells me that the procession that took the mortal remains of the immortal Lokamanya to the Chowpaty sands, huge as it was, was far outdone by the crowds that gathered together on the Azad Maidan. He tells me that all Bombay was present there. The labourers, who were the chief persons to benefit by the measure and who were at the same time the most affected by prohibition, attended in their thousands with their wives. They rejoiced in the deliverance from the devil from whose grip they could not disengage themselves without external assistance. Had they gone to express their gratefulness to the Ministers for their courage in persisting in their benevolent measure in the teeth of the opposition of vested interests?

It was not a mere labour demonstration. All classes took part in it. At that huge meeting there was not a jarring note. Men and women had turned up in their thousands to take part in thanks giving to God for the successful inauguration of prohibition.

The great Parsi community deserves congratulations for the restraint it observed in spite of its bitter opposition to the measure. Evidently wiser counsels prevailed and no hostile demonstration appears to have been staged by them. My hope that Parsi philanthropy will get the better of the opposition, appears to have been justified. Is it too much to expect whole-hearted support from the Parsis in making the measure a complete success? Let them remember, the glory of the effort in Bombay will be reflected not only throughout the province but it will be reflected all over India. I make bold to say that although they feel that they have been unjustly dealt with, the future generation of Parsis will bless Dr. Gilder as their true representative and benefactor. Surely Parsis should be proud, as India is

proud, that they have produced in Dr. Gilder a man who has stood firm as a rock in the midst of fiercest opposition including threats of boycott and worse.

Indeed the whole of the Ministry deserves hearty congratulations on the steadfastness with which they have pursued this great moral reform. The demonstration of 1st August shows that they had and have practically the whole of Bombay behind them. No constructive measure promoted by the Congress has had such enthusiastic support as this great moral reform.

It is a matter of regret that a Muslim procession of protest, not against the measure but against the property tax, was organized the same day and resulted in a clash with the police. But it only enhanced the value of the public meeting, for the procession had no effect whatsoever on the great and irresistible demonstration. Bombay had one mind at the Azad Maidan.

Let us hope the brilliant beginning has momentum enough in it to lead to a brilliant end. Much constructive effort will be required in order to consolidate the advantage gained by the closing of liquor shops. It removes the temptation from the drinker but not the craving for drink. His mind has to be directed into the right channel. He must have healthy refreshment at a place where he can rest his tired mind and limbs. Workers among the labourers should deem it their duty to study their lives and help them to conquer the craving for drink. The Government alone won't be able to cope with this consolidation work. They could close the liquor shops with a measure of popular goodwill. But they will need the active co-operation of a band of volunteer workers to supplement the official effort to help the drinker to lose his craving for drink.

Segaon, 4-8-1939

*Harijan*, 12-8-1939, p. 229

## 5. TODDY TAPPING AND TAPPERS

### 182. USES OF MAHURA

(Originally appeared in "Notes")

A correspondent writes a long letter about *mahura* flowers, and desires that all restrictions on the use of *mahura* flowers, other than that for distillation, should be removed. As an out-and-out prohibitionist I have no hesitation in endorsing the proposal. The whole conception of prohibition is not penal but educative. As soon as State recognition of intoxicating drinks and drugs, and licensed shops for the sale thereof, is withdrawn, the way of education becomes clear. Penal enactments under the prohibition law will have to be of a character wholly different from those that have been hitherto in vogue. People will be trusted, therefore, if my scheme is accepted, to make the right use of *mahura*, and not prevented from using it altogether from fear of wrong use. Therefore, under the prohibition law, there will be no check on the right use of *mahura*, as there will be none on the right use of toddy. The following are some of the uses of *mahura* flowers, *mahura* oil and *mahura* wood, which I copy from the letter:

1. Fresh *mahura* flowers are sweet to eat.
2. A variety of tasteful preparations are made out of dried *mahura* flowers. These preparations serve as sweets to the poor people.
3. Decoction of *mahura* flowers is very effective in removing chronic constipation.
4. The oil from the seed called *dolia* is used as food. It is the poor man's *ghee*.
5. *Mahura* flowers are regarded as tonic for both men and cattle.
6. In times' of scarcity and famine, which are very frequent in Kheda, *mahura* flowers go a long way in saving the poor from complete starvation.
7. *Dolia* oil is specially favoured in the preparation of washing soap.
8. *Mahura* wood is used as fuel and timber.

*Harijan*, 25-9-1937, p. 273

### 183. THE USE AND ABUSE OF TODDY

(Abridged from *Harijanbandhu* by P.)

A Parsi correspondent from Ahmedabad has addressed me a long letter of which the following is the gist:

I am not a liquor dealer myself, nor do I drink, though I have found half an ounce of toddy, taken judiciously in illness, to have wonderfully curative properties. But then, it befuddles me and I have to discontinue its use. Since 1896 when I became a vegetarian I have not taken meat. I am sixty five and therefore can claim to speak with some experience. I have not a shadow of doubt that Prohibition will add to the health and longevity of the working people as a whole. But I am afraid that what will be saved from liquor will be swallowed up by cinemas, theatres and vice, besides encouraging idleness and surreptitious illicit distillation. Toddy, on the other hand, has a number of valuable uses which I note below:

1. Fresh toddy is a healthy non-intoxicating beverage, though under the heat of the sun it quickly ferments and develops alcoholic properties.
2. Taken medicinally it acts as a refrigerent and cures the system of excess of heat.
3. Toddy is used as leaven to raise the flour for making bread, biscuits and pastries.
4. It cures constipation and promotes bowel action.
5. From toddy we get vinegar which is used in pickles and as a condiment.

Unfortunately it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain pure, unadulterated toddy. What is generally sold is a thin, poisonous mixture adulterated with water, saccharine, opium and other narcotics, which act as a slow poison on the system. The toddy-dealer, who is generally impecunious and harassed by the exactions of the Excise Department, is driven to make both ends meet by defrauding the

consumer. In my opinion, what is really needed is to exempt toddy from the licensing system, and make it possible to provide pure stuff to the consumer in sealed bottles at the rate of two pice per bottle.

To enforce prohibition in respect of toddy while leaving tobacco, *ganja*, opium and other narcotics free, would be tantamount to favouring Hindu licensees of these narcotics at the expense of Parsi vendors of toddy, and is bound to make a bad impression. The evil of juvenile smoking is daily becoming worse in our country. The result is a devitalized manhood and a fearful increase in the cases of tuberculosis, etc. The economic bill that the nation has to pay annually for this vice of tobacco smoking, works out at a staggering figure. If we take the cases of tobacco smoking in our country to be one-in three, and two pice worth of cigarettes as the average daily consumption of smoke for each smoker, then twelve crore smokers would, in a year, blow away 138 crores of rupees among them in this pleasant vice! By enforcing prohibition against tobacco smoking the whole of this amount could be saved and the problem of financing Primary Education for the nation be automatically solved; the national health would distinctly gain; and the daily desecration of the *Atash Deva* at the hands of millions of smokers be stopped. At the same time the abolition of licensed toddy shops in the cities would cause the towns people to go to the villages for fresh drawn toddy and help to put some money into the pockets of the needy village folk. Perhaps you know that in certain parts of the Surat District the date-palm is the only stay of the poor as the sub-soil water is too brackish to support any other cultivation. The necessity of journeying to the villages to obtain toddy will also serve as an automatic check on the consumption of toddy and effectively reduce the evil of drunkenness that is becoming more and more rampant in all the big cities.

Other Parsi correspondents too have written to me in the same strain. I must confess that it did surprise me somewhat at first that all such arguments against prohibition should emanate invariably from Parsi brains. But it" may be that this is



due to the fact that, owing to the special relations which the Parsis have with me, they freely speak out their mind, while others, who think similarly about prohibition, feel constrained and hold back their feelings. Let me assure my Parsi friends that I value this mark of confidence on their part as a rare privilege, which I hope I<sup>1</sup> have tried to deserve.

Coming now to the arguments advanced by my correspondents, it will be seen that such of them as are valid do not apply to the plan of prohibition that I have adumbrated. Prohibition will certainly not affect the sale of toddy for bona fide medicinal purposes. Only, as in the case of other drugs so in the case of toddy, the intending purchaser will be required to produce a certificate issued, not by the patient concerned to himself, but by a duly qualified doctor. My correspondent may feel competent to act as his own physician, but an average patient cannot safely be left to prescribe for himself. The proposed restriction in respect of medicinal toddy is thus conceived in the patient's own interest.

It is hardly necessary for me here to examine all the claims on behalf of toddy advanced by my correspondent. Suffice it to say that I have already admitted the immense economic value of the toddy-palm. I have nothing whatever against the use of toddy juice as such. My sole objection is to fermented toddy which has alcoholic properties like any other spirituous liquor, whether made from sugarcane, grape or apples. I have myself freely partaken, and made others partake, of sweet toddy *gur* and its *sherbet*. Nor is there any duty on the tapping of sweet toddy for *gur* making. I am planning to tap 250 palms here at Segaoon in the coming season for sweet toddy and, God willing, I hope to get some of the finest *gur* and sugar from it. The deeper I dive into the question of sweet toddy the more I find that owing to the disrepute into which it has fallen by its evil association with liquor manufacture, its proper use has never been inculcated upon our people. May I in all sincerity suggest that the Parsi community can render a great service to itself and the Province of Bombay by renouncing the liquor trade and doing its bit for the redemption of the much-wronged toddy-palm? Is it not also a happy

augury that the cause of prohibition in the Bombay Presidency has for its helmsman and guide a celebrated Parsi doctor?

I hope it will now be sufficiently clear to my esteemed correspondent, and others who might be inclined to think like him, that the prohibition move which I am sponsoring is not calculated to injure Parsi interests, or for the matter of that any legitimate interests. It is directed as much against opium, *ganja*, *charas* and every narcotic as it is against liquor drinking. And what is more, as I have already shown, it does not affect the legitimate use of the toddy-palm in which the Parsis, as a community, are especially interested. It does certainly aim at a crusade against the perversion of its legitimate use, in the form of manufacture and consumption of a fiery liquor. And, in this holy crusade, my venerable Parsi correspondent seems to be at one with me.

*Harijan*, 9-10-1937, p. 290

#### 184. NOT TODDY BUT NIRO

(From "Notes")

Some persons are consciously or unconsciously imputing to me an approval of fermented toddy. I have made it perfectly plain that prohibition affects all intoxicating drinks and drugs without exception. Fermented toddy, therefore, can never be tolerated under any scheme of total prohibition. But what I have said and what I repeat is that sweet unfermented toddy, which is called *niro*, should not be prohibited, and that the drinking of it in the place of fermented toddy should be encouraged. How it can be done is for the Prohibition Ministers to determine.

*Harijan*, 31-10-1937, p. 313

### 185. IS NIRA OBJECTIONABLE?

Among the fourteen points that Parsi friends have raised against the prohibition campaign there occurs this strange passage:

Mahatmaji persuades the Parsis to drink (*nira*) sweet unfermented toddy, but the Parsis very well know the properties of *nira*. Moreover the British Government had already tried this *nira* drinking experiment free of tree-tax, but it failed because *nira* produces cold, flatulence, diarrhoea, etc. The experiment was already tried in Mahatmaji's Ashram at Segaon and there fatal results were pronounced.

I do not know what the Bombay Government tried. But I do know what *nira* is doing and has done to those who are trying it. It is wholly wrong to say that the experiment at Segaon Ashram failed and that it produced fatal results. It has never been known to have produced any of the bad results ascribed to it by the writer. On the contrary *nira* is still being freely drunk by many in Segaon and that with profit to their health. Moreover it is turned into syrup or *gur*, and in that condition I and many others use it almost daily. As *gur* it is sold in large quantities. It is better relished than sugarcane *gur* because of its being less sweet. As to the deaths that occurred in Wardha, not in Segaon, the investigations have clearly showed that the deaths were due not to *nira* drinking but to cholera. Nothing has been shown to establish any connection between the deaths and *nira*. Supposing the patients had developed cholera without drinking *nira*, would it have been right to say that cholera was induced by the ordinary food that they had eaten? I may mention that several people had taken in Segaon with impunity the same *nira* that had been taken in Wardha.

If the thirteen other points are based on as weak a foundation as this (No. 13) is, surely there is no case against prohibition. And I make bold to say that the rest are no stronger. I have picked out the thirteenth in the hope that my personal testimony may put the opponents on their guard against making statements they

cannot substantiate. Opposition based on reason must always command respect.  
This one seems to me to lack that essential quality.

Brindaban, 7-5-1939

*Harijan*, 13-5-1939, p. 120

## 186. TAPPERS' ASSOCIATION

(From "Notes")

A correspondent sends me the following report of the formation of a Tappers' Association in Cochin:

A largely attended public meeting of tappers was held in the Cosmopolitan Club, Kunnamukulam, Mr. K. T. Matthew, B.A., B.L, M.L.C., presiding. The Chairman pointed out that jaggery making is a home industry in Kerala and it is the duty of tappers to give up tapping for fermented toddy and engage themselves in tapping for sweet toddy from which jaggery is manufactured. Mr. T. C. Varki and Mr. Manuel, Rural Secretary of the Y.M.C.A., Travancore spoke at length on the evils of drink and requested the tappers to abstain from tapping for fermented toddy. In the course of the meeting it was pointed out that in Cochin State tapping for sweet toddy is handicapped in various ways and in order to get the handicaps removed, it was resolved that a Tappers' Association should be formed, and its membership should be restricted to those who tap for sweet toddy for manufacturing jaggery. 102 tappers took the vow that they would not tap for fermented toddy and became members of the Association. . . .The Association will work for the moral and social improvement of the tappers in Cochin State, for temperance and for the removal of all the restrictive and vexatious rules imposed upon those who tap for sweet toddy for manufacturing jaggery.

Travancore and Cochin are palm groves. Tapping is a big industry in these States. But tapping, instead of being used for health giving purposes, is abused for promoting the destruction of health and morals. For the toddy tapped is fermented and sold as drink. This reminds one of the use that is made of vineyards in Europe and South Africa. There is no fruit save oranges to match grapes in its health-giving properties. A person who would live on fresh grapes and a little fatless bread need never get ill. But the grape culture supports a manufacture

that destroys annually more people than gun-powder. What fruitarians are nevertheless trying to do with no present prospect but with faith in the truth of their mission, the Tappers' Association may do in Cochin if it works without being dismayed by disappointments. It is a splendid idea to turn toddy into jaggery. If it succeeds, it will solve the problem of occupying tappers when temperance becomes the rule of life in the land of palms. It is painful to find that in a Brahmin-ruled State, which has the reputation of being called enlightened, instead of facilities being given there should be vexatious rules imposed upon those who would tap for manufacturing jaggery.

*Young India*, 30-9-1926, p. 338

## 6. PROHIBITION AND CERTAIN COMMUNITIES

### 187. BHANDARIS AND PROHIBITION

I

As the train taking me to the Frontier Province was steaming out of the station, Rao Bahadur Bole handed me a copy of the petition of the Bhandaris of Bombay addressed to the Prime Minister. He pressed me to read it and send him my reply. I read the petition after resting my tired limbs and sent him my reply.

The petition is an interesting document and deserves public notice. According to it the Bhandaris got the concession to tap trees as early as 1672 as a mark of favour for military services rendered to the then British Power. Then they lost the concession. But they were able to continue their occupation and to the present that is the occupation of about 8,000 people.

The petitioners say they are not against prohibition but they plead for gradualness extending to a few years.

Then comes the sting at the very tail-end. It runs "If the Government fail to pay heed to all these entreaties and leave the Bhandaris to their fate as it falls upon them, we do not know what course these poorly educated and uneducated people may follow in their sheer disappointment. We are afraid they may even go to the length of adopting not only Congress methods of seeking relief but, adopting more drastic measure in their frenzy."

The threat, in my opinion, vitiates a good case and raises grave doubts about the bona fides of the signatories. Are the Government to yield to cold reason or to the cold steel?

If the Bhandaris have a good case, why do they not rely upon its commanding public sympathy? Let me inform the public that the Ministers are trying their best, in spite of threats, to remove every kind of injustice. In these days of the growing

violence of the mind, threats must be regarded as the ordinary lot of Ministers elected under the extensive democratic franchise. They may not be deterred even at the cost of their offices or lives from doing what they hold to be their duty, nor can they afford to be angry and refuse to do justice because as in the case under consideration the petition for justice ends by issuing an ugly threat. I have, therefore, pleasure in informing the public that the Ministers are applying themselves to the task of keeping every tapper employed at the very work to which he has been used. Only the tappers have got to help the Ministers to apply the remedy. It consists in the tappers tapping *niro* during the *niro* season and turning it into *gud*. This requires honest care and attention. The pots have to be treated as has been pointed out in these columns. The *niro* need not be drunk. Pure *niro* cannot take the place of toddy which contains a certain percentage of alcohol and which therefore changes in quality. Pure *niro* is food even as sugar is. Toddy, even sweet, is not in the same sense and to the same extent as *niro*. Hence *niro* will be turned into *gud* which can compete with the ordinary *gud* which is often dirty, adulterated, full of grit. Palm *gud* is any day more tasty than sugarcane *gud*. It can be eaten raw whereas sugarcane *gud* being much sweeter does not admit of being eaten raw. And palm *gud*, when it is manufactured under State supervision, will always carry with it the guarantee of being pure. Many sweets can be manufactured out of palm *gud*. But in order to accomplish this great task, whole-hearted co-operation of the Bhandaris is necessary. If they are in earnest, they will help the Government and help themselves. What to do during the off-season will be a question. I have not been able to study the condition under which toddy is drawn. But this is a matter of detail and adjustment.

On the way to Peshawar, 7-7-1939

*Harijan*, 15-7-1939, p. 197

## II

(Originally appeared under the title "An Explanation".)



To,  
The Editor,  
The *Harijan*, Poona

Dear Sir,

My attention has been drawn to the criticism of Mahatma Gandhi on the last para of the memorial presented by the Bhandari Committee to the Hon'ble the Prime Minister of Bombay, which appeared in the issue of the *Harijan* dated 15th July 1939.

In this connection I have only to say that the signatories to that memorial acted bona fide and they never intended to offer any threat to the Bombay Ministry. The last para of the said memorial was a frank expression of the Bhandari Committee of its apprehensions about the probabilities that might ensue from the enforcement of the prohibition policy under the circumstances then prevailing.

I shall be thankful to you if you will kindly give publicity to this letter at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully, Bombay, 31st July 1939

S. K. BOLE

[I gladly publish the foregoing letter and accept the explanation. Without it the concluding paragraph of the partition could only be interpreted as a threat. Better than the explanation, however, will be the help the Bhandaris could render in the prosecution of the prohibition programme. Let them be true soldiers of the Congress Government and the nation as they were of the East India Company who were foreigners come to exploit the country. If they will heartily assist the Government in their arduous task, they will find that they will also assist themselves in a manner they never otherwise could have done. —M. K. G.]

Segaon, 7-8-1939

*Harijan*, 12-8-1939, p. 231

### 188. WHOM WILL YOU HELP?

(Originally appeared under the title "To the Parsis".)

A temperance wave is passing over India. The people want voluntarily to become teetotallers. Society is fast developing a public opinion that would consider drinking an unpardonable vice. Many Parsis make a living by running liquor shops. Your whole-hearted co-operation can sweep out of existence many of these plague-spots in the Bombay Presidency. The Local Governments almost all over India are making a discreditable attempt to thwart the movement which bids fair to succeed even to the point of destroying the whole of the *Abkari* revenue. Will you help the Governments or the people? The Bombay Government has not yet been seized by panic. But I can hardly imagine that it will have the courage and wisdom to sacrifice the drink-revenue. You have to make your immediate choice. I do not know what your scriptures say about drink. I can guess what the Prophet, who separated good from evil and sang the victory of the former over the latter, is likely to have said. But apart from your own religious belief, you have to make up your mind as to whether you will forward the cause of temperance in a whole-hearted manner or whether you will supinely and philosophically watch developments. I shall hope that you, as a practical community of India, will actively and thoroughly associate yourselves with the great temperance movement which bids fair to outshine every such movement in the world.

*Young India*, 23-3-1921, p. 92

### 189. NOT TOO LATE

(Originally appeared under the title "Too Late".)

A Parsi friend, who sends Rs. 10 for the Tilak Swaraj Fund, writing from Bombay says, "Your appeal to the Parsis comes too late. The Government of Bombay has already pocketed this time in advance nearly 23 lakhs of rupees, fearing a movement from you. If the Parsis can be assured that no other community would get into their place and that you can eradicate the evil for all time then I assure hearty support from the enlightened Parsi community." If the Government has taken the full annual charge in advance, those who close their shops for the purpose of advancing the cause of temperance must get a refund when better times come. The liquor dealers are obviously not non-co-operators. There is no reason why they should not apply to the Government for a refund. As for the assurance required by the friend, I can only say that no reform has yet been brought about on his conditions. His argument means that no one need be good unless all become good, whereas reformers set the example by standing alone. My appeal to the Parsis is to join this temperance movement whether the others do or not. As a matter of fact, several among the non-Parsis have given up drink traffic.

*Young India*, 27-4-1921, p. 129 at p. 130

### 190. DANGER AHEAD

The liquor-shop picketing has an intimate relation to Parsis. We will have to exercise great forbearance towards our Parsi countrymen. While we cannot stop picketing altogether, we must meet the liquor dealers in conference, understand their difficulties and explain our own. Mr. Godrej has earmarked his donation for liquor prohibition and the uplift of the suppressed classes. Let us not, therefore, think that all Parsis are necessarily hostile to the great temperance movement. At the present moment, an outbreak of violence is the most to be feared from the temperance campaign, unless the moderate Ministers take their courage in both hands, refund all auction bids and close liquor shops. I assure them that the movement can only be regulated, it cannot be checked. The people are bent on ending liquor shops, and treating as a crime all liquor selling except as a medicine by chemists. It is a matter that brooks no delay.

*Young India*, 29-6-1921, p. 201 at p. 203

### 191. LIQUOR AND PARSIS

Several Parsi friends seem to be under the apprehension that liquor picketing is to be confined only to Parsi liquor dealers. This is wholly a misconception. Picketing is now going on all over India in a more or less organized fashion. And in the parts other than Gujarat there are more Hindu dealers than Parsis. Even in Gujarat the thousands of toddy trees that are being uprooted belong overwhelmingly to Hindus. Toddy booths owned by Hindus are certainly to be picketed on a most extensive scale. Organized picketing, it should be remembered, has only just commenced. In my speeches I have made a pointed appeal to Parsis because there is an indissoluble bond between them and me and because they are the most advanced and organized community in all India and therefore more readily amenable to reason. They read newspapers. Parsi liquor dealers attend my meetings, whereas Hindu dealers are too ignorant to do so. The latter can only be reached by personal visits made to them in their own booths or homes. Indeed the response I am getting from Parsi friends is quite encouraging, though not yet adequate. It is a Parsi sister—Mithubai Petit—who assisted among others by a Parsi pleader is organizing picketing in the Surat district. Behram Mehta and Dhanjisha Darbari have gone to jail in the same cause. They were ostensibly arrested for breach of salt laws, but I have a suspicion that they were arrested for the possibility of their undoubted influence spreading among liquor dealers. Any way they were engaged in the anti-drink work as much as the Salt Satyagraha. It was a matter of joy to me too that some Parsi liquor dealers who came to me the other day went away satisfied to find that I had fully the intention of picketing toddy booths just as much as liquor shops. One complaint was that we were leaving alone the liquor shops in the adjacent Baroda territory. The charge is true. But I am hoping that the Baroda State people will organize the picketing of Baroda canteens. Prohibition is first and foremost a moral reform. The Indian States are

as much interested in it as the rest of India. The States' people, may take up this reform, and ought to do so.

The friends who saw me raised also the question of their living. It is here that the Parsis as a community have to step in to find a solution. Parsi associations can prepare statistics and organize bureaus for the employment of those who would need relief when the only source of their income is gone, as it ought to have long ago. It cannot be a matter of pride that this great community has so many of its members living on an immoral traffic.

*Young India*, 1-5-1930, p. 158

## 192. A PARSI PROTEST

Nearly 175 Parsis have signed the protest condemning the violence used against Congress pickets, including Sjt. Abid Ali on the 10th August last. The signatories to the protest include barristers, doctors, solicitors and professors. I congratulate the signatories on their protest. May I however suggest to them, that mere protest will perhaps produce very little effect on those who were concerned in organizing the hooliganism? What is really required is personal contact with the liquor dealers, and framing a scheme for finding some other and honourable work for them and creating among the Parsis a strong public opinion against the traffic. The argument that these liquor dealers have advanced is that if they gave up the traffic, some others would take it up. I have suggested to them that their abstention will create a public opinion even outside Parsi ranks and will really make it impossible for others to take up the immoral traffic. I have already recited in these columns the example of the Bhandaris in Ratnagiri District who led the way by giving up the traffic which was their hereditary occupation. Many Kolis have done likewise. If therefore the Parsis would carry out the reform, they would not be pioneers but they would be following a good example and making a patriotic contribution towards eradication of a traffic that is doing irreparable harm to the labouring population.

*Young India*, 24-9-1931, p. 275

### 193. PROHIBITION AND PARSIS

I have read long accounts of a great Parsi meeting in Bombay protesting against prohibition in Bombay. I note that Parsi ladies also took part in the meeting. I have also some letters from Parsi friends appealing to me, as the author of prohibition as a chief plank in the Congress programme, to ask the Bombay Ministry to desist from their policy of prohibition.

It is not clear whether the objection is to prohibition as such or to the new taxation. All India knows the intimate connection that subsists between the Parsis and me. It hurts me to think that this race of the greatest philanthropists in the world should ally itself to a campaign against a cause whose basis is purest philanthropy. The hurt is all the greater for the knowledge that even Parsi ladies have allied themselves to the campaign. I see that unworthy threats were used at the meeting and the rights of minorities were pleaded. I can only hope that all the heat shown at the meeting was due to the momentary passion, and that the innate philanthropy of the Parsis will assert itself. I venture to suggest that the Parsis will be among the first to benefit by the prohibition policy. It is wrong to suggest that drink has done or is doing no harm, to the Parsis. The Parsis will be the gainers for the diversion of Parsi liquor sellers to some other means of livelihood.

Let me remind the objectors that prohibition does not affect unfermented toddy which is called *niro*. Therefore no Parsi will be deprived of his *niro* which, I admit, is as healthy as sugarcane juice and perhaps cheaper if a means can be discovered of preventing quick fermentation which *niro* undergoes more than other sweet juices.

The objectors departed from truth when they raised the cry of attack on religion. I have read the carefully drawn prohibition rules which provide for special permits for the use of spirituous liquors for *bona fide* religious rites. The rules also provide for their use for medicinal purposes. And so far as taxation is concerned it ill



behoves, philanthropists to grumble at taxation for a cause so noble as prohibition which means the welfare of ignorant millions. I hope, therefore, that the nobler element, of which there is so much among the Parsis, will assert itself and help the glorious movement which promises to deliver the labouring population from a curse which is destroying them body and soul.

New Delhi, 4-4-1939

*Harijan*, 8-4-1939, p. 77

#### 194. A SINCERE SUGGESTION

(Originally appeared under the title "Liquor Picketing")

A Parsi correspondent writes as follows:

As you have a very wide experience of this world, I have no grounds to point you out any path for stopping the devil liquor trade, which is the sole monopoly of a few Parsis of Gujarat. You will kindly excuse me if I put up a few possible suggestions. I am myself a Parsi and I sincerely wish that this nefarious trade should be stopped and it could be only done by making the profits negligible. If there is negligible profit in liquor trade, the Parsis will leave it at once and join you gladly in all your undertakings. Can you find out any means and ways of making this profit of liquor shops negligible? It is a fact that these shop-keepers make a good profit by (a) short sale, (b) adulteration and keep the staff of the Excise Department well in hand by paying them their dues.

The only suggestion I can think of for stopping this middle man's profit, is to insist on Government to first introduce the "Bottle System", as is introduced in Indore and Gwalior States. If once the sealed Bottle System is adopted there cannot be any short sale and adulteration and thus the shop-keepers' profit would be negligible and they would gradually leave this trade of their own accord. The Excise staff would be reduced by one half, there cannot be illicit distillation and thus the consumption of liquor would be less.

The second point is, that the liquor now distilled in Nasik is quite unfit for human consumption. They distil over-proof liquor and then blend it and thus the liquor becomes insipid, tasteless and is not fit for consumption, and is harmful\* They should distil liquor of one uniform strength (say 35° or 45°) and bottle it at Nasik and then distribute it for sale. These are the main points, your supporters can legitimately fight for in the Legislative Council and these are the only means of gradually introducing prohibition.

The third point I have to suggest is that it is rather difficult to introduce peaceful picketing of liquor shops. Why not open magic lantern shows or cinema shows in every big town and a few big villages and show such pictures to the public pointing out harm and disadvantages of liquor? By seeing such pictures, the ignorant people will be gradually tempted to leave drinking. Such temperance movements will have better effects, Government cannot stop such shows and this will lead to temperance.

Along with temperance you will make it a point to make Government introduce the Bottle System all over India, and this is the first step to temperance.

I sincerely wish you success in all your legitimate fights with Government and chiefly the cause of temperance.

This is a sincere letter. It is a frank admission that if the Parsis can be persuaded to give up the drink traffic, the solution of the drink problem, at least up to Bombay if not throughout India becomes simple. But the remedy suggested by the correspondent will not answer the purpose. No matter what is done the traffic ail the world over bears an immoral taint. The only true remedy is therefore prohibition. Even as thieving cannot be regulated save by prohibition so may drink traffic not be regulated save by prohibition.

There is no doubt danger of violence in picketing. Hence my appeal to the sisters of India to take charge of it. If only the educated few will shed their fear and disbelief the other sisters are sure to follow.

And as to the Parsi liquor dealers, surely it is not beyond the capacity of Parsi philanthropists to take them in hand and find for them a suitable employment. Parsi leaders can create an atmosphere against the traffic and thus make picketing easy. Anyway I should be surprised if during this wave of self-purification the traffic is not swept away. It needs but a little sustained effort on the part of the sisters. In six canteens of Ahmedabad and frequented by the labouring population, thanks to the quiet picketing done by the Labour Union, the traffic has fallen to 19

p.c. Though I have not accurate figures as yet, the traffic in the area covered by Mithubai's activity has also fallen considerably. And I know that in both these places picketing has been absolutely non-violent. Thousands in Surat are said to have voluntarily come forward to forswear drink.

The mention of Mithubai Petit reminds me of two other Parsis who are working in the same field. Dhanji- shah known as Darbari Sadhu or *Bhikshu* or Sannyasi and who has now gone to jail under the Salt Act has been for years working in the village where I am writing these notes. It was partly in his honour that I decided to shift from Dandi to Karadi. The other is Baheram Mehta, a non-co-oprating graduate. He was picked up by the police in Orpad, because he was respected and loved by the people. I need not mention the four grand-daughters of the G.O.M. who have been for years unassumingly serving the cause with a single-mindedness worthy of their noble-hearted grandfather. I can name several other Parsis who are selflessly helping the cause. I have, therefore, every hope that the Parsi liquor dealers will themselves not repel the appeal of their sisters. The liquor traffic like the salt tax is doomed.

*Young India*, 24-4-1930, p. 142

### 195. TO PARSI FRIENDS

Parsi friends continue to favour me with their letters some of which do not err on the side of politeness. Some are affectionate and so simple that they believe me to be capable of performing wonders. Among these writers there is one who writes with a lacerated heart and sends me cuttings which contain palpable falsehoods. He asks me to appeal to the Parsis with a view, at least, of purging the opposition of indecency. The language used in the cuttings is not translatable. The families of those who have incurred their ill-will have not been left alone. Vulgarity is too mild a term for characterizing some of the writings. One writer uses language of violence which certainly brings him within penal laws. But the writers have no fear of the law. The writings before me are a fair sample of "civil" liberty. I call these writings terrorism of minorities. One writer has given the prohibition campaign a communal turn and has not hesitated to say that Congress Hindus have plotted to ruin the Parsis!!!

Surely abuse is no argument. Let the Parsis who are interested in opposing prohibition carry on whatever agitation they like. But let it be decent, non-violent and within bounds.

Must one hundred thousand Parsis hold up an overdue reform which promises to bring a ray of hope in the dungeons of the labouring population which far out numbers the whole of the Parsi population? Every legitimate ground of complaint has been removed by Dr. Gilder. No Parsi whose health requires the use of spirituous liquors will be deprived of them. If Parsi religious rites really demand the use of the fiery liquid, they shall be supplied. Then there is the economic question. Many poor liquor dealers will be hard hit by the deprecation of their means of livelihood. I understand that the Ministers are taxing themselves to devise some legitimate method of dealing with them. But it will surely be very difficult, if not impossible, for them to do anything, if the wild ferment is kept up

and terrorism short of physical violence is applied. Not that the Ministers should not do justice because of terrorism, but it incapacitates them from taking effective action. For instance, it is necessary for the heads of the Parsi Panchayat to confer with the Ministers and in consultation with them think out a plan whereby prohibition in Bombay can be inaugurated with the least possible hardship. This can be done only if all parties recognize that prohibition has come to stay.

My correspondents have asked me to use my influence with the Ministers for withdrawing their measure. They should know that I have my limitations. If I have any influence, it is due to my never crossing the boundary line. Let all concerned know that I have never interfered with the Congress Ministers although many of them have been and are my valued co-workers. Having withdrawn from the Congress, it would ill-become me to interfere with their work. The very purpose of my withdrawal would be defeated. What is more, I am most interested in prohibition. No one in India perhaps knows its beneficial effect as well as I do and therefore no one feels its necessity as keenly as I do. I have seen with my own eyes people otherwise sane lying in the gutter. Having identified myself with labour, I know what ruin drink has brought to the homes of labourers given to drink. I know that they will not touch liquor if it was not within reach. We have contemporaneous evidence that drinkers themselves are in many cases asking for prohibition. Have I not my eldest son who was intelligent, brave, patriotic, and capable of sacrifice, and who has been ruined by the drink habit and who is today lost to his parents and lost to society and exists on the misplaced charity of generous donors? This is not an exception. It is a typical case, as I can say from a knowledge of sons of persons in the so-called higher walks of life. As I write these lines, illustrations of unimpeachable authenticity crowd on my memory. I can therefore only ask my Parsi correspondents and others like them in return to help the Ministers in their noble and philanthropic mission; for I feel convinced that whatever may be said for or against Congress Ministers about their popular

measures, their prohibition programme, if they are able to put it through to the end, will go down to posterity as unquestionably the noblest measure of all. It is no vote-catching device. Prohibition is an integral part of the programme of national self-purification. Twice has it been demonstrated what was possible in the shape of closing of liquor shops even through voluntary effort. Let the great Parsi community, men and women, discarding the unbecoming vituperation, rise to the occasion and help the great reform movement which, if it succeeds, will not only enrich India morally and materially, but will serve as an impetus to similar effort in the Western world. Many eyes outside India are watching this experiment anxiously and prayerfully.

I grant that many Parsis drink moderately and without any visible bad effect. That is an argument not for opposing prohibition but for ensuring that they get their drink if it is proved to be a medical necessity. They should be patriotic enough to recognize that as against their limited experience is the universal experience of the deadly effect of the drink habit.

Rajkot, 30-5-1939

*Harijan*, 3-6-1939, p. 148

## 196. THE ANTI-PROHIBITION DEPUTATIONS

(By M.D.)

### THE ECONOMIC ARGUMENT

That the path of the reformer legislator is not strewn with roses is a truism. It is particularly different where customs and practices, religious or believed to be religious, are concerned. It is also difficult where vested interests are adversely affected. But no one would have expected the storm that has been raised against the introduction of prohibition from August 1st in Bombay by a small section of the population of Bombay. That section is predominately the Parsi population of Bombay. The programme of prohibition has been one of the principal planks of the Congress programme since 1920, and consequent upon it considerable suffering has been borne by the sympathisers and workers during the past twenty years. Gandhiji issued several appeals to the Parsis during the interval, and never before did the agitation assume such proportion as it has done during the past few months. Its questionable nature was described by Gandhiji in his article last week. When an agitation crosses the limits of decency it loses its point and often recoils on itself.

In refreshing contrast, however, to this ugly agitation was the criticism of the Bombay Government's policy made by the deputations that waited on Gandhiji in Bombay on Saturday last. The first deputation consisted of representatives of toddy, country liquor and foreign liquor dealers. Their representation addressed itself mainly to the hardships and sufferings that would be the result of several thousand Parsi families being thrown out of employment; their being reduced to poverty and even bankruptcy; illicit sales and clandestine breaches of the law; impossibility of disposing of 50 to 60 lakhs of rupees worth of material by August 1st; the loss on having to dispose of costly furniture.



Gandhiji congratulated them on the restrained language of their representation. They had every right to go to him, as he was specially attached to the Parsis. "What I gather from your representation is that far from being opposed in principle to prohibition you have pointed out the difficulties and hardships involved. But I am afraid you have come to the wrong man. I never interfere with the work of the Ministries. But on prohibition I am keener even than the Ministers. I confess I have not studied the economic aspect of the question. With me it is a creed and I would, if I could, fulfil it at any cost. If I had the administration in my own hands, I should study all the figures you have given. I am sure the Ministers have studied them, and you should approach them. They would gladly discuss the whole question with you and try to show the way out of the difficulties you have pointed out."

#### **SHORT NOTICE?**

They also raised the question of short notice. The Congress Election Manifesto, they said, did not contain this programme and the decision to introduce it in August had come upon them as a bolt from the blue. In reply to this Gandhiji said: "The Congress Election Manifesto is principally a political document and naturally does not contain the prohibition programme. But prohibition has been in the forefront of the Congress programme since 1920. With me it has been a passion ever since my close contact with the Indian immigrants in South Africa and also with the South Africans. I have seen with my own eyes the terrible scourge drink can be. It has ruined people morally, physically, economically, and it has destroyed the sanctity and happiness of the home. My heart bleeds as I think of the disaster that comes in its wake and I have really pined for the immediate introduction of prohibition. When the Congress decided to accept offices I thought it had a golden opportunity to introduce it at once, but it was the Ministers who pleaded for fixing the time-limit at three years. To my mind, therefore, there is no question of short notice. It is coming several years too late. Hundreds and thousands of women have in the past picketed liquor shops, suffered insults and

assaults. In one case a woman volunteer was so hit on the forehead that the evil effect still persists. There was no compulsion. It was all peaceful persuasion, and it had succeeded so remarkably that in some provinces the excise revenue was almost reduced to zero. As for its effects here in India I would like you to study the condition of workmen in factories, and I would like to tell you also the boon prohibition has been to them in Ahmedabad."

#### TODDY AND NIRO

One of the gentlemen in the deputation said that 12 to 15 thousand tappers would be adversely affected and that fresh toddy had great medicinal value. "It is *niro* you are referring to," said Gandhiji to him. "For I agree it is a refreshing drink, and we make *gad* out of it. I would invite you to sample some of it." With this he offered a plate of palm-juice and date-palm-juice *gad* to them. "If the tappers took to tapping the juice for *gad*-making there was no question of their unemployment. In Bengal tons of *gad* was prepared from *niro* and in South India *arrack* was prepared from *gad* made out of fresh juice." But the gentleman maintained that it was impossible to draw fresh *niro* from a tree more than ten times during a season and that *gad* was not a feasible proposition. Gandhiji said that the evidence in his possession was to the contrary. He would, however, enquire.

#### EXEMPT THE COMMUNITY

The other deputation was headed by Sir Cowasji Jehangir and its other members were Sir J. C. Koyaji, Sir H. P. Modi, Messrs. Khareghat, A. D. Shroff and *SaldaU* wala. The gravamen of their charge was that the prohibition policy was tantamount to coercion as the community had for centuries indulged in drink without being any the worse for it. There was the argument of dislocation of trade and financial and economic structure of the province, of the hardship it would cause to traders and tappers, and the interference with the religious rites of the people. They said they also resented the distinction between Asiatics and non-

Asiatics, and even suggested that not only the Parsis but Musalmans and Hindus were also opposed to the policy!

Some of the gentlemen have been friends of Gandhiji for years, especially Sir Cowasji. And so he was the most vehement in his attack, but the utmost friendliness prevailed during the discussion. "Drunkenness is bad, not drink. And for the sake of a few who drink, why penalize the whole community? I take two or three glasses of sherry every day and I know hundreds of others who talk of prohibition but who do drink and will do so in spite of prohibition", said Sir Cowasji. There was obvious defiance in his voice, but Gandhiji disarmed it by ultimately reminding Sir Cowasji how he had helped him (Gandhiji) in the past at various junctures, and how he expected him to stand by him at this! Sir Cowasji had a hearty laugh.

Mr. Khareghat, the veteran temperance reformer who, said Gandhiji, reminded him of Dadabhai by his silvery beard, entered a curious plea: "I do not drink nor am I dealer in drinks. But this policy will ruin thousands, and want you to realize your error and do as you did in Rajkot. I would then honour you with all my heart." He also said: "According to our religion it is the duty of the host to offer the guest good bread and good wine." "But, said Gandhiji, "it must be unfermented wine." Whatever it may be, one wonders how this can be a *religious duty* at all! What would a poor man do?

Then followed Mr. Saklatwala. "I do not drink," he said, "and thank God I have enough property to enable me to pay the property tax. But why should others regulate my life? I tell you, although I do not drink, if someone came and told me I might not drink, he would make my blood boil." He did not finish the sentence. He would, I suppose, drink if only to defy the guardian of the law! "But," said Gandhiji smiling, "even so you do not steal, and yet there is the law against thieving. Would you therefore steal to defy the law?"

Sir H. P. Modi, to my mind, summed up the case, which boiled down came to this: "We do not believe in prohibition. Why do you tempt us to break the law? We want to be exempted. Drink has become part of our social habit, our daily life, and we *want* to drink."

### **SACRIFICE 35 CRORES FOR A LAKH?**

Now Gandhiji summed up his reply: "As I told the deputations that preceded you, you have come to the wrong man. There is a wide gulf between you and me. It was Dadabhai Naoroji who taught me prohibition and the distinction between Prohibition and temperance. Individual liberty is allowed to man only to a certain extent. He cannot forget that he is a social being, and his individual liberty has to be curtailed at every step. I would appeal to you to consider one thing. What is your population? One lakh at the most in a population of 35 crores. You have become famous in the world not as residents of Persia but as Indians. I want you to consider not in terms of your one lakh but in terms of India, not the narrow interest of your community but of the larger interest of the whole country. How can you interrupt and ruin a noble experiment? You say you can not get rid of this, so very much you are wedded to it! You are not fair to yourselves there. You have given up so many things. You gave up your language and adopted Gujarati, you changed your dress, you changed many of your manners and customs. Why must you then stick to this one infirmity? You may plead your weakness, but for Heaven's sake don't advance the plea of individual liberty. There you have given away the whole case. You have sacrificed much for India, sacrifice this bad habit too. I have seen men and women wallowing in gutters in South Africa and families ruined."

Sir H. P. Modi, interrupting: "Where do you see the ruin in India?"

"I tell you I have seen it with my own eyes. There is the tragic case of my own son. 60,000 men in Ahmed- abad are blessing the prohibitionist. I claim that the moral conscience of the public is with me. The issue between us is the narrowest

possible. Do you want to press the question of a few individual consciences to the extent of ruining a whole country?"

"But are there not other evils? There is gambling for instance."

"None so disastrous as this, and this breeds the rest. But I am for the abolition of gambling too. This evil, however, runs the victim body and soul."

"The same thing would happen if you were to overeat! You are talking of the 60,000 mill-hands in Ahmedabad. Why not listen to the appeal of 50,000 Parsis of Bombay? Drunkenness is unknown amongst us."

"Let us assume that for a moment. It proves that you are temperate. Well then, why will you not carry your temperateness a little further and co-operate in this the greatest of all moral reforms in India? And remember there is ample provision for those who need drink for their health or religious rites. I suggest your working along these lines but not seeking to ruin the reform."

"But why draw the line between Europeans and Indians?"

Gandhiji retorted, "Call it my weakness, and agitate for including the Europeans too in the prohibition. They will, like us, profit by being included in the general law. Their health will not suffer for they will have all the drink they may need for their health."

Bombay, 5-6-1939.

*Harijan*, 10-6-1939, p. 156

## 197. PARSIS AND LIQUOR TRAFFIC

How I wish Parsis will shed their anger and look at the liquor policy of the Congress square in the face. If they have made it a principle to resist by all means at their disposal the Government's undoubted right to refuse to auction or sell liquor licences, there is no argument left to be advanced. It is the assertion of a principle against principle. But I hope they have taken up no such uncompromising attitude. The deputation of licensees and tappers took up no such attitude.

But apart from the question of principle there are objections raised against the working out of the policy. They are chiefly about

- a) the right to use wines for religious purposes,
- b) the right to have liquor on medical, i.e., health grounds,
- c) racial discrimination,
- d) compensation to those who will be thrown out of employment, i.e., tappers, contractors and liquor dealers, etc.
- e) the effect of the property tax on charities.

All these are pertinent questions demanding clear answers. Ministers are bound to remove every valid objection that can be advanced against the working out of the policy.

The right to use wines on religious or health grounds has always been recognized by Dr. Gilder.

I understand that in law there will be no racial discrimination. It may appear to be in the administration of the law. No one will be entitled to have the permit for the asking, not even the European, if only so that the law might not be evaded. Every case will be examined on merits. Even Europeans will be expected to respect the liquor policy of the country and, wherever they can, to refrain from asking for permits. The Archbishop of Bombay, in spite of his unconvincing

opposition to the closing of liquor shops, has gracefully announced that he and many under him are not going to ask for permits for their personal use. Many Protestant divines, I understand, have already announced similar self-denial. I should not be surprised if many European laymen copy the estimable example of the European divines. Nevertheless there is no doubt that in the administration of the law there will be more indulgence to Europeans than to those like Parsis for whom India has been their home for centuries. But I have not the shadow of a doubt that every genuine case will be considered with sympathy. May not the Parsis be expected to fall in with the general sentiment, especially when it conduces to the conservation of the social and economic welfare of the labouring classes? Enlightened Parsis must surely recognize the necessity of checking the drink evil while there is still time.

The points (d) and (e) cannot be dealt with at all satisfactorily without the hearty co-operation of the parties concerned. Thus, so far as the charities are concerned, it is surely up to the trustees of these charities to support their case with facts and figures. Some hardship no doubt there will be. Every tax is a hardship. But I should be surprised if any single charity is seriously affected. After all, the tax calculated to bring in from the city of Bombay about Rs. one crore is so widely distributed that no individual or corporation will be hit beyond endurance. But it is for those who contend otherwise to prove their case.

Liquor dealers have to present their case with full detail so as to enable the Government to deal with it.

I understand that most owners of stocks of wine have not even furnished the information asked for by the Government. How is the Government to deal with them, if they will sullenly refuse to help the Government to help them? I know that the Government are taxing themselves to meet every case of proved and avoidable hardship. I use the word "avoidable" purposely. The "Taj" will certainly be affected, but that is as much as saying that the liquor shop-keepers will be affected. The "Taj" is a mighty liquor-dealer. The house of Tata is resourceful

enough to devise other and better ways of supporting the many charities for which it is so justly famed. I dare say that the charities themselves will bear richer fruit for their being purged of the questionable income from the drink traffic. Let it not be said of the Parsis, known the world over as the greatest philanthropists as a class, that they lagged behind, nay actually obstructed a reform which was urgently needed for the sake of saving the helpless labouring population from social and economic ruin.

Bombay, 4-7-1939

*Harijan*, 8-7-1939, p. 189



### 198. ARE CHRISTIANS AGAINST PROHIBITION?

Having received protests from Christian correspondents against prohibition, I asked Mahadev Desai to write to a few representative Christian friends to ascertain their views on the question. Here are two answers. Shri P.O, Phillip, Indian Secretary of the National Christian Council of India, writes:

I am not surprised to hear that a number of Christian friends are writing to you to say that "the policy of prohibition touches upon their privilege to drink". I may not be far wrong - in thinking that most of the correspondents who write to you in that strain are Roman Catholics or those brought up in Anglo-Catholic traditions. Roman Catholic Christianity came to India from Latin countries and is even today dominated by Latin culture. People in Latin countries drink the common wine because in olden days it was not safe to drink water. The Roman Catholic missionaries who came to India, though celibates and given to the simple life, carried with them this national habit of theirs, and the people who accepted their religion naturally followed the example of their priests. There is thus no social or religious disapproval among Roman Catholics in India in regard to drinking in moderation as there is among Muslims and higher caste Hindus. Among Protestant Christians the attitude towards drink is different.

Though Protestant missionaries come to India mostly from Teutonic countries where beer is the common drink and where there is no taboo on the use of wine, they are generally total abstainers and have taught their Indian converts also to be total abstainers. The result is that the use of alcoholic drink even in moderation is looked upon with social and religious disapprobation among Protestant Christian Communities.

Among Roman Catholics also there is awakening to the evils of drink. While the authorities of the Catholic Church may officially maintain that there is nothing wrong in drinking in moderation, they cannot shut their eyes to the moral and eco-

conomic ruin that drink is causing among their people. Drinking even in moderation, when once started, has the fatal tendency to become drunkenness in many, especially among the ignorant and backward.

As a Christian Indian I rejoice that the Congress Ministries have placed prohibition in the very forefront of their programme. In the past, few British and American missionaries lent support to the anti-drink campaign of the Congress, under the mistaken notion that it was adopted only to harass the British Government and not from a genuine desire for reform. Unfortunately Indian Christians also took their cue from the missionaries and generally kept aloof from the movement. But the sincerity of the leaders of the Congress in advocating prohibition is beyond question. Its adoption is going to involve serious loss of revenue for the Governments for which the Congress Ministries are responsible.

The difficulties in the way of introducing prohibition are stupendous. But the difficulties are there only to be overcome by determined and sustained effort. The undoubted public support there is in India for the total abolition of drink—including, I believe, that of the majority of Christian Indians—will enable the Congress Ministries to overcome these difficulties. The poor classes in the villages, including Christians, need protection more than any other group of people from the temptations of drink now placed before them. Indian villages will have new life and prosperity when drink is abolished. The Christian Indian community along with other communities stand to gain immensely by this measure.

Whatever may be the national habits and traditions of the missionaries from the West in regard to drink, we may trust that their sense of practical wisdom will lead them to adopt a neutral attitude on this question, if they are unable to give active support to the cause of prohibition. But Christian Indians who love India and care for the real welfare of the rural masses cannot but rejoice at the prospect of prohibition in the six Provinces. They should not have any difficulty in wholeheartedly co-operating with their fellow-countrymen in making prohibition a complete success."

And Rev. A. Ralla Ram, General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement of India, Burma and Ceylon writes:

I give my full support to the objective of the Congress to bring about complete prohibition in the country and those who are asking that we should be satisfied with temperance should not be listened to. In my opinion the Europeans who come to this country should fall in with our aspirations, and I am afraid that if we should respect their feelings in this matter, we shall leave a loophole for many others.

As I have said before it is for Europeans to make the choice. I know how difficult it is for them to give up a habit of a life-time, considered respectable. But if they will fall in with the great national reform, the incentive should prove strong enough to wean them from the habit. Anyway, even if in the end exemption within well defined limits has to be given, let us hope that they will be graceful enough to taboo alcohol from their parties and banquets. Exemption will be, if there is to be, a concession to a life-long habit and not to a weakness or to an extravagance.

*Harijan*, 11-9-1937, p. 248

## 199. ROMAN CATHOLICS AND PROHIBITION

(From "Notes")

Mr. F. A. Plair writing from Lahore resents Shri Phillip's remarks which appeared in these columns recently about Roman Catholics; and contends that Prohibition has been preached from time immemorial by the Roman Catholic priests. He concludes his letter by saying, "We all Roman Catholics concur in your prohibition movement and join it heartily."

*Harijan*, 16-10-1937, p. 299

## 200. INTOXICATING WINES IN JUDAISM

(From "Notes")

When I saw that a claim was registered, and accepted by Dr. Gilder, for the use of spirituous liquors on behalf of Jews, I was much disturbed. For my experience of Jews among whom I had many friends in Johannesburg was wholly against the claim made in Bombay. I therefore wrote to my friend Herr H. Kallanbach to send me an authoritative opinion from the Chief Rabbi in Johannesburg. Here is Dr. Landau's opinion:

I beg to state that the orthodox Jew may use only specially prepared (kasher) wine for the sanctification of the Sabbath or holidays in the Synagogue after Divine Service and at home before meals, and on the two eves of the Passover Festival.

The wine need not be fermented.

I may state that the use of wine is not a law but a tradition which the orthodox Jew cherishes, as it is referred to both in the Talmud and in Jewish Codes of Law.

If the Jews of Bombay accept this opinion as authoritative, they should withdraw their claim and be satisfied with the juice of fresh grapes which I understand is the original meaning of the word wine. It is worthy of note, too, that even this use has the authority, not of the Jewish scriptures but of tradition only.

Segaon, 10-9-1939.

*Harijan*, 16-9-1939, p. 273

## 7. PICKETING AGAINST SALE OF LIQUOR

### 201. APPEAL TO WOMEN

In connection with the temperance movement, Mr. Gandhi appeals to the women of Gujarat to help in the campaign. They should visit the liquor shop localities and plead with the liquor sellers. If they do not succeed with them they should approach the drinkers. They should scrupulously avoid harsh language.

"You are our brothers; our brothers will not drink. In the name of God, give up drinking." This and this much only, would suffice for their lecture. "I am sure," adds Mr. Gandhi, "they will succeed in shaming the drinkers into leaving the shops. And even if they do not, and behave improperly towards them, even if they abuse them, I would ask them to put up with the abuse for the sake of the country."

*Young India*, 30-3-1921 p. 103

## 202. AN ACT OF NON-VIOLENT BRAVERY

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "An Injured Eye".)

Attention has been drawn in these columns to the temperance activity in Ahmedabad and its great self-restraint. Dr. Kanuga was so seriously hurt in the eye by an unknown stone thrown that he might have lost it. As it was, he had to be laid up for a few days. He stood his ground in spite of the injury till he was relieved. The other pickets continued at their post. There was no panic. Naturally there was no complaint. The result was electrical. The drinking party was non-plussed. The stone-throwing lost its force for want of reaction. And I understand that, after the incident, there has been no stone-throwing at all. The effect on the visitors to the drink shops has also been equally great. I regard this as one of the best examples of non-violence and its immediate results. Had Dr. Kanuga complained to the police, or his companions retaliated, there would have been a confusion of issues. All kinds of side issues would have been raised, and, as usual, feelings would have run high among parties, and what is worse, the cause of temperance would have suffered a set-back. Dr. Kanuga's bravery, sacrifice and self-restraint have advanced the cause for which he has bled, it has checked any further exhibition of temper on the part of the publicans and their friends and raised the temperance crusade to a very high level.

Young India, 20-4-1921, p. 121 at p. 122

### 203. OF PICKETING

(From "Notes")

The Indian Social Reformer contests the utility of picketing in its own vigorous style. Without entering upon any examination of its argument, I would perhaps take up less space if I simply state my view and experience. Picketing in its nature must be temporary, but it is like what a stimulant is in medicine. Drink is more a disease than a vice. I know scores of men who would gladly leave off drink if they could. I know some who have asked that the temptation might be put away from them. In spite of the temptation having been put away at their instance, I have known them to steal drink. I do not, therefore, think, that it was wrong to have removed the temptation. Diseased persons have got to be helped against themselves. If I have a son who is addicted (say) to gambling, and a gambling company imposes itself on me to tempt my boy, I have either violently to knock the company down or to post watches at its offices, in order, if possible, to shame my son into not going there. It is true, that there are other gambling companies some distance from my place. Still I take it, I would be held in the right in having posted a watch at the company's door. I must make it difficult for my son to gamble. If the Reformer accepts the doctrine of State prohibition, it must accept the corollary of picketing so long as the State is a tyranny being perpetrated in the face of public opinion. What, for instance, should the public do, if the State were to build palaces in every street for women of ill fame, and issue to them licences to ply their trade? Will it not be its duty, unless it destroys these palaces inhabited by vice, to quarantine them and warn the public of the danger of falling an easy prey to the temptation forced on it? I recognize the necessity of using only men and women of character as pickets and of guarding against violence being offered to those who insist on drinking in the face of public opinion. Picketing is a duty a citizen must discharge, when he is not helped by the State. What is a police patrol, if it is not picketing against thieves? The Police use the gun, when the thief

betrays an inclination to break into another's house. A picket uses the pressure of shame, i.e., love, when he warns a weak brother against the dangers of the drink evil. The Reformer has attributed to picketing claims never put forth on its behalf.

Young India, 6-7-1921, p. 209 at p. 211



## 204. HOW TO DO IT

(From "Notes")

Mr. Andrews has endeavoured to answer the query of the Secretary of the Bengal Sevak Sangh as to how to combat the drink evil. His answer is to follow in the footsteps of Pussyfoot Johnson. Whilst he was trying to convert certain English students, he was stoned. The throw resulted ultimately in the loss of one eye. He pardoned the offenders, would not prosecute them and would not take compensation offered by the British Government. That was an instance of non-violence in thought, word and deed. If such non-violence can be ensured here, I would not hesitate to revive the idea of picketing liquor shops again. But we stand, discredited. In many places our picketing in 1921 was far from non-violent. The political idea of embarrassing the Government was predominant with us, that of reforming the drunkard was a very secondary consideration. In the struggle of non-co-operation, politics are made to subserve the moral end. If we can reform the drunkard, we also reform the administration and the administrators. Whereas if we suppress the drunkard by force, we may deprive the Government of the liquor or the drug revenue for a time but in the end of the suppressed drinker or smoker will raise his head and the Government will raise an increased revenue. Not until we have men and women enough who would carry on picketing for the love of the drunkard even at the risk of their lives, can we dream of reviving picketing.

*Young India*, 17-4-1924, p. 131 at p. 132

## 205. A GAG ON PEACEFUL PICKETING

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Temperance Reform".)

For some time past, some Christians of Travancore have been earnestly striving to put down the drink habit by working from within, i.e., by seeing and speaking to the people given to the habit. They are trying to organize picketing with the intention of warning the visitors to the liquor dens. This simple procedure seems to have frightened the Travancore authorities. The District Magistrate at Kottayam has served a gagging notice upon Dr. L. M. Paret who is a well-known Christian in Travancore and, so far as I know, whose non-violent spirit has never been questioned. This is the notice:

Whereas it has been made to appear to me from reports received from the District Superintendent of Police, Kottayam, that you are making speeches inciting people to do picketing before liquor shops and to commit other form of lawlessness and that speeches are likely to cause breaches of the peace and bring the authority of Government into contempt, I do hereby strictly order and erjoin you under Section 26 of the Regulation IV of 1095 not to make any speech, harangue or address from this day in any part of this District of Kottayam.

The notice begs the question by describing every speech advising picketing as an incitement. What "the other form of lawlessness" can be is not made clear in the order. Thus in Travancore if the Magistrate's order correctly interprets its law, a premium is put upon the vice of drunkenness. Not only does the State provide facilities for drink but it also prevents reformers from resorting to the only effective and peaceful method of directly approaching the drunkards and appealing to them not to give way to temptation. I hope that the law of Travancore is faultless and that the District Magistrate has erred in his interpretation. The interpretation should be tested in a higher court. In any case, the reformer's duty is clear.

If the law is at fault, they must move for its repeal. And if all effort to set it right fails, their peaceful picketing must go on even at the risk of being imprisoned, taking care to avoid enlisting as volunteers persons who cannot restrain themselves under provocation. It is worthy of note that the gag is perpetual.

*Young India*, 18-11-1926, p. 400

## 206. WHY PICKETING BY WOMEN ONLY?

(From "To the Women of India")

The impatience of some sisters to join the good fight is to me a healthy sign. It has led to the discovery that however attractive the campaign against the salt tax may be, for them to confine themselves to it would be to change a pound for a penny. They will be lost in the crowd, there will be in it no suffering for which they are thirsting.

In this non-violent warfare, their contribution should be much greater than men's. To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not greater intuition, is she not more self-sacrificing, has she not greater powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman.

I have nursed this thought now for years. When the women of the Ashram insisted on being taken along with men something within me told me that they were destined to do greater work in this struggle than merely breaking salt laws.

I feel that I have now found that work. The picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops by men though it succeeded beyond expectations up to a point, for a time in 1921, failed because violence crept in. If a real impression is to be created, picketing must be resumed. If it remains peaceful to the end, it will be the quickest way of educating the people concerned. It must never be a matter of

coercion but conversion, moral suasion. Who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than woman?

Prohibition of intoxicating liquors and drugs and boycott of foreign cloth have ultimately to be by law. But the law will not come till pressure from below is felt in no uncertain manner.

That both are vitally necessary for the nation, nobody will dispute. Drink and drugs sap the moral well-being of those who are given to the habit. Foreign cloth undermines the economic foundations of the nation and throws millions out of employment. The distress in each case is felt in the home and therefore by the women. Only those women who have drunkards as their husbands know what havoc the drink devil works in homes that were, once orderly and peace-giving. Millions of women in our hamlets know what unemployment means. To day the Charkha Sangh covers over one hundred thousand women against less than 10,000 men.

Let the women of India take up these two activities, specialise in them, they would contribute more than man to national freedom. They would have access of power and self-confidence to which they have hitherto been strangers.

Their appeal to the merchants and buyers of foreign cloth and to the liquor dealers and addicts to the habit cannot but melt their hearts. At any rate the women can never be suspected of doing or intending violence to these four classes. Nor can Government long remain supine to an agitation so peaceful and so resistless.

The charm will lie in the agitation being initiated and controlled exclusively by women. They may take and should get as much assistance as they need from men, but the men should be in strict subordination to them.

In this agitation thousands of women literate and illiterate can take part.

Highly educated women have in this appeal of mine an opportunity of actively identifying themselves with the masses and helping them both morally and materially.

*Young India*, 10-4-1930, p. 121

## II

(From a free rendering by M.D. of extracts from Gandhiji's speech delivered at Dandi to men on 13 th April 1930 which originally appeared under the title "Men's Part".)

I have just finished the women's conference. You will like to know what part we men may take in the women's movement. In the first place we men may not meddle with the women's picketing of liquor and foreign cloth shops. If we do, we are likely to make a hash of it as we did in 1921. We can assist them in a variety of ways. The two classes of picketing have been designed to provide them with a special and exclusive field of activity. We can help by making the acquaintance of liquor and toddy dealers and interviewing them personally and asking them to give up the traffic now that the nation is going through the throes of a new birth. One can help also by showing greater and more delicate respect towards our women. Such general levelling up of the atmosphere will act upon the liquor dealer and also the foreign cloth dealer and buyer and the drinker as neither will then be able to resist the appeal made to the heart by gentle sex. In my opinion these are virtues in which *women* excel men. Ahimsa is preeminently such a virtue. Woman exercises it naturally and intuitively when man reaches it through a laborious analytical process. Women left to themselves are likely quicker to reach the goal than if we men were to meddle with their picketing though we may help them with advice and guidance whenever they need them.

*Young India*, 17-4-1930, p. 133

## 207. HOW TO DO THE PICKETING

1. At least ten women are required for picketing a liquor or foreign cloth shop. They must choose a leader from among themselves.
2. They should all first go in a deputation to the dealer and appeal to him to desist from carrying on the traffic and present him with leaflets setting forth facts and figures regarding drink or foreign cloth as the case may be. Needless to say the leaflets should be in the language understood by the dealer.
3. If the dealer refuses to suspend traffic, the volunteers should guard the shop leaving the passage free and make a personal appeal to the would be purchasers.
4. The volunteers should carry banners or light boards bearing warnings in bold letters against buying foreign cloth or indulging in intoxicating drinks, as the case may be.
5. Volunteers should be as far as possible in uniforms.
6. Volunteers should at frequent intervals sing suitable *bkajans* bearing on the subject.
7. Volunteers should prevent compulsion or interference by men.
8. On no account should vulgarity, abuse, threat or unbecoming language be used.
9. The appeal must always be to the head and the heart, never to fear of force.
10. Men should on no account congregate near the place of picketing nor block the traffic. But they should carry on propaganda generally through the area against foreign cloth and drink. They should help and organize processions of women to parade through the area carrying the message of temperance and khadi and the necessity of boycott of drink and foreign cloth.

11. There should be at the back of these picketing units a network of organization for spreading the message of the *takli* and the charkha and thinking out new leaflets and new lines of propaganda.
12. There should be an absolutely accurate and systematic account of all receipts and expenditure. This should be periodically audited. This again should be done by men under the supervision of women. The whole scheme presupposes on the part of men a genuine respect for women and sincere desire for their rise.

*Young India*, 24-4-1930, p. 144

## 208. SOME PICKETING RULES

In picketing foreign cloth or intoxicating drinks and drugs let it be remembered, that the aim is to convert the addict or the buyer. Our object is moral and economic reform. The political consequence is but a by-product. If Lancashire ceased to send us its cloth and the Government ceased to use the *abkari* revenue for any purpose save that of weaning the drunkard or opium eater from his vice, we should still be engaged in picketing work and allied propaganda. The following rules therefore must be read in that light:

1. In picketing shops your attention must be rivetted on the buyer.
2. You should never be rude to the buyer or the seller.
3. You may not attract crowds or form cordons.
4. Yours must be a silent effort.
5. You must seek to win over the buyer or the seller by your gentleness, not by the awe of numbers.
6. You may not obstruct traffic.
7. You may not cry *hai hai* or use other expressions of shame.
8. You should know every buyer and his address and occupation and penetrate his or her home and heart. This presupposes continuity of same picketers.
9. You should try to understand the difficulties of buyers and sellers, and where you cannot remove them you should report them to your superiors.
10. If you are picketing foreign cloth, you should have some khadi or at least sample book with prices and should know the nearest khadi shop to which you could take the buyer. If the buyer does not wish to buy khadi and insists on mill cloth, you should direct the buyer to an indigenous mill cloth seller.



11. You should have relevant literature upon your person for distribution among the buyers.
12. You should join or organize processions, lectures with or without magic lantern, *bhajan* parties etc.
13. You should keep an accurate diary of your day's work.
14. If you find your effort failing do not be disheartened but rely upon the universal law of cause and effect and be assured that no good thought, word or deed goes fruitless. To think well, to speak well is ours, reward is in the hands of God.

*Note:* If you think of any other rule please forward it to me.

*Young India*, 19-3-1931, p. 41 at p. 42

## 209. AGAINST PICKETING

A retired Government officer from the South writes:

I gather from the *Hindu* of Madras that you have published in *Young India* a new code of picketing liquor and foreign cloth shops, and have invited your readers to send you any other rules for picketing they might think of. May I venture to suggest *Punch's* famous advice: "Don't" in this connection? In your most excellent address to the journalists explaining the terms of the Peace Pact you said Among other things that freedom was not worth having if it did not include freedom to err and even to sin, and you pointed out that when Almighty God Himself had given the humblest of His creatures full freedom even to sin it was unthinkable that any man should dare to deny the same complete freedom to his fellow creatures. May I most respectfully ask you then why you are toiling night and day to prevent people from drinking liquor or wearing foreign cloth if they liked to do so? If you would care to follow *Punch* would you not be more consistent in your words and deeds? Besides there is one very important point that should not be lost sight of. If picketing were to be legalized, or once picketing as advocated by you is recognized as a lawful method, it might be employed in many cases with results that are shuddering to think of. I will mention just one such case. Religious missionaries are now trying to persuade people to be "converted". If Christian and Mahomedan or any other preachers were to picket Hindu temples for the purpose of achieving their objects what would be the condition of India? You might probably lay down a rule in your code that picketing was not to be employed in any religious connection. But is that not admitting that picketing as a principle has no legs to stand on? Further, besides religion there are several other departments of life in which picketing could be easily employed without deviating in the least from any of the provisions of your code, with results that would be totally embarrassing. I hope that you will not fail to bestow your best thought on the

matter and be quite sure that in encouraging picketing in any form you are not helping to "sow the wind".

The writer is plausible but not convincing. He forgets that picketing is as old as time. It does not need legalizing. The settlement does not legalize that which was illegal before it. Picketing is the right of a reformer which he may not give up without giving up his cause.

The writer has been betrayed into the common error of thinking that because a man has the freedom to err or to sin, any warning against sin would be an unpardonable interference with the freedom. The fact is that individual freedom to sin carries with it the freedom on the part of the public to wean the sinner from his sin and even to legislate against it. "The wages of sin is death." No one can sin or err with impunity. What I have protested against and what the world has always resented is the arrogant and unctuous assumption by authority to force people against their will to be "good" and to claim infallibility about its standard of what is good and what is bad. Peaceful picketing on the other hand is a friendly warning against a practice that a reformer thinks to be bad. When it goes beyond that point, and becomes violent the law steps in and prevents the person from interfering with the human liberty. The writer has pictured the dangers of picketing in certain conditions. He is not even original in his illustrations. Temples have been picketed before now. Only the attempt proved futile and was given up. And there is nothing to prevent any person from renewing such picketing as long as he observes the rule of the game and does not mind public opprobrium. Picketing of drink and drug shops and foreign cloth shops has been possible and largely successful because there is a public feeling against these shops. There is therefore no danger of the Congress having "sown the wind and reaping the whirlwind". Picketing of the educative type has come to stay, for it has proved its usefulness.

*Young India*, 23-4-1931, p. 87

## 210. THE METHOD OF PICKETING

(From "Notes")

Congressmen should know that the Government of India have been receiving complaints from the provincial Governments that picketing is not always peaceful. I do not know how far these complaints are justified. But we cannot be too strict in the observance of our part of the Settlement irrespective of how the authorities implement their part of it. Let us realize that the stricter we are, the greater will be our prestige and strength. I therefore repeat what I have said before:

1. There should be no coercion direct or indirect.
2. There should be no show of intimidation, hence not more than say five pickets should work at one and the same place at a time.
3. There should be no more than courteous entreaty and distribution of literature.
4. There should be no fine levied by Congress Committees for breach of promises by foreign cloth dealers.
5. There should be no hooting of purchasers of foreign cloth.
6. There should be no cordons formed to surround the would be purchasers.
7. There should be no lying down to block the passage of customers or trollies carrying foreign cloth.

If there are those who think that picketing under such restrictions will be of no avail, they may give it up and run the risk of foreign cloth being sold under their noses. It is better that foreign cloth is sold than that, in order to prevent its sale we should break the letter or the spirit of the Settlement.

Boycott of foreign cloth will ultimately succeed only when the Congress message has penetrated the masses and the khadi spirit permeates them. The real work of propaganda and production lies in the villages.

We should remember too that boycott of foreign cloth is pursued for its great economic and social consequence. And it is just as necessary to boycott Japanese or Italian cloth as it is to boycott British cloth or yarn. Indeed it is more necessary to boycott Japanese cloth because it offers greater competition to both khadi and indigenous mill cloth. We have no ill-will against Japan. We pursue foreign cloth boycott because it is an economic necessity for the nation.

What I have said about the method of picketing, applies equally to liquor picketing. That too depends for its ultimate success in penetration into the home of the drinkers.

*Young India*, 21-5-1931, p. 116

## 211. IF PICKETING IS NOT PEACEFUL

(From "Terrible If True")

I take the following from a complaint about picketing:

In rural areas there is definite evidence that everything short of physical violence has been resorted to by volunteers. Would be customers are obstructed, abused and generally harassed, and toddy shop renters have been put to considerable loss and in some instances have been so discouraged that they have ceased to get trees marked for tapping and closed their shops rather than suffer further indignities. The Congress office in Tellichery issued summonses to the principal renters to appear before them and few had the courage to disobey. Those who appeared were summarily told to close their shops, and when they asked for compensation they were told that Congress would do nothing for them.

If these complaints are true this picketing should be suspended immediately. Though as soon as I had this complaint I wrote enquiring about the allegations, I thought it was better for the sake of workers in general to publish the complaint. It may be mentioned that somewhat similar complaints have been received regarding cloth picketing too. I can but repeat the warning I have issued in these pages that it would be better for the Congress, better for the cause of prohibition, whether of intoxicating drinks or drugs or foreign cloth, that we ceased picketing altogether than there was the slightest departure from the terms of the Delhi Settlement. If picketing cannot remain peaceful, it should be abandoned altogether.

It is being discovered that the more effective method is to pay house to house visit and meet the drunkards, opium eaters or foreign cloth users in their own homes and explain to them the evil of the use of any of the three things. There may be also addresses at street corners and distribution of leaflets. *Prabhat Pheries* too can do this propaganda through Swadeshi and anti-drink and drug songs. Foreign

cloth boycott may also be assisted by door to door hawking of khadi, registering orders and organizing the weaving of self-spun yarn. Such levelling up the atmosphere cannot but affect the use of drinks and drugs and foreign cloth.

*Young India*, 25-6-1931, p. 155

## 212. LIQUOR DEALERS BEWARE

(From "Notes")

Auctions for liquor licences are now in season. In the face of what I have already published it is too much to expect local authorities to stop auctions or restrict them. But is it too much to expect liquor dealers to foresee the future? They ought to know that prohibition of liquor and foreign cloth is the permanent policy of the nation. The one is a moral necessity, the other is an economic necessity. Both produce political results. But they are a by-product. Picketing no doubt of the most peaceful character will continue without remission till the State is converted to the policy of prohibition. It is an effective method of education.

*Young India*, 16-7-1931, p. 176

## 213. ASSAULT ON PEACEFUL PICKET

### I

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "To the Parsis".)

Brave Abid Ali, being mistaken for equally brave Nariman, got nearly killed by seven injuries inflicted by some unknown Parsi's infuriated projectiles, —what they were I do not know. This happened, while Davar bar was being picketed and Sr. Abid Ali was trying to disperse a crowd of do-nothings. My appeal then is to the interested Parsis and to the great Parsi philanthropists and reformers. To the interested liquor dealers and their friends I say: My sympathy is with you as with foreign cloth dealers. My sympathy compels me to warn both against your trades. Both the trades must go for the sake of the poor. And you cannot keep up either by hooliganism. Parsis are surely shrewd enough to recognize this fact, and are resourceful to find out some other calling. To the philanthropists I say: You have a brilliant record of philanthropy before you. Will you not add to your record by taking in hand the Parsi dealers in liquor and put them on to some honourable occupation? No philanthropy can possibly be compared to the one I am suggesting. What can be nobler than that your riches are utilized for ridding the nation of the soul-destroying curse of drink?

*Young India*, 27-8-1931, p. 239 at p. 240

### II

(Originally appeared under the title "A Parsi Protest".)

Nearly 175 Parsis have signed the protest condemning the violence used against Congress picket, including Sjt. Abid Ali on the 10th August last. The signatories to the protest include barristers, doctors, solicitors and professors. I congratulate the signatories on their protest.



May I however suggest to them, that the mere protest will perhaps produce very little effect on those who were concerned in organizing the hooliganism? What is really required is personal contact with the liquor traders, and framing a scheme for finding some other and honourable work for them and creating among the Parsis strong public opinion against the traffic. The argument that these liquor dealers have advanced is, that if they gave up the traffic some other would take it up. I have suggested to them, that their abstention will create a public opinion even outside Parsi ranks, and will really make it impossible for others to take up the immoral traffic. I have already recited in these columns the example of the Bhandaris of Ratnagiri District, who led the way by giving up the traffic which was their hereditary occupation. Many Kolis have done likewise. If therefore the Parsis would carry out the reform, they would not be pioneers, but they would be following a good example, and making a patriotic contribution towards eradication of a traffic that is doing irreparable harm to the labouring population.

*Young India*, 24-9-1931, p. 275

## 214. WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AGAINST DRINK

(Originally appeared under the title "Curse of Drink".)

A sister writes:

On going to the village—I was more than grieved to hear of the havoc drink is working among these people. Some of the women were in tears. What can they do? There is not a woman who would not like to banish alcohol for all time from our midst. It is the cause of so much domestic misery, poverty, ruined health and physique. As usual it is the woman who has to bear the burden of this self-indulgence on the part of man. What can I advise the women to do? It is so hard to face anger and even cruelty. How I wish the leaders in this province would concentrate on the removal of this evil rather than expend time, energy and brain on the injustice of the Communal Award. We are so apt to neglect the things that really matter for such trivialities as would settle themselves if the moral stature of our people were raised. Can't you write an appeal to the people on the question of drink? It is sad to see these people literally going to perdition because of this curse.

My appeal to those who drink will be vain. It must be. They never read *Harijan*. If they do, they do so to scoff. They can have no interest in being informed of the evil of the drink habit. They hug the very evil. But I would like to remind this sister, and through her all the women of India, that at the time of the Dandi march the women of India did listen to my advice and made the fight against drink and plying of the wheel their speciality. Let the writer recall the fact that thousands of women fearlessly surrounded drink shops and often successfully appealed to the addicts to give up the habit. In the prosecution of their self-imposed mission they put up with the abuses of the addicts and sometimes even assaults by them. Hundreds went to gaol for the crime of picketing drink shops. Their zealous work produced a marvellous effect all over the country. But

unfortunately with the cessation of Civil Disobedience, and even before the cessation, the work slackened. Into the reasons for the slackening I need not go. But the work still awaits workers. The women's pledge remains unfulfilled. It was not taken for a definite period only. It could not be fulfilled until prohibition was proclaimed throughout India. The women's was the nobler part. Theirs was to bring about prohibition by emptying drink shops by an appeal to the best in man. Could they have continued the work, their gentleness combined with earnestness would most assuredly have weaned the drunkard from his habit.

But nothing is lost. The women can still organize the campaign. If the wives of those of whom the writer writes are in earnest, they can surely convert their husbands. Women do not know what influence for good they can exert on their husbands. They wield it unconsciously no doubt, but that is not enough. They must have that consciousness, and the consciousness will give them the strength and show them the way to deal with their partners. The pity of it is that most wives do not interest themselves in their husbands' doings. They think they have no right to do so. It never occurs to them that it is their duty to become guardians of their husbands' character, as it is the latter's to be guardians of their wives' character. And yet what can be plainer than that husband and wife are equal sharers of each other's virtues and vices? But who but a woman can effectively awaken the wives to a sense of their power and duty? This is but a part of the women's movement against drink.

There must be enough women with proper equipment to study the statistics of drink, the causes that induce the habit and the remedies against it. They must learn the lesson from the past and realize that mere appeals to the addicts to give up drink cannot produce lasting effects. The habit has to be regarded as a disease and treated as such. In other words, some women have to become research students and carry on researches in a variety of ways. In every branch of reform constant study giving one a mastery over one's subject is necessary. Ignorance is at the root of failures, partial or complete, of all reform movements whose merits

are admitted. For every project masquerading under the name of reform is not necessarily worthy of being so designated.

*Harijan, 24-4-1937, p. 84*

## 8. MISCELLANEOUS

### 215. MY LIMITATIONS

I

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Why only Prohibition?")

A correspondent thus twits me:

It was all very well for you to have insisted on prohibition. Do you suppose that the *satta* in the share market, the *ank farak*, the dens of gambling, the races and the cinemas do less damage to the morals and the pockets of the people than the drink evil? I hear you have never gone to the cinema. Do go if only once and you will see things on the stage and among the spectators that will set you a thinking. I assure you that the institutions I have mentioned demand your attention as much as the drink monster.

This is the substance of a fairly long indictment in Gujarati. There are other things packed into the letter. But I have given in my own words the relevant portions.

I have no difficulty in agreeing with the correspondent that the evils named by him are serious and should be dealt with. But who will bell the cat? If I could have, I should have dealt with the lady long ago. I have my limitations. I have only recently shown that I am not so powerful as some people imagine. The drink evil has been recognized as such by the people of this land. But the other evils are more or less fashionable. If I led an agitation against the share gambling, I should be in danger of losing some of my willing and regular donors. If I incited people against the races and the infernal gamble that goes on there, all the high personages from the Viceroy downward would be up in arms against me. And those who patronize the race specials? If I led a raging campaign against the cinemas, I should lose caste among educationists and reformers. They have often sought to convert me by pleading that cinemas are a fine medium of education and that churches and reformers in the West give them their patronage in an ever

increasing measure. Therefore if I treated these evils as I have treated the drink evil and if I began to organize picketing in respect of them, I should lose caste, lose my Mahatmaship, and even lose my head which of course has very little value at this time of my life. But as I do not wish to suffer the triple loss, i must allow my correspondent and others like him to think that I am shirking an obvious duty. I know the evils. I hope that greater reformers than I will deal with them. For me one step is enough.

*Harijan*, 26-8-1939, p. 251

## II

(Originally appeared under the title "Lack of Sense of Humour".)

I cannot resist publishing the following very frank and well-meaning letter addressed to the Editor:

I earnestly request you to be kind enough to give me a few minutes to clear some of my doubts. I write this letter not as critic. I am an ardent seeker after truth and one of the many "Ekalavyas" of Bapuji.

I am rather very much pained to read the following in this week's *Harijan* in the course of a note under the caption "Why only Plobibition?" written by Bapuji: "Therefore if I treated these evils as I have treated the drink evil and if I begin to organize picketing in respect of them, I should lose my caste, lose my Mahatmaship and even lose my head which of course has very little value at this time of my life. But as I do not wish to suffer the triple loss, I must allow the correspondent and others like him to think that I am shirking an obvious duty."

I was not prepared for the above note especially the portion quoted by me, along with his previous writings and my reading of his life. For, I was, and am still of the opinion that Bapuji stands for "Truth" and he would be ready to lose any donation whatever it may be, his Mahatmaship, his caste, and, if necessary, even his head for the sake of Truth, i.e., God.

Now let us examine some of his writings. In his *Autobiography* (Part V, ch. X) he says when he accepted Dudhabhai, an untouchable and his family, "All monetary help, however, was stopped.... With the stopping of monetary help came rumours of proposed social boycott. We were prepared for all this."

This clearly indicates that he was not ready to accept donations or maintain his caste at the cost of his principle, i.e., Truth.

In an article "Truth v. Brahmacharya" (*Young India*, Feb. 25, 1926) he says: "My Mahatmaship is worthless. It is due to my outward activities, due to my politics, which is the least part of me and is therefore evanescent... What is of abiding worth is my insistence on Truth, non-violence and brahmacharya." In yet another article he has tried to show the 'Handicap of Mahatmaship'. (*Young India*, No. 8, 1928).

What else is necessary to show that he cares naught for his Mahatmaship?

Moreover he says in the course of a conversation reported in *Harijan*, August 29, 1936: "I am here to serve no one else but myself, to find my own realization.. .Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God." In another place (*Young India*, October 11, 1928), he says: "I know too that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself."

I hope that these are enough to prove that he stands for Truth and not for anything else. It may be perhaps that he does not recognize these evils, viz., gambling, race, cinema etc. as such or so dangerous as the evil of drink or untouchability to lead an agitation against them, "to wrestle with and against evil at the cost of life itself."

"Anyhow I am sure that there will be a number of readers of *Harijan* like me who will not be prepared to read a statement like this from the pen of Bapuji. Now I ask you what does he stand for? For donations, caste, Mahatmaship, etc. at the

cost of Truth, or for Truth at the cost of all these? Will you kindly refer this to Bapuji and correct the misunderstanding created by the above note?"

If the writer, who is manifestly a close student of my writings and is himself a school-master, took seriously my note in *Harijan* about gambling, etc. there must be quite a number of other readers who too had the same doubts as the correspondent. The correspondent has quoted enough from my writings to enable him to know that the note was written in a humorous vein. But unfortunately many of us have no sense of humour. Therefore, in order to secure appreciation, humour evidently has to be boldly labelled as such. The readers should have known that by writing the note I had expressed my disapproval of cinemas, races, share market, gambling and the like. I had tried to show also that these vices were fashionable and therefore were not capable of being dealt with like prohibition, I claim to be a practical reformer. I know almost instinctively what vices are ripe for being publicly dealt with. Of course it may be that I lack the courage to tackle the others and cover my cowardice by pleading untimeliness. No man can get over his limitations beyond a point.

*Harijan*, 14-10-1939, p. 302



## SECTION FIVE: NARCOTICS

### 216. THE COCAINE HABIT

(From an address at All-India Social Service Conference held at Calcutta on 31-12-1917)

I was told the other day that the cocaine habit was sapping the nation's manhood and that, like the drink habit, it was on the increase and in its effect more deadly than drink. It is impossible for a social worker to blind himself to the evil. We dare not ape the West. We are a nation that has lost its prestige and its self-respect. Whilst a tenth of our population is living on the verge of starvation, we have no time for indulging ourselves. What the West may do with impunity is likely in our case to prove our ruin. The evils that are corroding the higher strata of society are difficult for an ordinary worker to tackle. They have acquired a certain degree of respectability. But they ought not to be beyond the reach of this Conference.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XIV, p. 121 at p. 127*

## 217. OPIUM POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT

Mr. C. F. Andrews has shown me a paragraph in his writings in *Young India* regarding the opium policy of the Government of India. In that paragraph he quotes Mr. Campbell, the Government representative at the Geneva Conference held in May 1923. Mr. Campbell is reported to have stated that "From the beginning India had handled the opium question with perfect honesty of purpose and not even its most ardent opponents including Mr. Gandhi had made any reproach in that respect." The statement Mr. Andrews has shown me was written whilst I was a prisoner in the Yeravda jail. Mr. Andrews tells me that, knowing my views in the matter of opium, he did not hesitate to contradict Mr. Campbell's charge against me, but in view of the importance of the matter he wants me to state my position clearly regarding the opium policy of the Government of India. I do so gladly.

I confess that my study of the opium question is very cursory, but the campaign against drink that was taken up in 1921 with such great enthusiasm and even fierceness, was a campaign not merely against the drink curse but against all intoxicating drugs. It is true that opium was not specifically mentioned, nor were opium dens picketed, except perhaps in Assam; but those who know anything of the history of the anti-drink campaign, know that sustained agitation was led against all manner of intoxicants not excluding even tea. During my travels in Assam Mr. Phookan, the Assam non-co-operation leader, told me that the campaign had come to the Assamese as a blessing, because more than any other part of India Assam had a very large number of its population addicted to opium in a variety of ways. The campaign, however, Mr. Phookan said, had brought about a wholesale reform and thousands had vowed never to touch opium. I should have thought that the severe condemnation that I have repeatedly expressed of the liquor policy of the Government would include condemnation of the whole of its policy regarding intoxicating drink and drugs, and that no separate condemnation

was needed regarding opium, *ganja* etc. If there was no ruinous and growing expenditure on an army, kept not for the sake of preventing encroachments from without, but for suppressing Indian discontent due to the exploitation of India for the sake of Great Britain, there would be no revenue needed from immoral sources. In saying that India (meaning the Government of India) has handled the opium question with perfect honesty of purpose, Mr. Campbell evidently forgets that, in the interest of revenue, opium was imposed upon China by force of arms.

*Young India*, 20-3-1924, p. 95

## 218. COMMERCIALISING VICE

(From "Notes")

This is the expression that Mr. Andrews has used in connection with opium traffic on which the reader will find in another place an informing contribution from his pen.\* As he handed it to me, he said he had improved upon my description of the traffic. I had described it as an "organizing vice". Mr. Andrews calls it "commercializing vice". I dare not dispute with a scholar of Mr. Andrews' stamp the superiority for choice phrase-making. But I would commend to the reader's careful attention Mr. Andrews' essay. And when he has digested the gruesome facts with which Mr. Andrews has fortified his impeachment of the opium traffic, let the reader recall the fact that it is British India that grows and supplies opium to British Singapore and then recall the further fact that our children are educated in Government schools from the proceeds of this organized and commercialized vice.

*Young India*, 3-4-1924, p. 110

\* Omitted from this collection.

## 219. WAR AGAINST OPIUM

The White Cross is an international anti-narcotic society whose headquarters are in Washington. It appears to have branches all over the world. Its letter-head contains distinguished names as trustees or standing council. Its executive secretary Mr. McKibben writes a long letter urging me to secure India's co-operation in the White Cross Crusade against opium. I cull the following passage from the letter:

The people of China resisted its invasion in two wars and in 1906 took the first opportunity in a century and a half to gain deliverance by pulling up or ploughing under the poppy on millions of acres. So long and so binding had been their enslavement that it was predicted that at any attempt to take opium away the Chinese people would rise in insurrection. Spence an English writer said in 1882 that "revolution would result if the Chinese Government would undertake suppression of the growth of the poppy, the quiet seaports would be turned into hell, streets would run with blood". So far were these dire foiecasts from coming true that no action of the Chinese Government was ever so popular as its determined and successful campaign for poppy destruction. It became a fervent, sweeping, religious movement. In a thousand cities and villages old smokers stacked up their pipes in piles as high as the houses as a burnt offering to Heaven. Jubilant processions, music and banners, voiced the general thanks-giving, while women wept tears of joy that the century-old curse was lifted.

Their rejoicings were short-lived. The British Government kept its promise to cease importing opium but, as has happened before and since, as you too well know, the western world kept the word of promise to the ear but broke it to the heart. In place of opium there was poured upon devoted China a flood of morphine, heroin and cocaine, ten times worse. In this atrocity, I blush to say the United States was a participant until a recent day. In consequence of chaotic conditions military chieftains have now forced upon unwilling Chinese farmers a

renewal of poppy planting, excusing themselves because native opium is better than foreign morphine. Those who know China best believe that her fundamentally sound conscience will again respond when the nations give them support and will again rid their land of opium.

It is universally recognised that no one nation can save itself. Opium products are so compact, so easily concealed and the wages of the traffic so enormous that as long as the drugs are produced, they will find their consumers. The American Congress has accordingly appealed to all nations to unite in suppressing the opium poppy and the cocaine shrub, reserving only such amounts as are considered necessary in medicine and science. A conference has been agreed on to meet in Geneva in November 1924, to put into effect this proposal. This conference will be vested with authority whereby it may, if it will, inaugurate measures that will deliver the world from the menace.

The question is now before the world, how may this narcotic ' conference be brought to act in the spirit as well as in the letter of this mandate? Shall they meet the world's hopes or blast them? To you, Sir, I need not name one all powerful agency that may be invoked, namely, the power of public opinion, the focussing of the world's conscience and conviction upon the meetings of that conference.

The organization of which I have the honour to be a representative, the White Cross International Anti-narcotic Society, is seeking a voicing of public opinion and conscience, focussing it upon the November conference in a way to move them irresistibly to use the opportunity providentially in their hands and rid the world of its greatest physical menace.

The experience of China should convince India that fears which have sometimes been expressed of "Oriental Revolt" against "deprivation of opium" will prove groundless in India as they did in China. It is perhaps not strange that some representatives of the British Government in India fear that India is so wedded to opium

that "serious consequences would follow any attempt to take it away." There is far less danger of this in India than in China. India has never become enslaved to the extent of China, even though its victims have largely been those on whom the whole future depends, namely, the babies doped by their mothers day after day while the mothers are at work in the factories. Indian ladies, who are devoted social workers, say this practice is well-nigh universal. If "revolt" is apprehended it would seem to a friendly observer most likely to be a revolt of the people against a Governmental policy which poisons to death the babies in their mothers' arms, or leaves them alive as if born old, pallid, emaciated, stunted, blasted in body and hopeless of future, the motive being that the Government might get the revenues "which it needs".

The world can never be delivered until India saves herself by ceasing to poison her own oncoming generations and by ceasing to pour her opium into the veins of other nations. For the sake of India and of the world we lay before Mr. Gandhi and the people of India this our request for expressions of their mind such as will convince the coming Opium Conference that India both seeks deliverance from her own opium enslavement and joins hands for the redemption of the world....

Furthermore, may we ask what is the wish of the people of India as to who shall be their representatives and spokesmen at the opium conference? In previous meetings have the convictions of India been accurately voiced? Whether sent unofficially or, as would be more fitting, clothed with full powers of representation, we would suggest that India send some of her best sons to speak for her that the world may know her mind. If in any way our organization can assist in bringing before the Conference the expressions of Indian conviction, we shall be at your service.

The White Cross may rely upon India's co-operation in its noble work. The A.I.C.C. has only recently unanimously passed a resolution which places on record its emphatic condemnation of the opium policy of the Government of India. If every poppy plant were rooted out there would be no protest in the land against the act.

The people will certainly rejoice when the whole of the revenue from intoxicating drinks and drugs is stopped, their sale absolutely prohibited except strictly as medicines to be sold by certified chemists or druggists.

But unfortunately for us and the world, India's opinion is today represented by a Government that does not represent its people. At the forthcoming convention therefore it will not be the people of India that will be represented but it would be the foreign rule over India that will be represented in the interests not so much of humanity as chiefly of its revenue. Whether it would serve any useful purpose to send an unofficial representative such as Mr. Andrews truly representing the people is a matter to be considered by die A.I.C.C.

Let us however see what the goal of the humanitarian crusade is. Miss La Motte has shown by unchallengeable figures that the world's production of opium is far in excess of its medical requirements and that so long as it continues, so long will the immoral and soul-destroying traffic in it continue in spite of efforts to the contrary. She has shown too that the Government of India is the greatest culprit in the matter. The goal cannot be reached till the Government of India honestly carries out the wish of the best mind of the world, immediately to reduce the cultivation of opium in its jurisdiction to the lowest term possible and without counting the cost. The Government of India alone has blocked the way and it is feared that it will do so again. And it will do so not because India wishes but because she is helpless.

*Young India*, 24-7-1924, p. 245

## 220. OPIUM IN ASSAM

(From "Notes")

The Opium Inquiry Committee appointed by the Assam P.G.C. has already commenced work and examined several witnesses at Sibsagar. Many witnesses were leading men of the district and chosen from all parties. They unanimously advocated total prohibition. AJl experienced witness said that it was "a preposterous suggestion that opium has any prophylactic action against Kala Azar or Malaria". The largest number of deaths, the witness added, were among opium eaters at Angera Khowa a village in Sibsagar. Some witnesses gave the interesting information that temperance workers were harassed and prosecuted "for the offence of asking people not to smoke or eat opium". I hope that the Committee will not be satisfied with general statements but will collect comparative statistics about opium cultivation, opium shops, opium dens. There should also be medical evidence as to the effect of opium on the population of Assam. There should be evidence showing the effect likely to be produced by complete prohibition of opium. The report to be of use must be a veritable mine of information.

*Young India*, 24-7-1924, p. 248



## 221. AN OPIUM REPORT

(From "Notes")

The Congress Opium Enquiry Report for Assam has been just published and can be had at the Congress Office, Jorhat, Assam or of Mr. C. F. Andrews, Santiniketan, for Rs. 1/8 or two shillings. It is well-printed and covers 166 pages including a map, appendices, a glossary of unusual terms and a subject index. The report itself covers 44 pages. It has nine chapters. There is too an introduction by Mr. C. F. Andrews who was a co-opted member and who is mainly responsible for the creation of the Committee and the conduct of the Enquiry. Sjt. Kuladhar Chatia was the chairman of the Committee. This is the tribute Mr. Andrews pays to the workers:

I wish to express my sincere admiration for the devoted courage and perseverance of the workers on the present Committee who have sacrificed time and ease and leisure and business occupations in order to do this service to their country. This enquiry is one among a series. Assam was the first province chosen because it has the blackest record for opium in all India. Whereas the standard medical requirement of opium according to the League of Nations is 6 seers per each 10,000 the lowest figure for Assam is over 45 seers and the highest over 237 seers! The report shows that during the Non-co-operation period the figures for opium dropped from 1,614 maunds to 884. This was due to picketing which was rendered illegal. 1,100 workers were imprisoned including lawyers, graduates, college students etc. But I must not anticipate the pleasure that a patriot or a reformer would gain by reading the whole of the instructive report. I must therefore close this review of the report by copying the recommendations.

1. The sale of opium and its derivations should be ultimately limited to the medical and scientific needs of Assam.

2. Provision should be made for confirmed addicts above the age of forty, enabling them to procure a rationed amount of opium, their names being registered for that purpose.
3. All opium addicts, who are under forty years of age, should be dealt with as medical patients. Wherever opium is needed by them, it should be given only under the order of a fully qualified doctor, the medical permission to obtain it being subject to quarterly renewal.
4. These changes should be carried out within the next five years. At the end of five years, opium should be placed on the list of poisons under a Dangerous Drugs Act, and treated as such for all inhabitants of Assam.

While much depends on the Government action, we feel that no progress can be made without the education of public opinion. The non-co-operation movement showed what a great advance could be made in opium restriction by voluntary effort and public propaganda. The decrease in consumption in a single year is a proof of what can be done by these methods. This work needs to be still further promoted and sustained.

We, therefore, appeal to all those who desire the welfare of Assam to organize themselves into anti-opium societies and to advocate opium prohibition amongst the people in general. This will lead to the education of public opinion against the opium evil and create a moral atmosphere, without which no great success can be achieved. Every avenue of approaching the illiterate masses, who are the greatest customers, should be employed. Especially necessary is the careful training of the young children in all the elementary schools of the Assam valley and among the Hill tribes. We would invite the co-operation of all sections of the community in this educational work, and we would specially appeal to the missionaries to help us in organizing temperance societies among the Hill tribes with whom they are closely connected.

Finally, we would venture to ask Mahatma Gandhi once more to come to Assam and put himself at the head of a great anti-opium campaign to be carried on by entirely peaceful means.

I note the appeal made to me. It was a matter of deep regret to me that I was unable to take in Assam during the Bengal tour when the cruel hand of death snatched away Deshabandhu from us. I am, however, under promise to Sjt. Phookan to visit that fair garden next year if all goes well. My terms are well known. Deshabandhu's formula was men, munitions and money. It must abide even though he is not with us in body. Munitions are hand-spun yarn, bullets that hurt no one and whose saving power has no limits. I would undertake to wean the Assamese from the opium habit if Sjt. Phookan and his friends will induce them by their own glorious example to shed their idleness and take to the charkha. He believes and I believe with him that Assam has great possibilities for khaddar. May they soon become realities.

*Young India*, 12-11-1925, p. 391

## 222. THE TWO ARMS OF THE DEVIL

(Originally appeared under the title "Drugs, Drink and Devil".)

Drugs and drink are the two arms of the devil with which he strikes his helpless slaves into stupefaction and intoxication. And according to an illuminating article in *The Survey* and the two Opium Conferences at Geneva, opium, the chief among the drugs, "won". The writer says: "Out of all the marching and counter-marching, the drawing of swords and putting up them again, the rumours of defeats and famous victories, the traffic in opium and other narcotic drugs has gained a new lease of life." In the midst of confusion and chaos caused by the bewildering reports on behalf of the different nations, the writer says: "The only people concerned who knew precisely what they wanted and did not want, and who were quite clear about and content with what they got, were those who in one way or another make profit out of the traffic in narcotics." "Especially during the world war," the writer adds, "the campaign has been going almost by default. In that five years of turmoil, so far as international interest or action was concerned, the war against narcotics took its place with the war against Original Sin. . . . Indeed, the war itself materially aggravated the evil. The widespread use of morphine and cocaine in the armies as anodynes against human agony, and to some extent as a means of mental relief from the deadly despairs and fears, disgusts and monotonies of war, turned loose at the end in many countries a considerable army of uncured and more or less incurable addicts to continue and spread their addiction. For, one of the awful concomitants of this vice is a kind of perverted missionary impulse to propagate itself by making new addicts."

This is one of the most deadly by-products of the late war. It has destroyed millions of lives, it has also hastened the soul-deadening process. But Mr. Gavit, the writer, shows that during the thirteen years since the International agreement was registered in the Hague Convention "the character of the problem has changed greatly". Mr. Gavit can only speak from the European standpoint. Therefore, he

says, "the evil is no longer an exotic affair of the Far East, of the eating, drinking and smoking of the raw and prepared opium after the time-entrenched fashions of India, China and other Oriental regions." It has now resolved itself into the use "of the more concentrated and far more injurious forms in the *high power drugs*, manufactured in the expensively-equipped and scientifically operated pharmaceutical laboratories of the lands which call themselves "civilized". Whereas in the former time opium and the opium habits of the Far East were creeping out into the West, now the flow is the other way. And that is not all: these drugs are equally deadly, and spreading ominously, in the countries where they are made, and across their borders to their neighbours. . . . The threat is against the welfare of all mankind. To this devil a white addict is as useful as a black or yellow. . . . His is a domain upon which the Sun never sets."

The writer then touches "the heart of the evil" which is in "*the excess of production*" beyond the very legitimate needs of medicine and science. "These needs *per capita* are :

Raw opium 450 milligrams (about 7 grains)

Cocaine, 7 milligrams (about 11 of a grain)

This works out for a population of 744,000,000 (out of the world's assumed total of 1,747,000,000) as accessible to Western-trained medical service, to a total "medical and scientific" need in tons about as follows:

For medical opium            100 tons

For morphine                136 tons

For cocaine                 84 tons

For heroin                    15 tons

Total world need            335 tons

. . . Of course, at the rate mentioned the requirements would be a little over 12 tons. But the total output at the very lowest is 8,600 tons. Of cocaine, there are no ascertainable figures but it is nowhere under 100 tons. Thus the world's

production of narcotics is more than ten times the most extravagant estimates of the world's legitimate needs."

The writer shows that none of the great powers including America and Great Britain has seriously tackled the problem. He charges them with having broken the promise under Article 9, of the Hague Convention—"to limit the manufacture of these substances to the bona fide, needs of medicine and science". He deplors that these civilized nations have failed not merely to check the overproduction of raw and prepared opium but have failed to check even the manufacture of the deadly drugs in the huge laboratories which are subject to licence and inspection and whose control is the easiest thing possible if there is only the will.

The readers who have studied the Assam Opium Report prepared at the instance of the Congress by Mr. Andrews' labours know the evil wrought by the opium- habit. They also know how the Government has failed egregiously to deal with the growing evil and how they have thwarted the efforts of reformers who tried to deal with it. It therefore did one's soul good to find that during the National Week speakers at public meetings, insisted upon the total prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs. It is a reform that is overdue. And, if it is at all worth going to the Councils, this total prohibition must be made a prominent plank in the electoral campaign. Every member must be pledged not merely to support but to initiate and pursue, the total prohibition campaign, the only way to bring about total prohibition, being to cut out from the military expenditure a portion equivalent to the revenue derived from this immoral source. The demand therefore for total prohibition must go hand in hand with the demand for reduction in the military expenditure. Nor must the solution be delayed by plans of taking referendums. In India there can be no reason for any referendum because drink and drug habits are universally recognized as a vice. Drink is not a fashion in India as it is in the West. To talk therefore of a referendum in India is to trifle with the problem.

*Young India*, 22-4-1926, p. 146

## 223. OPIUM ADDICTS

(From "Notes")

A correspondent writes as follows:

I do not know whether you are aware that in Rajputana (Marwar) the inhabitants are terrible opium addicts. A wedding or death or any ceremonial occasion necessitates the offering of opium to the visitors. It may even mean the pawning of goods or mortgaging of property, but the opium has to be offered. It is quite an ordinary matter for a person to take or 2 tolas of opium per day and sometimes even more. I know of some who can swallow as much as five. When my father died I went home. A Brahman friend came to condole. The first thing was to offer him opium which is generally kept in a special box. There were three tolas in it. The Brahman said he would help himself. To my astonishment he emptied the entire contents on the palm of his hand and swallowed them. Having done so he said he was not satisfied. When I asked him how much was sufficient he replied "Four tolas"! And of course, if opium eaters do not get their dose at the proper time, they are no better than useless lumps of flesh. This drug habit is eating as a cancer into our society.

Deenabandhu Andrews and Pearson laboured on behalf of these addicts. We have not cared for them half as much as we have for the drink addicts. The effects of opium are not so patent as of drink so far as society is concerned. But both the vices have nothing between them to choose. Slaves of opium have their reason atrophied. They become living automata, having no interest in anything but their opium. How to deal with them is a tremendous question. Not until we have an unlimited band of workers, well-trained and seasoned, will it be possible to produce an effect on these helpless members of society. The medical profession can render valuable assistance by carrying on researches and discovering remedies for dealing with this social disease.

Sevagram, 4-5-1942

*Harijan*, 10-5-1942, p. 145

## SECTION SIX: ' THE CURSE OF BETTING AND GAMBLING

### 224. THE CURSE OF BETTING

"You will earn the gratitude and thanks of thousands of wives, both European and Indian, if you can succeed in putting a stop to betting at the races. My husband was an ideal husband until he took to betting at the races. We are now in debt, and, although he draws a good salary and does not drink alcohol, we are hard up, and I am sure this is the experience of very many wives. I have often implored him on my bended knees not to go to the races, but to no purpose. And does it not seem very hard that wives and children should suffer because their husbands cannot refrain from going to the races and losing money?

It is true that alcohol is ruining thousands, but betting at the races is certainly ruining tens of thousands.

By practically robbing the public, the W.I.T. Club can afford to pay its European employees handsome salaries. If you were only in the know I am sure you would agree with me that hanky-panky tricks are carried on by the Turf Club and thus the public are cheated and robbed of a lot of money. Do, for God's sake, try and right matters. Things were certainly better when the bookmakers are allowed to take bets on the racecourse.

Sir, I am sure you are acquainted with a number of men on the new Councils, and with their aid, I do hope you will succeed in putting a stop to betting at the races. If Government would take over and manage the totes, I am sure, things would be more fair and square. The public invariably lose, and those who win, are the owners of the horses and their trainers and jockeys; and is it not a scandalous shame that Government should connive at it, simply because some of their big officials are keenly interested in horse-racing?



I had better not offer my signature to this letter as my husband is in Government service; but I pray that you will interest yourself in what I have written and succeed in stopping betting at the races.

This letter has been travelling with me for some time. The reader will share my feelings that it is a pathetic letter. Anonymous letters are rarely valuable. But this one is certainly an exception, though the writer has chosen not to disclose her name.

I know nothing of horse-racing. I have ever looked upon it with horror for its associations. I know that many men have been ruined on the race-course.

But I must confess I have not had the courage to write anything against it. Having seen even an Aga Khan, prelates, viceroys and those that are considered the best in the land, openly patronizing it and spending thousands upon it, I have felt it to be useless to write about it. As a journalist and reformer, my function is to call public attention to those vices about which there is likelihood of public opinion being created. Much as I disapprove of vaccination, I deem it to be waste of effort to draw public attention to the evil. I must own that I had- not the courage to bring the drink traffic in the campaign of purification. It has come unsought. The people have taken it up of their own accord.

The surest sign that non-co-operation is a movement of purification is that many abuses are being removed by the people without any guidance or preaching. And it is in such hope about betting that I have published the above letter.

I am aware that the writer would be satisfied merely with some modification. What is required is a total destruction of the pest. Betting at races is a part of the gambling mania. If only the people will non-co-operate, the evil will die a natural death. Thousands who attend the race-course, do so merely for fun. They attend either to see horses run breathlessly, or because it is the fashion, but they, nevertheless, aid and abet the ruin of many a gambler.

But betting is, I apprehend, more difficult to deal with than drinking. When vice becomes a fashion and even a virtue, it is a long process to deal with it. Betting is not only fashionable but is hardly regarded as a vice. Not so drinking. Fortunately, it is still the fashion to consider drinking a weakness, if not positively a vice. Every religion has denounced it with more or less vehemence. But betting has escaped such special attention. Let us hope, however, that the vigilant public will find a more innocent recreation than attending the race-course, and thus show its disapproval of gambling at the racecourse.

*Young India*, 27-4-1921, p. 132

## 225. EFFECT OF BETTING

The Editor,

*Young India*

Sir,

The *Deccan Herald* has it that the boycott movement is to spread to the forthcoming race meetings, and that Indians will not be allowed to visit the race-course on race days. If you really intend to do so, God bless you.

My husband used to be an ideal husband, until he was invited by his boss to go to the races with him and unfortunately did so. He took Rs. 10/- with him, met with exceptionally good luck and brought home Rs. 300/-. But since then he has never won except a few rupees on two occasions, and has often returned home drunk.

May God grant that your endeavour may be crowned with success.

I am sure that what I have stated will be endorsed by many wives who have the courage of their convictions.

Yours etc.

A WOMAN

(I hope a woman's prophecy will prove true, and that all who prize India's good and the purity of their homes will give up the race-course.—M. K. G.)

*Young India*, 25-5-1921, p. 163

## 226. THE CURSE OF BETTING

The Editor,

*Young India*

Sir,

I am glad *Young India* and its Editor have taken up the question of the evils of betting. I feel, however, that a casual article in *Young India*, is not enough to root out this evil, imported from the West. The evil has spread from the idle rich to the commercial communities, the middle classes, the labourers working in factories, and the schoolboys. Over and above thousands of people regularly going to the races week after week, there are thousands more, to whom temptation to gamble comes in the shape of bucket-shops, openly plying their trade in the heart of the city. The Government have appointed a committee to consider the question of closing down these shops, and they will have some legislation at the next sessions. But that is not enough. Public opinion must be created, and it must be definitely shown that race-going and betting is as bad as drinking and prostitution. For this, a strong agitation is required, and I hope, readers of *Young India* will respond to it.

Bombay,

26-5-1921

Yours etc.

SATYA

(As I have already said, unfortunately the races and gambling in connection therewith are fashionable. They do not excite the same feeling of shame that drinking does. Race-going, therefore, is more difficult to deal with than drinking. "Satya" knows the evils of race-going in a special manner. I invite him to come out in the open, and personally tackle the vice which is slowly but surely undermining the morals of society.--M. K. G.)

*Young India*, 22-6-1921, p. 195

## 227. LOTTERY FOR A CHARITABLE CAUSE

(Originally appeared under the title "Buying Merit.")

A correspondent draws my attention to the institution of lotteries in Goa for the purpose of supporting hospitals. The correspondent tells me that lakhs of rupees are spent by people in British India in those lotteries in the vain hope of suddenly becoming rich without effort and yet gaining heavenly merit. Here is an extract from an advertisement sent by the correspondent:

Behold the sick. He that giveth to the poor lends to God.

Then why not help our poor by staking a rupee at this drawing? It is a comely way of exercising charity.

The advertisement contains a portrait of a hoary-headed reverend gentleman.

It would be interesting to know the condition of the hospitals built with the monies gained from these lotteries. Meanwhile it is worth while to examine the ethics of founding charitable institutions with monies collected by an appeal to man's greed, enhancing it by a promise of merit if the purchaser of such a lottery ticket should fail to get the tempting prize or prizes as lakhs of purchasers must fail.

As it is the haste to be rich without working and waiting for the happy day pervades the atmosphere. Every one who spends a rupee on the race-course or in a lottery ticket erects the pyramid of his hope on the foundation of the ruin of a multitude of such hopes of men and women having equal right with the few (lucky?) winners of prizes. It is difficult, however, to single out the lottery system for criticism, when the gambling spirit possesses even those who are ranked among the most respectable. The share market is nothing but a feverish gamble. And yet who is free from that fever? Every man who finds himself rich in a day by manipulating the share market knows that the sudden accession of wealth means desolation of many a widow's home. Only the relatives of the widows who bought

shares had no doubt almost the same kind of hope that the clever speculator of our imagination had.

Cotton, rice and jute are, strange as it may appear, objects of such speculation. The system of lottery is but a crude extension of the same gambling spirit. It is no doubt good to treat the lottery as disrespectable, but it is better to make the acquaintance of the spirit that is common to the lottery and the share market and thus deal with the root cause of the disease rather than its worst symptom. It is therefore to be wished that the worst symptom will enable us to reach the root cause and deal effectively with it.

But it is a far off hope. Let not my mention of the pervasive nature of the disease make a single person connected with these lotteries seek justification for his participation in the lottery system.

And the caution is all the more necessary when the lottery is in connection with a charitable institution. Surely it is bad enough to want to be rich without deserving, but it is positively wrong to connect charity with a gamble. Those who throw away rupees in lotteries must not think that they gain merit even whilst they are hoping to satisfy an unlawful ambition. We may not hope to serve God and Mammon at the same time.

And why do the Christian conductors of the Goan hospitals degrade religion by exploiting the evil tendency of human nature? Do they imagine that they please God by attempting to support a hospital by making lakhs of people morally diseased? Are they not robbing Peter to pay Paul? What will it profit them to heal a few bodies if at the same time they wound a thousand times more souls?

*Young India*, 24-5-1928, p. 164

## 228. WAR AGAINST GAMBLING

(Originally appeared under the title "The Evil of Gambling".)

A friend has been persistently asking me to draw public attention to the species of gambling prevalent in Bombay among the so-called high class people. Whilst I have been heart and soul with the friend in deploring the evil, I have not had the courage to write about it. I felt that whatever I said would be a waste of effort, as I had no hope of following up my writing by some organized constructive effort to combat the evil. Whilst I was thus debating as to writing on the evil, I had to go to Borsad in answer to the Sardar's summons. There in Borsad the Sardar and his volunteers poured into my ears harrowing tales of the havoc that gambling was working in the villages of Gujarat. It is spreading like grass fire of a windy night. Everybody is in a hurry to be rich without working. "Somebody will have made the correct guess as to the ruling price for the day of some commodity. Why not I?" argues the gambler and rushes to his ruin. Peace is being destroyed in the once happy homes of Gujarat.

There is no doubt that whatever one calls it, this gambling is as old as Adam, and that though the form and the name may have changed, the substance has not changed at all.

The law must be against this gambling. But it is of no avail if public opinion is not behind it. It is therefore necessary for workers to bestir themselves as they did during the plague or as they have done for the earthquake relief. They must not be satisfied till the evil is rooted out. In a way it is worse than the plague or the quake. For it destroys the soul within. A person without the sou is a burden upon the earth. No doubt war against gambling is not so simple as war against plague or earthquake distress. In the latter there is more or less co-operation from the sufferers. In the former the sufferers invite and hug their sufferings. To wean the gambler from his vice is like weaning the drunkard from the drink habit. This war

against gambling is therefore an uphill task. But it must be tackled, if the evil is not dealt with in time. It is bad enough in Bombay. Its inroad upon the villages is a danger signal which no lover of the country can dare ignore.

*Harijan*, 15-6-1935, p. 144



## 229. CAUSES FOR SPREAD OF GAMBLING

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "A Gambling Evil".)

A correspondent from Bombay writes a pathetic letter on the growing evil of gambling. Below is a free translation of the telling passages of the letter:

If the canker is eating into the vitals of the simple village folk of Gujarat, it is invading titled men, barristers, doctors, merchants, and even teachers who are expected to guard national morals. Even the police are said not to be free from the vice. Women, children of tender age, and blind beggars are not free from the vice. Some newspapers thrive on advertising the evil. It goes on unchecked in spite of effort of some reformers. May not growing poverty and consequent unemployment be the cause of the evil?

I do not think so. No doubt unemployment favours the spread. But the causes are much deeper. The very fact that the vice has affected all classes must make us cautious and lead us to make deeper investigations into the causes.

*Harijan, 29-6-1935, p. 158*

### 230. ON LEGALIZING GAMBLING ETC

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Gambling and Vice".)

In the provinces where the Congress has a majority, all kinds of hopes have been raised. Some are legitimate and will, no doubt, be fulfilled. Some others cannot be. Thus the people who indulge in gambling, which unfortunately is even on the increase in the Bombay Presidency, think that gambling will be legalized and surreptitious dens that cover Bombay will be no longer required. I am not quite sure that even if gambling is legalized on a universal scale, as it is already in a restricted manner, there will be no illegal dens. Thus it has been suggested that the Turf club, which has the monopoly of gambling on the race-course, should be allowed to open an additional entrance to make it easier for poor people to gamble. The bait offered is a larger revenue. A similar suggestion has been made for the regulation and licensing of brothels. The argument advanced, as in all such cases, is that the vice will continue whether it is legalized or not and, therefore, it is better to legalize it and make it safe for those who visit the brothels. Let me hope that the Ministers will not fall into this trap. The proper method of dealing with brothels is for the women to carry on a double propaganda, (a) amongst women who sell their honour for a livelihood, and (b) amongst men whom they must shame into behaving better towards their sisters whom they ignorantly or insolently call the weaker sex. I remember years and years ago in the early nineties when the brave Salvation Army people, at the risk of their own lives, used to carry on picketing at the corners of notorious streets of Bombay which were filled with houses of ill fame. There is no reason why some such thing should not be organized on a large scale. As for gambling on the race course, it is so far as I am aware, an importation like many other importations, from the West, and if I had my way would withdraw the protection of the law that gambling on the race-course enjoys even to the extent it does. The Congress programme being one of self-purification, as is stated in so many words in the resolution of 1920, the

Congress can have nothing to do with income derived from any vice. The Ministers will, therefore, use the authority that they have obtained for educating public opinion in the right direction and for stopping gambling in high quarters. It is useless to hope that the unwary public will not copy the bad manners of the so-called high placed people. I have heard it argued that horse-racing is necessary for breeding good horses. There may be truth in this. Is it not possible to have horse-racing without gambling, or is gambling also an aid to the good breeding of horses?

*Harijan, 4-9-1937, p. 233*

### 231. LIMITATIONS OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

(From "Question Box")

Q.: Horse-racing is going on in many important cities. It is alike a lure for high and low, rich and poor, and it leads to moral degradation and in some cases penury. Many princes' spend lakhs of their people's money on buying race horses. What steps should new Governments take to check this evil?

A.: There is no doubt whatsoever about the evil. The good it is supposed to do is extremely doubtful. And at this time of growing distress in the country it is criminal. The new national Government can do a great deal to check the evil. But let us recognize their limitations. Being popular, i.e. people's Governments, they will never be able to go far in advance of popular opinion. That is specially a function belonging to reformers. But these governments can certainly, by their own example, rob the evil of the stamp of fashion that the bureaucracy has set upon it even to the point of wasting public money on the luxury. The princes will copy the example of good manners that the national Governments may set.

*Harijan, 7-4-1946, p. 67*

### 232. HORSE-RACING

(From *Harijan Bandhu*)

I have written before regarding the ruination of men and money through horse-racing but a very strongly worded letter from a friend, who says that gambling on the racecourse is not a lesser evil than the drink habit, constraints me to write again on this subject. The writer further says:

Special trains are run for the races and are full of people who wear Gandhi caps, call themselves Congressmen and go there only to waste their money. Where does this money come from? We now have popular Ministries, but they too are silent and put up with the evil.

Although, in my opinion, gambling at races is not as great an evil as drinking of alcohol, one ought not really to draw comparisons. Less bad does not make gambling a good thing. I do not know all the intricacies of horse-racing. All I can say is that if it is within the competence of a popular Government to put an end to the evil, it should certainly do so.

Sevagram, 9-8-1946

*Harijan*, 18-8-1946, p. 275

### 233. SHALL WE RETAIN THE VICES OF THE RULE?

(From "*Racing*")

I have often written about the evils of racing. But mine was then a voice in the wilderness. The alien rulers liked the vice and clothed it with some kind of virtue. Surely, there is no reason for now clinging to the vice. Or shall we retain the vices of the rule and will its virtues quit with it?

*Harijan*, 17-8-1947, p. 284

### 234. BETTING ON RAGE-COURSES

A correspondent from Madras writes a pathetic letter on the subject of betting on the race-course and holds that the two go together. If betting went, horse-racing probably would fall flat. It is wholly unnecessary for the sake of the love of horse flesh to have horse-races and all their attendant excitement. They pander to the vices of humanity and mean a waste of good cultivable soil and good money. Who has not witnessed as I have, the ruin of fine men caused by the gamble on the race-courses? It is time to leave alone the vices of the West and to strive to adopt the best that it has to give.

New Delhi, 12-1-1948

*Harijan*, 18-1-1948, p. 515

## SECTION SEVEN: ON SMOKING AND TEA, COFFEE DRINKING

### 235. THE EVILS OF SMOKING

(Originally appeared in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion*, dated 21-10-1905 and has been translated into English.)

The Government of South Australia has noticed that smoking, besides consuming a lot of money, badly undermines the health of the people. More harm is done by cigarettes than by cigars, for the former, being smaller and cheaper, are consumed in excess. The Government therefore proposes to introduce a Bill prohibiting the manufacture and sale of cigarettes.

The evil habit of smoking cigarettes has nowadays become very widespread among us, both young and old. This is sheer imitation of the English. Formerly, people were no doubt in the habit of smoking *bidis* or country cigarettes, but they used to keep it within limits. They felt ashamed of smoking any and everywhere. They did it at specific times and that, too, in privacy. It was considered lack of decency to smoke publicly in the streets at all hours of the day, and people rarely smoked outside their homes. Hence the saying about tobacco, that it spoils "a corner (in the house) of one who chews it, the whole house of one who smokes it, and the clothes of one who sniffs it". But the English today never mind smoking anywhere and everywhere, and we too are copying them. When the people in a country like South Australia have begun to realize the harm done by smoking, we also, we hope, will learn a lesson and come to some decision in the matter.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. V, p. 105

### 236. EVILS OF TOBACCO

(Originally appeared in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion*, dated 28-4-1906 and has been translated into English.)

An article by the renowned Dr. Cortez of Paris has appeared in the latest number of *The Indian Review*, wherein he mentions many evils of tobacco. The more important among them are that digestion is impaired and eyesight badly affected. It leads to loss of memory and disables one from developing high moral virtues. Moreover, it has now been found that even hearing is affected. The doctor has conclusively shown that irregular action of the nerves governing the sense of hearing is to be ascribed to tobacco.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. V, p. 298

### 237. JUVENILE SMOKING

(Originally appeared in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion* dated 3-11-1906 from which it has been translated into English.)

We have drawn the attention of our readers more than once to the fact that the habit of smoking *bidis* or cigars is harmful. Now we have yet another occasion to refer to it. A law has been enacted in the Victoria Province of Australia to check the evil habit; under this law none below sixteen may smoke. A shopkeeper found selling or giving a *bidi* to a boy below that age may be fined 20 shillings for the first offence and 40 shillings for the second; if he is caught a third time, his licence may be cancelled for five years.

It is not for the first time in the history of the world that such strict measures have been adopted for the prevention of smoking. Such laws are in force in some civilized countries like Japan and Germany and, nearer home, the Cape Colony. A short time ago, a similar bill was introduced in Natal also. But the usefulness of a juvenile smoking bill is not recognized in a land where enthusiasm is misused for getting rich by ruining others and, if possible, driving them out. Tobacco does nothing but harm. It weakens body and mind. It is obvious that its harmful effect is felt all the more in the youth. In certain places, religion forbids the use of tobacco, and it is true that many Indians do not smoke for that reason. But in some places the habit is so firmly rooted that we feel no hesitation in writing against it again and again.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. VI, p. 77*



### 238. AN ACT TO PREVENT JUVENILE SMOKING

(Originally appeared in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion*, dated 17-8-1907 from which it was translated into English.)

This Act was recently passed by the Natal Parliament. We give below the substance of each section.

1. It will be unlawful for any person under 16 years of age to smoke tobacco, a cigar, or a cigarette. If any tobacco, tobacco-pipe, cigar, cigarette or cigarette-holder is found (on such person), a white police officer may take possession of the same and hand it over to the Government.
2. If any school-going boy is found with a cigarette or any of the other things mentioned above, the school-teacher shall take them away and hand them over to the guardian of the boy. If any students are found smoking tobacco, they will be considered guilty of breach of school discipline and will be liable to be punished accordingly.
3. No one should supply or sell tobacco, a cigar or a cigarette to a person under 16 years of age without a note from parents, the guardian or the employer. The note or order should state that the cigarette etc. is for the use of a person above 16 years of age and that it will be delivered into the hands of the signatory. It will be unlawful to supply or sell cigarettes, etc. to a person under 16 years of age in the absence of such a note. Anyone violating this section will be liable to be punished with a fine upto £ 5 or imprisonment extending to one month for every offence.
4. Any person, not being a parent or guardian or employer, who sends a person under 16 years of age to buy cigarettes, etc. will be liable to be punished with a fine upto £5 or imprisonment extending to one month.

5. If in connection with this Act there arises any doubt regarding the age of a person, the apparent age of such person as determined by the court will be taken as correct in the absence of satisfactory evidence to the contrary.
6. This Act will be known as the Prevention of Smoking Act of 1907.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. VII, p. 168

### 239. "GANDHI CIGARETTES"!

(From "Notes")

Of all the abuses to which my name has been put, I know nothing so humiliating to me as the deliberate association of my name with cigarettes. A friend has sent me a label purporting to bear my portrait. The cigarettes are called "Mahatma Gandhi" cigarettes. Now I have a horror of smoking as I have of wines. Smoking, I consider, to be a vice. It deadens one's conscience and is often worse than drink in that it acts imperceptibly. It is a habit which is difficult to get rid of when once it seizes hold of a person. It is an expensive vice. It fouls the breath, discolours the teeth and sometimes even causes cancer. It is an unclean habit. No man has received my permission to associate my name with cigarettes. I should feel thankful if the unknown firm were to withdraw the labels from the market or if the public would refuse to buy packets bearing such labels.

*Young India*, 12-1-1921, p. 9 at p. 11

## 240. SMOKING IS LIKE AN OPIATE

(From a speech of Gandhiji at Pachiappa's College, Madras; this and another speech originally appeared under the title "Two Speeches".)

In response to the request of a Calicut professor I shall now proceed to say something about cigarette smoking. . . . Cigars and cigarettes, whether foreign or indigenous, must be avoided. Cigarette smoking is like an opiate and the cigars that you smoke have a touch of opium about them. They get to your nerves and you cannot leave them afterwards. How can a single student foul his mouth by converting it into a chimney? If you give up these habits of smoking cigars and cigarettes . . . you will find out for yourselves how much you are able to save. A drunkard in Tolstoy's story is hesitating to execute his design of murder so long as he has not smoked his cigar. But he puffs it, and then, gets up smiling and saying, "What a coward am I", takes the dagger and does the deed. Tolstoy spoke from experience. He has written nothing without having had personal experience of it. And he is much more against cigars and cigarettes than against drink. But do not make the mistake that between drink and tobacco, drink is a lesser evil. No. If cigarette is Beelzebub, then drink is Satan.

*Young India*, 15-9-1927, p. 311 at p. 315

## 241. OUR TOBACCO BILL

A correspondent who is interested in a variety of reforms asks what the nation pays for her tobacco bill. I find that we pay for unmanufactured tobacco and cigarettes 213 lakhs of rupees per year. The cost is increasing every year. The import of unmanufactured tobacco which was million lbs. in 1923 rose to 5 million in 1927. There was a corresponding increase in the import of cigarettes. If the references I have consulted are reliable, we do not export any of our own tobacco. Therefore the value of that considerable crop has to be added to the figures quoted above. If every smoker stopped the dirty habit, refused to make of his mouth a chimney to foul his breath, damage his teeth and dull his sense of delicate discrimination and made a present of his savings to some national cause, he would benefit both himself and the nation.

*Young India*, 5-7-1928, p. 229

## 242. AN EVIL ENVELOPING THE WORLD

(From "With Gandhiji in Burma—III" by M.D.)

He (Gandhiji) had some hesitation in speaking about smoking—a habit universal in Burma. But he was particularly requested to do so at Moulemein and he said:

I have really less courage to speak about the terrible curse of smoking. But I understand that throughout Burma I shall not find a single man or woman free from this habit. We who come from India are painfully surprised to see the beautiful Burmese women disfigure their mouths by cheroots and cigars. But I know that it is a most difficult thing to speak about an evil which is enveloping the whole world. If you have heard the name of Tolstoy, I quote his authority to show that Tolstoy being an inveterate smoker himself was speaking from experience when he said that tobacco dulled the intellect of man, let alone other senses. Indeed he cites examples to show that most deliberate crimes have been committed under the influence of smoke, and in one of his beautiful stories he pictures the villain of the piece as committing murder not after drink but after having had a smoke. Although it is perfectly true that the smoke habit is on the increase and it has amongst its supporters many of the brilliant men of the world, there is a spirit of resistance against it and the opponents are some of the best men in the West and great moralists.

*Young India*, 11-4-1929, p. 114 a p. 115

### 243. WHEN A VICE REACHES THAT STATE

(From "Question Box')

Q.: While you have all along written very strongly in favour of prohibition, you have not spoken either often enough or with equal emphasis in the matter of smoking. This evil is increasing with alarming rapidity and even children are increasingly getting addicted to it. The crores literally burnt by smoking could be so well utilized in wise ways in our poor land.

A.: The taunt is true but not new. The reason for want of equal emphasis is to be sought in the fact that smoking has attained alarming respectability. When a vice reaches that state it becomes difficult to eradicate. This admission does not mean that we should not agitate for abatement of the nuisance. How to do so and when is the question. I am sorry to have to confess my inability to answer it.

New Delhi, 12-10-1946

*Harijan*, 20-10-1946, p. 368

## 244. THE BENEFITS OR OTHERWISE OF TEA

(Originally appeared in Gujarati in *Indian Opinion*, dated 28-10-1905 and has been translated into English.)

The Southwark Council in England has had an enquiry made into the benefits or otherwise of tea. We give below some of the notable facts collected.

The Chinese began taking tea in the ninth century and have done so ever since. Tea was first introduced into England in 1660. By the eighteenth century it had spread all over the country, and at the turn of that century, twenty million pounds of tea were imported into England every year. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, the *per-capita* annual consumption of tea in England was a pound and a half, but during the last decade, the consumption has increased so much that it now comes to six pounds.

The first to raise his voice against tea was the famous John Wesley. He was a very great religious preacher. He was subject to fits of giddiness; but he did not suspect that it was due to tea, because everyone thought it wholly beneficial. Once, all of a sudden, he swooned and fell down and then resolved to give up tea; his giddiness ceased. Sir Andrew Clarke, a famous doctor, has said that tea weakens the nerves. Thousands of women in England, it is reported, have been suffering for years; they have headaches, they have cramps in their legs and suffer from giddiness—all this is mainly ascribed to the tea habit. The officer in charge of the Southwark enquiry says that tea becomes all the more injurious if it is boiled. It is best of course to do without it; but if the habit cannot be given up, the best way of making tea is to pour boiling water over tea leaves, and immediately pour it out into a cup. The brew should not at all be red, it should rather be the colour of hay.

Among us the custom of taking tea is of recent origin. In India, there is no need for it, but if in imitation of the whites, people do want to have some drink, they should instead drink coffee or cocoa which are less harmful.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. V, p. 118*



## 245. SLAVES OF TEA AND COFFEE DRINKING

(From a speech of Gandhiji at Pachiappa's College, Madras; this and another speech originally appeared under the title "Two Speeches".)

In response to the request of a Calicut professor I shall now proceed to say something about . . . coffee and tea drinking. These are not necessities of life. There are some who manage to take ten cups of coffee a day. Is it necessary for their healthy development and for keeping them awake for the performance of duties? If it is necessary to take coffee or tea to keep them awake, let them not drink coffee or tea but go to sleep. We must not become slaves to these things. ... If you give up these habits of . . . drinking coffee and tea you will find out for yourselves how much you are able to save.

*Young India*, 15-9-1927, p. 311 at p. 315

## APPENDIX

### GANDHIJI'S INSTITUTIONS

Q.: Would you please give a list of the institutions founded by Gandhiji or inspired by his teachings?

A.: It is possible to give a list of such institutions only as were founded by Gandhiji or if not actually founded by him, those which worked more or less directly under his guidance. It is difficult to give a list of all those independent institutions which are inspired by his teachings. Probably there are scores of such institutions, both small and big. Subject to correction, I list below institutions of the first two types, on such information as I could gather with the help of my colleagues.

1. *Satyagrahashram, Sabarmati*. Founded on 15-5-1915 in a rented bungalow at Kochrab, a small village near Ahmedabad. It came to the present site on about 25-6-1917. Its name was changed by Gandhiji into Udyoga Mandir, in November 1928. In July 1933, Gandhiji disbanded the Udyog Mandir, handed over its movable property to public use and offered land, buildings and crops to Government. On Government declining to accept the offer, he made them over to the Harijan Sevak Sangh, New Delhi, in September 1933. Since then the Ashram is known as the Harijan Ashram.
2. Rashtriya Gujarati Shala, (National Gujarati School) Satyagrahashram Sabarmati, 1915, now defunct.
3. Harijan Ashram, Godhra, (1918).
4. Dakshina Bharat Hindi (.Hindustani) Prachar Sabha (1918), Tyagaraja Nagar, Madras 17.
5. Navajivan Press, P.O. Box No. 105, Ahmedabad (1919).\* Gandhiji took over the Young India, a bi-weekly of Bombay in April 1919. After the establishment of the Navajivan Pfess in October 1919, the Young India began to be published as

a weekly from Ahmedabad. The Gujarati weekly Navajivan began in September. Later on the *Hindi edition too was added.*

The press and the weeklies had a checkered career. They are a faithful record of the National Movement of that period. All the weeklies stopped in the beginning of 1932.

6. Majur Mahajan or the Labour Union, Mirzapur Road, Ahmedabad (1920).
7. Satyagrahashram, Wardha (1920), under the guidance of Shri Vinoba Bhave. The enthusiasm of Shri Jamnalal Bajaj and the guidance of Shri Vinoba backed by the always available advice of Gandhiji were responsible for the founding, closing or reshaping of the following institutions at Wardha and its suburbs:
  - a) *Kanya Ashram, Wardha closed in 1935*
  - b) *Mahila Ashram, Wardha, 1935*
  - c) *Gram-Seva Mandal, Nalwadi (Wardha)*
  - d) *Goseva Charnalaya, Nalwadi (Wardha)*
  - e) *Maharogi {Leper} Ashram, Dattapur (Wardha)*
  - f) *Goseva Sangh, Gopuri, Wardha, 1941*
  - g) *Gram Seva Mandal, Wardha*
  - h) *Swaraj Bhandar, Wardha*
  - i) *Paramdham, Pavnar, (Wardha) headquarters of Shri Vinoba for some years past*
8. Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad (1920)
9. Swaraj Ashram, Bardoli, District Surat, (1922)
10. Gandhi Seva Sangh, Wardha (1923), founded by Shri Jamnalal Bajaj, its first president.

11. All-India Spinners\* Association, Sevagram (Wardha) (1925). It was started by a resolution of the All-India Congress Committee, at Patna on 22-9-1925: under its auspices, Khadi Vidyalaya, Sevagram.

12. Akhil Bharat Goseva Sangh, Sabarmati (1928), now at Wardha

13. All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh, Kingsway, New Delhi, (1933)

14. The Harijan, English (1933)

*The Harijanbandhu*—Gujarati (1933)

*The Harijan Sevak*—Hindustani (1933)

The English *Harijan* was the first to be published under Gandhiji's all but nominal editorship from the Yervada Central Prison, Poona. Translations followed a little later. They continued with a suspension of more than a year till August 1942. They have been resumed since 10-2-1946 with the edition of the *Harijansevak* in the Urdu Script.

Besides these four weeklies, the Navajivan publishes books in Gujarati, English, Hindustani, Marathi and Urdu.

15. *All-India Village Industries Association, Maganwadi, Wardha (1934) This was started by a resolution of the Indian National Congress. Under its auspices:*

a) *Gramsevak Vidyalaya, Wardha*

b) *Magan Sangrahalaya, Wardha (1938)*

16. Sevagram Ashram (1936): Gandhiji began to stay at Segaoon since 30-4-1936. On 5-3-1940 the village was named by Gandhiji as Sevagram.

17. Hindustani Talimi Sangh, Sevagram, (Wardha) (1938). This was started by a resolution of the Indian National Congress.

18. Hindustani Prachar Sabha, Wardha (1942)

19. Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust, Bajajwadi, Wardha (1944)

20. All-India Mature Cure Foundation, Poona (1946)

21. Nisargopehar Ashram, Uruli-Kanchan, Dist. Poona (1946)

K. G. Mashruwala

*Harijan*, 12-12-1948, p. 348