

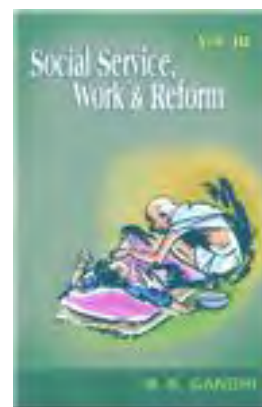
# Social Service, Work & Reform

Volume III

M. K. Gandhi

Compiled & Edited by: V. B. Kher

First Published: December 1976



Printed and Published by

Jitendra T. Desai

Navajivan Publishing House

Ahmedabad-380 014 INDIA

Phone: 079 - 27540635, 27542634

E-mail: [jtndrnavajivan@hotmail.com](mailto:jtndrnavajivan@hotmail.com)

Website: [www.navajivantrust.org](http://www.navajivantrust.org)

## 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.

## 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.

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

M. K. GANDHI

## SECTION ONE: UNTOUCHABILITY

### 1. ANTYAJA STOTRA

(Translated from the preface dated 17-4-1918 in Gujarati.)

The most striking instance of the terrible excesses of Hinduism is our treatment of the *Antyaj*s. How degrading and shameful it is, Shri Amritlal Padhiar has set out vividly in his *Antyaj Stotra*. There is some exaggeration in it, thanks to the poet in him, but it is slight. Shri Padhiar has given a heart-rending picture which cannot but fill the reader with horror to the very root of his being. He has poured forth his indignation in the *stotra*. It should be read out to men and women in their millions, in the same way that the works like the *Bhagvat* are read out to them in every square.

Till we have rid ourselves of this taint of untouchability, the big question will remain whether we have become fit for Swaraj. If slave owners can be said to be fit, then perhaps we are. Let it not be forgotten that we are ourselves under subjection at present. Those who desire to be free from this state should all the more pay attention to their own evils. The little, mole-like faults of those who have fallen on evil times seem to others as huge as the Himalayas. Something of this kind has happened about our conduct towards the *Antyaj*s; what is more to the point, the evil itself is a Himalayan one and hence it obstructs our progress. I have studied, with care and in a spirit of humility, the controversy which has followed in the wake of the *Antyaj* Conference at Godhra. I have not come across a single convincing reason justifying the practice of

untouchability. Where the scriptures themselves are under attack, to quote from them is like the blind man denying the existence of what he does not see. If we cannot defend our conduct by reason, the authority of scriptures is of no avail. They cannot be above reason and morality. If these latter are given the go-by any fraud can be justified in the name of religion.

We shall have to make such a sustained effort to purge ourselves of this terrible sin that, as Shri Padhiar points out, the effort will by itself raise us very high. If we make it in our traditional manner, we shall have achieved our aim while advancing in the path of *dharma*; if we follow the method they do in West, a gulf will be created between us and the *Antyajias*.

It is cowardly for anyone to suggest that the *Antyajias* will be emancipated when the old generation has passed away. Our worth as men consists in doing *tapascharya* and awakening in our elders compassion and the purest sense of *dharma*. That and nothing less is our duty. If we boldly translate our words into action, the task can be accomplished quite soon. It is a mean desire to wish to kill an enemy so that one may rule over his kingdom afterwards; *dharma* consists in winning him over to our way of thinking and converting him into a friend. Shri Padhiar will have to shake off his cowardice.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XIV, p. 344

## 2. THE BAR SINISTER

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "The Panchamas".)

But I must resist the temptation of dealing with the varied problems. As in all my Madras speeches, I have dealt most with the Panchama, i.e. the untouchable's problem, I propose to deal briefly with it in these notes. Nowhere is the "untouchable" so cruelly treated as in this presidency. His very shadow defiles the Brahman. He may not even pass through Brahman streets. Non-Brahmans treat him no better. And between the two, the Panchama as he is called in these parts is ground to atoms. And yet Madras is a land of mighty temples and religious devotion. The people with their big *tilak* marks, their long locks and their bare clean bodies look like *Rishis*. But their religion seems almost to be exhausted in these outward observances. It is difficult to understand this Dyerism towards the most industrious and useful citizens in a land that has produced, Shankara and Ramanuja. And in spite of the Satanic treatment of our own kith and kin in this part of India, I retain my faith in these Southern people. I have told them at all their huge meetings in no uncertain terms, that there can be no Swaraj without the removal of the curse from our midst. I have told them, that our being treated as social lepers in practically the whole world is due to our having treated a fifth of our own race as such. Non-co-operation is a plea for a change of heart, not merely in the English but equally in ourselves. Indeed, I expect the change first in us and then as a matter of course in the English. A nation that can throw away an agelong curse in a year, a nation that can shed the drink- habit as we shed our garments, a nation that can return to its



original industry and suddenly utilise its spare hours to manufacture sixty crores worth of cloth during a single year is a transformed nation. Its transformation must react upon the world. It must constitute even for the scoffer a convincing demonstration of God's existence and grace, and so I say, that if India can become transformed in this wise no power on earth can deny India's right to establish Swaraj. In spite of all the clouds that are thickening on the Indian horizon, I make bold to prophesy, that the moment India has repented of her treatment of the "untouchables" and has boycotted foreign cloth, that moment India will be hailed, by the very English officials who seem to have hardened their hearts, as a free and a brave nation. And because I believe, that if Hindus will, it is possible for them to enfranchise the so-called Panchamas and extend to them the same rights that they claim for themselves, and it is possible for India, if she wills, to manufacture all the cloth she needs even as she cooks all the food that she eats. I therefore also believe that Swaraj is attainable this year. This transformation cannot take place by any elaborately planned mechanical action. But it can take place if God's grace is with us. Who can deny that God is working a wonderful change in the hearts of every one of us? Any way it is the duty of every Congress worker every where to befriend the untouchable brother, and to plead with the un-Hindu Hindus, that Hinduism of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, Hinduism of the *Bhagavadgita* and of Shankara and Ramanuja contains no warrant for treating a single human being, no matter how fallen, as an untouchable. Let every Congressman plead in the gentlest manner possible with orthodoxy, that the bar sinister is the very negation of Ahimsa.

*Young India*, 29-9-1921, p. 305

### 3. DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY

Here is what a worker in the South writes about Panchamas:

I am just returning from a Panchama gathering. It was all very nice and encouraging. But as we returned from the Panchama quarter, we passed through the main village. There was an ominous-looking party of villagers, all ryots, non-Brahman peasants, gathered under the village-banyan tree. They stood up when we stopped to greet them. A conversation ensued which dispelled my fond visions. It was a khaddar producing village. It was obvious khaddar work was going to stop, for they don't like this untouchability business. We could not get a bullock cart to negotiate the country road. We somehow reached our car in the main road late in the night and after a few tyre-punctures and halts reached home at midnight, sad and not very sleepy. This is nothing. Only in the South this untouchability business is too big and all of us with all our resources can be at it for years. We run it now as a subordinate part of Congress work. It won't do!

Of course it won't do. Untouchability is a terrible reality. If they had a tongue, we should not be able to sleep for the noise the untouchables would make about the treatment meted out to them in the name of religion.

We have only played at it. We have neither sacrificed ease nor time, much less money at all commensurate with the work required, whereas we Hindus will have to pour our blood like water in order to achieve the end. Let us reformers at once admit that we are on this question in a hopeless minority. I verily believe that the adoption of the reform by the Congress has given it a tremendous momentum. But it has only touched the fringe of the problem. We have not seriously tackled it. We wanted excitement of a sort. The work of untouchability can bring no such

excitement. It requires silent, self-effacing work. On the one hand we have to break down the wall of prejudice, not by violence but by patient effort that only love can evoke. The moment we lose temper with the orthodox, we lose ground and make our own and the Panchamas' position worse than before. We have to reason with them, we must put up with their taunts, their insults, yes, even their kicks without retaliation. We will then have produced an atmosphere that will enable truth to reveal itself to the orthodox people.

We must know our own mind. We must not have many minds on this question. Let us understand that this is not a question of inter-dining nor of inter-marrying. Nor is it a question of abolition of *varna-dharma* mistranslated caste. It is a question purely and simply of removing untouchability, of abolishing the unwarranted fifth division. We have a school of reform that aims at a total abolition of the *varna-dharma*. This is not the place to examine the merits of the reform. The movement against untouchability restricts itself to removing the sinful superstition that mere touch of a person, because he is born in a particular group, is a pollution to be atoned for. The more the movement progresses in extent and intensity, the more urgent it becomes to understand and scrupulously to abide by its limitations. Thus whilst we challenge orthodoxy, we must assure it at the same time that we mean no more than we say. It must be enabled to understand the full scope of the movement. Letters I receive weekly show that the minimum has not always been kept steadily in view. The orthodox people have become naturally alarmed. It makes the reformer's task far more difficult than it need be.

On the other hand we must be equally patient with the Panchama brother. He does not always appreciate our effort. He often distrusts us. I know untouchable parents who resent their children being taught the degradation and unhealthiness of eating the remains of cooked food from the dishes of the touchables. Some resent even cleanliness itself. They cling to their habits with almost as much tenacity as the orthodox to their belief in pollution.

A reformer of the average type, therefore, when he realizes the immensity of the work before him, is likely to despair, if not actually to begin to think that the untouchables deserve the treatment they receive, as if they are to blame for the circumstances in which they find themselves.

It is perhaps now clear why I say that we might have to pour out our blood like water before the curse is removed and Hinduism becomes purified.

*Young India*, 21-8-1924, p. 279

#### 4. UNTOUCHABILITY IN KATHIAWAD

(From an English translation of Gandhiji's Presidential Address at the 3rd Kathiawad Political Conference held at Bhavnagar on 8th January 1925 which was published under the title "Kathiawad Political Conference".)

Another extremely important question is that of untouchability. The suppressed classes perhaps suffer more in Kathiawad than in other parts of Greater Gujarat. They are harassed even in railways. To succour the distressed is the special mission of Princes. They are the natural champions of the weak. Will they not come to the aid of the suppressed classes? Princes live by the blessings of their subjects. Will they not enrich their own lives by earning the blessings of the suppressed? The scriptures proclaim that there is no distinction between a Brahman and a scavenger. Both have souls; both have five organs of sense. If they wish, the Princes can do much to ameliorate the condition of these classes and can remove untouchability by association with them in a religious spirit. Let them found schools and sink wells for the suppressed and find a throne in their hearts.

*Young India*, 8-1-1925, p. 9 at p. 11

## 5. BENGAL UNTOUCHABLES

(From "Notes")

A Bengali correspondent asks:

1. In Bengal the untouchables are not allowed to draw water from the wells, nor are they allowed to enter the rooms where drinking water is kept. What should be done to remove this evil? If we dig separate wells for them or establish separate schools, that will be making allowance for this vice.
2. The mentality of the untouchables in Bengal is that the upper classes should take water from their hands, but they themselves refuse to take water from the hands of those who are below them. What should be done to wean them from the error?

\* \* \*

My answers are:

1. One way of removing the evil is for us to take water from the hands of the untouchables. I do not think that the digging of separate wells for them will perpetuate the evil. It will take a long time to root out the effects of untouchability. It would be wrong to withhold help from the untouchables in the shape of providing them with separate wells for fear of others never letting them use public wells. My belief is that if we build good wells for the untouchables many people will use them. Reform among the untouchables must proceed side by side with breaking down of the prejudice against them by caste Hindus realizing their duty towards them.
2. When the so-called "superior" Hindus begin to touch the untouchables, the untouchability among the untouchables themselves is bound to die

a natural death. Our work must commence with the lowest among the untouchables.

*Young India*, 19-2-1925, p. 65

## 6. IN DEFENCE OF UNAPPROACHABILITY!

A Travancore correspondent writes:

There seems to be a misunderstanding about the Brahmans and their customs or *achar* as. You praise Ahimsa, but we the Brahmans are the only community that observe it as a religious function. Any one who violates it, is regarded as an outcaste by us. The very association with those who kill or eat flesh is considered by us as sinful. At the approach of the slaughterer, fisherman and toddy extractor, as well as the touch of the flesh-eater, wine drinker, and the irreligious, our moral as well as the physical atmosphere becomes poisoned, *Japas* or religious merit diminishes, and pure magnetism becomes lost.

This, we consider as pollution, and we have to bathe forthwith. It is by keeping up such rules that the Brahmans have been able to preserve their hereditary virtues so long even though time and fortune have undergone many changes. If free communication with others be allowed without these restrictions, the Brahman will gradually degrade himself to the lowest of the outcastes, indulge in the vices in private, and pretend to be pure trying at the same time to do away with the barriers of restriction which give him much trouble in keeping his sins secret. We know that many of the nominal Brahmans of today are of this sort, and that they are moving heaven and earth to drag others to their degraded level.

In a place, where people are grouped together into different communities according to their habits and notions of right and wrong (not as per colour, wealth or power as is wrongly followed in the West) and located in different centres, according to their professional, social and domestic conveniences, with perceptible demarcation lines as

in our motherland, it is not possible for any one to remain unobserved for long, if he changes his habits.

If on the contrary one is put up in the midst of slaughterers, meat-eaters and drunkards, it is impossible for him to maintain himself there, preserving his foreign virtues. Naturally, we seek such surroundings as suit our tastes. Therefore, it is that the surroundings of a Brahman's abode have also to be preserved physically, morally and religiously pure, free from the encroachment of the slaughterers, fishermen, toddy extractors.

In India profession and the caste system have been inseparably linked together, and it is therefore natural to believe a man belonging to a caste, to be invariably following that profession.

These are the grounds on which unapproachability and untouchability have been enjoined on us. These, as mentioned above, not only protect the purity of our line but also acting as a direct social or religious punishment of excommunication on the wrong-doers, and indirectly induces them to give up their bad habits if they want free communication with us.

You may therefore publicly ask them to renounce their sins and to take up to weaving and spinning along with the necessary religious observances of bathing regularly, fasting, prayer etc., if they want to destroy their unapproachability in the course of a few years. They should not also associate with those who have not mended their old ways of living. This is the way sanctioned by the shastras. Since there is no way of verifying the private sins or virtues of a man, it is useless to talk of the mental purities of the one or the mental impurities of another. It is from public habits that we should judge a man's private nature. Therefore, any one, who cannot publicly embrace your or our Mother's Ahimsa *dharina*, or at least to the extent of slaughtering, fish or flesh eating, cannot be considered fit to transcend their hereditary unapproachability. In fact this unapproachability and untouchability are nothing but a practical means of preserving and spreading our Ahimsa *dharma*.



Though the question raised by the correspondent has been often dealt with in these columns, it is perhaps necessary to re-expose the fallacy underlying the correspondent's argument. In the first place the claim advanced on behalf of the Brahmans as to vegetarianism is not wholly true. It is true only regarding the Brahmans of the South. But elsewhere they freely eat fish and in Bengal, Kashmir, etc. even meat. Moreover, in the South all' meat-eaters and fish-eaters are not unapproachables. And even an "unapproachable" who is severely pure is an outcaste, because he is born in a family unlawfully regarded as "untouchable" or "unapproachable". Do not Brahmans brush shoulders with meat-eating non-Brahmans if they happen to be persons in authority? Do they not pay respects to the meat-eating Hindu royalty?

It is surprising and painful to find cultured men like the correspondent in their blind zeal defend an indefensible and tottering system, forgetting the obvious implications of their own argument. The correspondent strains at the *himsaic* "gnat" of meat-eating and swallows the treble *himsaic* camel of deliberate suppression of millions of fellowbeings in order to preserve an imaginary purity. I suggest to the correspondent that a vegetarianism that demands for its protection a degrading excommunication of others is not worth preserving. Thus preserved it becomes a hot-house growth doomed to perish under the first blast of cold air. I treasure vegetarianism. I am convinced the Brahmans have gained spiritual advancement through their vegetarianism and other self-imposed disciplinary restraints. But when they were at their height, they did not need protection for their purity from without. Every virtue loses its vitality when it becomes incapable of withstanding outside influences.

Moreover, it is too late in the day for Brahmans to claim protection of the type mentioned by the correspondent. Happily the number of Brahmans who not only disdain such protection but who are leading the reform movement at the peril of being persecuted is daily on the increase. And in that lies the best hope of the reform making rapid progress.

The correspondent wants me to preach purity among the suppressed classes. He is evidently no reader of *Young India* or he would have known that I never lose a single opportunity of preaching purity among them. I make him too a present of the information that they are responding to such effort in a most satisfactory manner. I invite the correspondent to join the ranks of reformers who go in the midst of these long suffering men and women and work among them not as patrons but their true friends.

*Young India*, 21-1-1926, p. 28

## 7. COMPARISON IN UNTOUCHABILITY

During my stay in Wardha, I had occasion to visit the untouchable quarters. The inmates seemed happy but the awakening that has come into being amongst them has made them dissatisfied with the progress of the campaign against the curse of untouchability. They resent the fact that they are still being debarred the use of temples, wells and public schools in general. They cannot, they will not, understand that progress is "lame" and therefore tantalizingly slow. They can see no reason, there is none, for the insufferable disabilities under which they are labouring.

Two days after this interesting visit I discovered that in Wardha, thanks to the efforts of Jamnalalji, they were better off than anywhere else. They have several public wells open to them. They were freely admitted to the Municipal schools. As orphans they had the same facilities as the others. They had free use of public water taps. And a continuous attempt was being made to break down completely the wall of prejudice against them.

About the same time that I was having experiences of the thought current of the "untouchable" brethren, I had to rehearse to myself the incidents of the untouchability of South Africa. I had to do so in view of the Round Table Conference that is deliberating there at present. We who are responsible for Indian untouchability are ourselves victims of it in South Africa. It is a case over again of "the biter bitten". We have sown the wind in India, we are reaping the whirlwind in South Africa.

The Conference is now sitting to consider whether there is a way out. Andrews is making herculean efforts to bring about a happy result. He has mobilized the purest forces of South Africa in favour of the cause.

Let us, however, see the difference between the two untouchabilities. The Indian is withering. The axe has been laid at its root. Enlightened public opinion is against it. No one whose opinion carries any weight defends it.

The chains that bind the "untouchables" are daily being broken. Law does not countenance it. What there is of it is all due to the persistence of custom. Customs die hard, they long survive the withdrawal of legal sanction, especially if they are ancient. The disappearance of Indian untouchability is now purely a question of time.

The South African species on the other hand is growing into a hardy tree. It is being daily armed with fresh legal sanctions. The legal disabilities of the Indian "untouchables" of South Africa have grown with every sitting of the Union Parliament since 1915 in spite of the final settlement of 1914. It is spreading in other parts of the British Empire as was made plain by the Kenya letter printed last week in these columns.

It is against this growing evil that Andrews is fighting almost single-handed in South Africa. Let us hope that his efforts will be crowned with success.

But the very best way of dealing with the evil no doubt is to rid ourselves of it in India. The Members of the Union Deputation were heard to say more than once that it would be time for Indians to agitate for removal of the bar in South Africa when they had got rid of it in India. No doubt

they forgot or did not know that with us here, there was no legislative bar against the "untouchables". But it would ill become us to advance an argument of that nature when we are seeking justice. There is a fine legal maxim which is applicable to our case. Those who seek justice must come with clean hands. The best case therefore that we can prepare against South African untouchability is to put our own house in order. Till then, I suppose, we will have to be content with what palliatives the Round Table Conference secures for us.

There is the other side to the question. The "untouchables" owe something to themselves and to India. But I must deal with this phase of the question in another article.

*Young India*, 30-12-1926, p. 461

## 8. UNTOUCHABILITY AND UNREASON

A correspondent from Mahad writes:

It gives me much sorrow to let you know that there was a riot on the 20th of March last between touchables and untouchables at Mahad. There was held a conference of the Colaba District depressed classes on the 19th and 20th ultimo. The meeting was quite successful. But whilst the crowd was dispersing, Mr. A. V. Chitre of the Social Service League of Bombay told the people as they were thirsty and as the sun was very hot that they could go to the public tank and drink water. There were some who tried to dissuade the men from going to the tank. But Dr. Ambedkar the president decided to march the men to the tank. Even the police inspector could not feel the gravity of the situation, and instead of stopping the crowd from proceeding to the tank, went with them. The tank is situated in the midst of the Brahman locality. As however no one was aware that the untouchables were going to the tank there was no disturbance, and hundreds of them quenched their thirst at the tank with cries of *tiara Hara Mahadev*. Meanwhile the touchables came to the scene and they watched the incident with rage. The crowd of untouchables then went back to the pandal for their meals. Within an hour of this, the Mahad public was suddenly awakened by the wild cry *Guruva* and they were told that the untouchables were thinking of entering the temple of Vireshwar.

It was a false cry; but in no time the temple was filled by an infuriated mob of touchables who had sticks in their hands. The poor untouchables had no intention whatsoever of going to the temple. But the touchables finding no untouchable attempting to enter the temple practically ran amuck, went to the bazar and began to beat any untouchable they came across in the street. All the while this beating was going on the part of the touchables, not one untouchable offered any resistance. A few touchables who sympathized with the untouchables tried to protect them; but the furious mob would not be checked. They even rushed into the huts of shoe-makers and such others and beat them severely. The helpless untouchables ran wildly

for help; but none was offered by the shopkeepers. The untouchables who were in the pandal were derided by the touchables for not coming out in the open to fight. There were nearly 1,500 of the former in the pandal and if they had offered to fight there would have been a great calamity and Hinduism would have been disgraced. Dr. Ambedkar justified the advice that he had given on the strength of the resolution that was passed in the Bombay Legislative Council and on the opinion expressed by the Mahad Municipality that the untouchables were lawfully entitled to take water from public tanks and wells.

I have omitted from the correspondent's letter several passages giving further details. But the letter appears to me to be genuine and does not in any way appear to be an overestimate. Assuming then that the incident is correctly reported there can be no question about the unprovoked lawlessness on the part of the so-called higher classes. For, it should be remembered that it was not the drinking of water at the tank which had brought together the "touchables" to the temple but the false report that the untouchables were wanting to enter the temple. But one can hardly expect sanity to exist side by side with unreason. Untouchability itself has no reason behind it. It is an inhuman institution. It is tottering and it is sought to be supported by the so-called orthodox party by sheer brute force.

The so-called untouchables have brought the question a step nearer solution by their exemplary self-restraint under most provoking circumstances. Had they retaliated, it would have been perhaps difficult to distribute the blame. As it is, the blame is all on the side of the "touchables". Brute force will not sustain untouchability. It will bring about a revulsion of feeling in favour of the suppressed classes. It is a sign of the times that there were at least some "touchables" who tried to defend the

poor untouchables. One could wish that there were many more in Mahad. Silent sympathy on such occasions is not of much use. Every Hindu, who considers the removal of untouchability to be of paramount importance, should on such occasions prove his sympathy by publicly defending the suppressed classes and having his own head broken in defending the helpless and the downtrodden.

I cannot help thinking that Dr. Ambedkar was fully justified in putting to test the resolutions of the Bombay Legislative Council and the Mahad Municipality by advising the so-called untouchables to go to the tank to quench their thirst. No incident of this character should pass by unnoticed on the part of associations like the Hindu Mahasabha interested in this reform. Let them investigate the statements made by my correspondent and if they can be substantiated, let them condemn the action of the "touchables". There is nothing like the growth of enlightened public opinion for eradicating everything evil, which untouchability undoubtedly is.

*Young India*, 28-4-1927, p. 134



## 9. UNTOUCHABILITY IN TRAVANCORE

(From the Nagercoil Speech)

I

### A HIDEOUS DOCTRINE

Whilst it gives me great pleasure to pay a second visit to this most beautiful part of India, I cannot conceal from you the deep grief for the fact that in this fair land untouchability has a sway which it does not exercise in any other part of India. I feel deeply humiliated as a Hindu to find that it is in this enlightened Hindu State that untouchability appears in its most hideous form of unseeability and unapproachability. I speak with a due sense of my responsibility that this untouchability is a curse that is eating into the vitals of Hinduism, and I often feel that unless we take due precautions and remove this curse from our midst, Hinduism itself is in danger of destruction. That in this age of reason, in this age of wide travel, in this age of a comparative study of religions, there should be found people, some of whom are educated, to uphold the hideous doctrine of treating a single human being as untouchable, or unapproachable, or unseeable because of his birth, passes my comprehension. As a lay humble student of Hinduism and claiming to be one desirous of practising Hinduism in the spirit of and to the letter let me tell you that I have found no warrant or support for this terrible doctrine. Let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that everything that is written in Sanskrit and printed is Shashtra and has any binding effect upon us. That which is opposed to the fundamental maxims of morality,

that which is opposed to trained reason, cannot be claimed as Shastra no matter how ancient it may be. There is enough warrant for the proposition that I have just stated in the *Vedas*, in the *Mahabharata* and in the *Bhagavad Gita*. I therefore hope it will be possible for the enlightened ruler of Travancore to blot the curse out of the land during her reign. And what can be nobler than that a woman should be able to say to herself and her people that during her rule it has been possible for these people who have been suffering from agelong slavery to receive their full freedom?

#### **WAKE UP PRIESTS AND SAVARNAS**

But I know also her difficulties and those of her councillors. A Government, be it ever so autocratic, is always timid and cautious in moving in such reforms. A wise Government will welcome an agitation in connection with such reforms. An unwise Government impatient of public opinion will use violence in putting down such agitations. But from my personal experience at Vykam Satyagraha I know that you have a Government which will not only tolerate but welcome agitation in order to strengthen its hands to achieve this reform. The real initiative therefore must lie with the people of Travancore, and that too not with the so-called untouchables miscalled also *avarna* Hindus. To me the very word "*avarna*" Hindu is a misnomer and a reproach to Hinduism. In many cases the remedy or the initiative lies not with them but with the so-called *Savarna* Hindus who have to rid themselves of the sin of untouchability. Let me tell you that it is not enough for you to hold the belief passively that untouchability is a crime. He who is a passive spectator of crime is really, and in law, an active participator in it. You

must therefore begin and continue your agitation along all lawful and legitimate lines. Let me, if my voice will reach them, carry my voice to the Brahman priests who are opposing this belated reform. It is a painful fact, but it is a historical truth, that priests who should have been the real custodians of religion have been instrumental in destroying the religion of which they have been custodians. I see before my eyes the Brahman priests in Travail core and also elsewhere destroying the very religion of which they are supposed to be custodians, from their ignorance or worse. All their learning, when it is utilized to sustain a hideous superstition, a terrible wrong, turns to dust. I wish therefore that they will recognize before it is too late the signs of the times and march with the events which are taking them and us voluntarily or involuntarily along the path of truth. All the religions of the world, while they may differ in other respects unitedly proclaim that nothing lives in this world but truth.

#### **THE PATH OF THE REFORMER**

Let me also warn the impatient reformer that unless he keeps himself on the right, strait and narrow path, he will hurt himself and hinder the reform about which he is rightly impatient. I venture to claim that I have placed in the hands of the reformer a matchless and priceless weapon in the form of Satyagraha. But then the conditions of successful Satyagraha are fairly hard. If he has faith in God, faith in himself, faith in his cause, he will never be violent, not even against his most fierce opponent whom he would accuse rightly of injustice, ignorance and even violence. I state without fear of contradiction that truth has never been vindicated by violence. A Satyagrahi therefore expects to conquer his opponents or so-

called enemies not by violent force but by force of love, by process of conversion. His methods will be always gentle and gentle manly. He will never exaggerate. And since non-violence is otherwise known as love it has no weapon but that of self-suffering. And above all in a movement like that of the removal of untouchability which in my opinion is essentially religious and one of self-purification there is no room for hate, no room for haste, no room for thoughtlessness and no room for exaggeration. Since Satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a Satyagrahi exhausts all other means before he resorts to Satyagraha. He will therefore constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagraha. But when he has found the impelling call of the inner voice within him and launches out upon Satyagraha he has burnt his boats and there is no receding. Let me however hope that it will not be necessary in this land for people to undergo all the suffering for removing a wrong which is so patent.

#### **WITH THE POLICE COMMISSIONER**

You will be glad to learn that immediately I entered this place, the Commissioner of Police was good enough to call on me and we discussed this great question. There are at the present moment two questions pending so far as I am aware one in connection with the roads about Thiruvarpur and the other in connection with Suchindram. So far as I am aware in both these places the reformers have the right on their side. I understand that at the first place Satyagrahis have already commenced

their battle. I think it is a hasty step. I have therefore sent them a telegram asking them to desist for the time being and to see me tomorrow at Trivandrum. And I propose, if I am given the opportunity, as I hope I shall be, to discuss both these questions with the authorities. Though this visit of mine to Travancore was intended to be confined principally to khadi or khadi collections, fate threw me into the untouchability fray immediately on my arrival. I shall not spare myself during the brief time that is at my disposal in endeavouring humbly to assist both the State and the people in arriving at an honourable settlement.

## II

(From the Trivandrum Speech)

### **HINDUISM AND UNTOUCHABILITY**

As at Nagercoil, here too the best part of the day has been devoted to discussing this problem. Though it was partly a social call that I paid to the Diwan, we naturally began to discuss this thorny question. And if you found me coming to the meeting a few minutes late it was because I had gone to pay my respects to Her Highness the Maharani Regent, and I found myself again discussing this very question with her. I have always, after having paid the first visit to Travancore, looked forward to a series of visits to this enchanting land. Its most beautiful scenery, the location of Kanyakumari in Travancore, and the simplicity and freedom of the women of Travancore captivated me when I first came here. But the pleasure that all these thoughts and associations always gave me has been seriously marred by the thought that untouchability had assumed its most terrible shape in Travancore, and it has pained me to think that this

evil has existed in that terrible form in a most ancient Hindu State, which has the privilege of occupying the first place in all India in educational progress. And this existence of untouchability in its extreme form has always caused me so much pain, because I consider myself to be a Hindu of Hindus saturated with the spirit of Hinduism. I have failed to find a single warrant for the existence of untouchability as we believe and practise it to day in all those books which we call as Hindu Shastras. But as I have repeatedly said in other places if I found that Hinduism really countenanced untouchability I should have no hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself. For I hold that religion, to be worthy of the name, must not be inconsistent with the fundamental truths of ethics and morality. But as I believe that untouchability is no part of Hinduism, I cling to Hinduism, but daily become more and more impatient of this hideous wrong. So, when I found that this question was agitating Travancore I had no hesitation in plunging myself into it. If I have taken up this question, I have done so not in any way to embarrass the State. For I believe that Her Highness the Maharani Regent is solicitous about the welfare of her people. She also claims to be a reformer along these lines, and I fancy that I commit no breach of confidence when I tell you that she is eager to see that this wrong is removed at the earliest possible moment.

#### **DUTY OF STATE AND PEOPLE**

But then Governments cannot afford to lead in matters of reform. By their very nature Governments are but interpreters and executors of the expressed will of the people whom they govern, and even a most autocratic Government will find itself unable to impose a reform which

its people cannot assimilate. So, if I was a subject of Travancore State I should be entirely satisfied to know that my Government was willing to carry forward this reform as speedily as the people were willing to assimilate it. But having satisfied myself of that one thing, I should not rest content for one single moment till I had carried the message of reform from mouth to mouth and village to village. Well ordered, persistent, agitation is the soul of healthy progress and so if I were you, I would not let the Government rest till this reform was carried through. Not allowing the Government to rest does not by any means mean embarrassing the Government. A wise Government welcomes and needs the support and warmth and encouragement of such an agitation in order to achieve a reform which the Government itself wants. I know that when I was here last, I was told that the *savarna* (caste) Hindus were all most anxious for this reform of the abolition of untouchability in every shape and form. But I am afraid that the *savarna* Hindus have slept over their wish. They have not given a concrete form to their wish, and I believe that it is the bounden duty of every Hindu in the State to wake up to a sense of his duty and to wake up his lethargic brethren also to a sense of their duty. And I have no shadow of a doubt that if the *savarna* Hindus could with one voice express their wish, this monster of untouchability would go. It would be wrong therefore to ascribe our own lethargy and slothfulness to the Government.

#### THE SECRET OF SATYAGRAHA

But reformers in every community and every country are to be counted on one's finger tips; and I know that the brunt of all such reform falls upon the devoted heads of that small band of reformers. What are the

reformers then to do in the face of this evil of such long-standing, is really the question one has to solve. The reformers all over the world have resorted to one or other of the two methods that I am about to mention. The vast majority of them have drawn attention to evils by creating wild agitation and resorting to violence. They have resorted to agitation that embarrasses the Government, that embarrasses the people and that disturbs the even tenor of life of the citizens. The other school of reformers which I would call the non-violent school resorts to agitation of the gentle type. It disdains to draw attention by doing violence in thought, word or deed; but it draws attention by simple self-suffering. It never exaggerates. It never departs by a hair's breadth from truth, and whilst impatient of evil does not mean ill even to the evil-doer. I have given that a short name and I have placed it before this country as before South Africa in the name of Satyagraha. Do not for one moment mix up Satyagraha with civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is no doubt a branch of Satyagraha. It comes not at the beginning but at the fag end. It presupposes immense discipline. It presupposes great self-restraint. It is based upon charity, and it never puts an unfavourable or unwarranted construction even upon the motives of its opponents. For it seeks not to coerce but to convert. You may therefore imagine my painful surprise when I found the whole of my doctrine and my remarks grossly misinterpreted by a friend who visited me in Virudhnagar. I saw in the *Trivandrum Express* a report given by him of what had occurred between him and myself. It is a distortion from start to finish of the conversation that I had with him (A voice: "Shame"). But there is no warrant for crying "shame". The gentleman who cried shame evidently



does not know the virtue or meaning of charity. For I do not for one moment suggest that the friend who saw me has consciously or deliberately distorted my meaning. I am prepared to believe the explanation that he gave me this morning. But I have drawn your attention to this prominently in order to illustrate what I mean by Satyagraha and also to show you the danger of those who do not know this fine weapon dabbling in it. I am simply giving this example in order to warn the would be reformer against undertaking this method unless he is absolutely sure of his ground and unless he has got more than the ordinary measure of self-control, and seeing that I am enamoured of this method of Satyagraha, which I consider to be a matchless weapon, I do not want it to be misused or abused, so long as I can prevent it. I therefore advised this friend to keep out of this problem until he had understood what Satyagraha really was, and unless he had assimilated the true spirit of it.

But this again is not intended to damp the zeal of even a single reformer. I am going into the problem so much in detail, for the simple reason that I want you to work at it in order to get the quickest possible solution. I want therefore humbly to suggest that those of you who have had some experience of public life should take up this movement and make it their own and harness the energy and the will of the youths who are interested in this problem but do not know how to solve it. And I suggest also that you place yourselves in touch with the authorities and day after day worry the life out of them until this reform is achieved. For I am free to tell you that not only is Her Highness desirous of carrying out this reform but so is the Diwan himself. But belonging as he does to a different faith,

you and I, Hindus, can appreciate his limitations. In my opinion, so far as the Government is concerned, it is on the side of reform; only the initiative will have to come from you and not from the Government. You will forgive me for having dealt with this very important question in a highly technical manner. I could not do otherwise as I have no other time at my disposal so that I could have convened a few of the leaders at a conference and discussed the pros and cons. I felt therefore that you would overlook the heaviness of my speech in connection with untouchability before a big audience as this.

\* \* \*

### III

(From the Quilon Speech)

"Untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk", said Gandhiji at Quilon and made an impassioned appeal to the caste Hindus to destroy the poison.

"Knowing the quality of milk, and the use of milk and knowing the quality of arsenic, we should be impatient with a man sitting near a pitcher of milk and trying to remove arsenic grain by grain, and we should throw the whole pitcher overboard. Even so do I as a Hindu feel that the curse of untouchability is rendering the milk of Hinduism altogether poisoned and impure. I feel therefore that patience in a matter of this character is not a virtue. It is impossible to restrain ourselves. Patience with evil is really trifling with evil and with ourselves. I have therefore not hesitated to say that the State of Travancore should lead in the matter of the reform and blot out the evil at a single stroke. But I know also that it was

not possible even for a Hindu State to do away with this evil, unless it was backed and actively backed by its Hindu population. And so my appeal must be mostly to you rather than to the head of the State, and to every Hindu in this meeting I wish to make a definite personal appeal. You and I have long neglected our duty to the so-called untouchables and unapproachables, and to this extent you and I have been false representatives of Hinduism. . I ask you without the slightest hesitation summarily to reject the advance of every person who comes to you in defence of untouchability. Remember that in this age whatever one man or group of men and women do does not remain secret for any length of time, and we are daily being weighed and found wanting so long as we nurse untouchability in our bosom. You must remember that all the great religions of the world are at the present time in the melting pot. Let us not ostrich-like hide our faces and ignore the danger that lies at the back of us. I have not a shadow of doubt that in the great turmoil now taking place either untouchability has to die or Hinduism has to disappear. But I do know that Hinduism is not dying, is not going to die, because I see untouchability is a corpse struggling with its last breath to hold on for a little while."

#### IV

(From the Alleppey Speech)

#### MY HOPE

I had a very long discussion with many of the Ezhuva leaders this afternoon, and I tell you that if I was not told that they were Ezhuvass I should not have known them to be such, nor could I see the slightest distinction between them and those who call themselves *Savarnas* (caste

Hindus). Their pecuniary position is any day better than of many of the *savarnas*. Their educational qualifications leave nothing to be desired, and their personal cleanliness appeared to be infinitely superior to that of many Brahmans and others whom I have seen during my travels from one end of the country to the other. And so when I faced these friends and read their address, I hung my Hindu head in shame, that these friends were considered untouchable and unfit to walk along some of the public roads in Travancore, and that these were the friends whose presence in our temples would defile the temple ground, and that these were the men who could not send their sons and daughters to at least some of the Government schools although they were as much tax payers as the tallest in this Assembly. For let it be remembered that as against these inhuman disabilities, they are not excused from paying the tax in the same measure that *savarnas* pay to the State. This then is in my opinion a cause to which it is the duty of many Hindus who feel for their religion to dedicate their lives, and I do hope that Her Highness the Maharani Regent, enlightened as she is, will not rest content until this disgrace is removed from Travancore, and from all the talks I had with Her Highness, with the Diwan, and the Commissioner of Police, and last but not least the Devasvam Commissioner, I am leaving Travancore in the hope that at least the roads question will be solved to the satisfaction of all concerned, and it is in that fervent hope that I have not hesitated to advise the deputation today to suspend Satyagraha, and I am glad to be able to say to this meeting that this deputation were kind enough to listen to my advice and suspend Satyagraha whilst this question was being satisfactorily settled. God forbid that there should be any

disappointment with reference to the hope that I carry with me. But I have told the friends that if the redress that is their due is not given in time, and if after they have exhausted all preliminary proposals they fail in getting relief, it will be not only open to them, but it will be their bounden duty, to resort to Satyagraha in order to win what is their right.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF THE HOPE

Let me reiterate to you the implications of the hope I am taking with me. Flimsy in one respect though I consider what is called the Vykom settlement to be, in other respects and from another point of view it is a settlement honourable alike to the State and to the *avarana* Hindus. It is a settlement which I consider to be the bedrock to freedom. I call it a bedrock of freedom because the settlement is a document between the people and the State constituting a big step in the direction of liberty in one respect at least. But so far as the *avarana* Hindus are concerned it is in no sense a final settlement, it was the minimum that they permitted themselves to be satisfied with at the time and for the time being. It is necessarily a settlement for the Government never to recede from. Government by that settlement erected for themselves a platform to make further advances from. Its interpretation therefore must be always in favour of the *avarana* Hindus. Nor can it ever be interpreted to curtail the liberties of non-Hindus. Applying this principle to the present trouble at Thiruvārppu it is not possible for Government to curtail any substantial right of Christian and other non-Hindus who have been using the roads there. It is therefore their bounden duty to throw these roads open to *avarana* Hindus, and any difficulty that there may be in the way of the roads being thrown open it is for the Government to get over, and not for

the *avarana* Hindus to accommodate the Government over. Similar though not precisely the same is the case now pending in connection with the roads round the Suchandram temple, and I am hoping that in the very near future the State will overcome all difficulties there may be in giving the relief I have suggested.

Subject to this I have given my advice to the Ezhuva friends to suspend their activities, and I venture to hope that in the circumstances the order the Government have thought it necessary to serve on Sjt. Madhavan will be withdrawn without delay. I think the order at least now wholly unnecessary, as also is the general order prohibiting the holding of meetings within a certain radius of Thiruvwarppu.

*Young India*, 20-10-1927, pp. 352-56

## 10. UNTOUCHABILITY IN THE SOUTH

Though untouchability appears in its worst and crudest form in the extreme South, that is Kerala, not much at least not enough, is being done by the reformers in the South to stamp out the evil. They will not even finance the movement to the extent that is necessary and possible for them. When, therefore, I started collections during my visit to Calicut amongst the people locally, I was glad to find that the South Indian Colony in Bombay signified their intention of making a much more substantial collection than was made in Calicut and giving it to me when I passed through Bombay. In continuation of their promise a deputation came to me in Bombay during my recent visit and assured me that they had not forgotten it but that they were waiting for a favourable season for making the collections. One of them now writes: "Many a young man with meagre salary is wasting his money in races and other city inducements, and if only we could wean them from their present tendencies, much could be expected of them for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of the city of Bombay." I hope that this reform movement will take deep root amongst the South India young men. I would advise them not to wait for a "favourable season". For any time is a favourable season for doing good work or begging or giving in a good cause. No cause can be better than the cause of the "untouchables", the "unapproachables" and the "invisibles". If the young men from the South living in Bombay will only deny themselves some of the costly luxuries such as smoking, races, visits to tea-shops etc., there will be a fat collection. Every religion enjoins the setting apart of a certain portion of

one's income for charitable purposes. Unfortunately young men now a days in most cases have given the go-by to religion. But if the practice of invariably allocating a certain portion of one's income to charitable purposes can be revived, causes such as those of the untouchables need never wait for a "favourable season".

*Young India*, 31-5-1928, p. 176



## 11. THE DOOM OF UNTOUCHABILITY

(From "Under the Starry Sky" by P. \*)

"What has interested me most," Dr. Mott proceeded to say, "is your work in connection with the removal of untouchability. Will you please tell me what is the most hopeful sign indicating that this institution is as you say on its last legs?"

"It is", replied Gandhiji, "the reaction that is taking place in orthodox Hinduism and the swiftness with which it has come about. As a most illustrious example I will mention Pandit Malaviyaji. Ten years back he was as punctilious in the observance of the rules with regard to untouchability as perhaps the most orthodox Hindu of that day. Today he takes pride in administering the *mantra* of purification to the untouchables by the bank of the Ganges sometimes even incurring the wrath of unreasoning orthodoxy. He was all but assaulted by the diehard section in Calcutta in December last for doing this very thing. In Wardha a wealthy merchant Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj recently threw open his magnificent temple to the 'untouchables' and that was without arousing any serious opposition. The most remarkable thing about it is that from the record kept in the temple of the daily visitors it was found that the attendance had gone up instead of declining since the admission of the untouchables to it. I may sum up the outlook by saying that I expect the tide against untouchability to rise still more swiftly in the near future, astonishingly swift as it has already been."

*Young India*, 21-3-1929, p. 95

1Pyarelal

## 12. THE TREND

(From "In Andhradesha")

I

This deadly snake of untouchability is scotched but not destroyed. It shows its poisonous fangs even when you may least expect to see them. I was certainly not prepared for the following letter:

I regret very much to bring to your kind notice, the following fact which occurred soon after the ladies' meeting held at Tanuku on the 22nd instant. At about 5 p.m. there were present three to four hundred ladies in the meeting. It was whispered by some in the meeting that the young lady who was sitting by you was a Panchama girl.

As soon as the meeting was over, all the ladies who attended the meeting directly went to the canal and took a plunge in the water to purify themselves from the unpardonable sin of touching free. I saw with my own eyes even small children, nay more, suckling babies too were sprinkled with holy water to save them also from this sin. We are deceiving you and honouring you. It is a pious ancient fraud with us. . . .

People are steeped in ignorance and superstition. These combined with the pride of higher caste are ruining us and seem to be more powerful even than the present Government.

As it so happens the young lady sitting by me was no other than Shrimati Prabhavati Devi, the daughter of Brijakishore Babu, the well-known leader of Bihar. She has been with me in the Ashram for some time and has been travelling with me during the Andhra tour. By the vast majority of the people she has been taken to be my daughter, by some to be daughter-in-law, but it was reserved for the Tanuku ladies to confound her with Lakshmi, the *antyaj* girl, whom I have adopted as my daughter

in my own manner. And so being polluted by the touch transmitted through me of the imaginary *andyaj* girl the good ladies purified themselves and their children by a holy bath or a mere sprinkling. This tragic comedy has been a lesson for us. Superstitious themselves, men have neglected the women folk, have allowed the latter to remain in darker superstition. After I got the letter, I became circumspect and began an examination of the composition of subsequent audiences. I found that at most meetings the untouchables were intermingled with the touchables. I asked the audience point blank whether they had any objection. And they said they had none. At one of the villages near Rajahmundry I saw at a well-arranged meeting volunteers pointing with pride to the touchables, untouchables and women in their respective wards. I set a trap for them. "I suppose you have specially arranged this in order to isolate the untouchables?" The poor volunteer who answered my question readily fell into the trap and said, "Yes, Sir". I discovered afterwards that he knew very little English and had not understood my question. But I straight away asked the audience whether they had any objection to untouchables sitting in their midst. They showed by a chorus of hands that they had none. I was still not satisfied and therefore asked whether they would have me send the untouchables in their midst. They again raised their hands signifying assent. I asked them to signify the same with their voice. And they did so, at first softly. I asked for a loud voiced declaration. And all sang out at the top of their voices "*saray, saray*". Then I invited the untouchables to sit in their midst which they did without any hesitation and without any fear. Then I based my speech to the meeting on untouchability telling them that they had done a

meritorious act by letting the untouchable brethren sit in their midst and that it was a sin to regard any human being as an untouchable. If in spite of this ocular demonstration enforced by the explanation that I gave the women or anybody had a purificatory bath, it will be a question for psycho-analyst to dissect and consider. Let me finish this story by adding that the women also had taken part in signifying their assent to the untouchable intermingling, and as a matter of fact the so-called untouchables sat with caste is men and women touching both without my noticing any movement on the part of anybody to avoid them. In a village nearby, a school is being conducted where both touchable and untouchable boys associate in large numbers without any friction. And so while I deplore occurrences such as happened at Tanuku, the fact cannot be gainsaid that untouchability is fast dying of exhaustion.

*Young India*, 16-5-1929, p. 157

## II

(From "Notes")

The reader will recall a paragraph I gave to a letter from an Andhra correspondent who had complained that the ladies at the women's meeting at Tanuku had a purificatory bath after the meeting under the belief that the *antyaj* girl Lakshmi was with me at that meeting. Two correspondents have sent letters energetically protesting that the charge is wholly false. I gladly reproduce one of the letters:

We were all surprised to read your note in *Young India* for 16th inst. entitled "Untouchability" about the ladies' meeting at Tanuku. The remarks are justified if what your correspondent wrote is true. But I am sorry to say your correspondent has erred grievously.

It may be possible that some ladies might have taken Shrimati Prabhavati Devi for the *antyaj* girl, Lakshmi. But as far as I know it is not true. Some of the ladies thought she was the Kamma girl who had offered to join the Ashram. But it is untrue to say that all the ladies, babies included, had a purificatory bath soon after the meeting in the river Gristanadi. I was at the place of the meeting as the ladies of my family had been to the meeting. I am a Brahman and my ladies have not had a purificatory bath. I know many ladies who attended and they assured me they never contemplated such a thing. I read and explained your correspondent's letter to many orthodox ladies and it was news to them. One fact may be noted, viz. the ladies were crowded into a small hall and they were waiting for more than an hour, they sweated profusely. Some ladies, I know, bathed to remove this dirt. Some might have bathed as they had to cook the evening meals. But to suggest that they did this to purify themselves from the touch of a so-called untouchable is a gross libel.

Both the correspondents have given their names. I have no reason to disbelieve their statements and I am sorry for hurting the feelings of the ladies who attended the meeting. I had the name of the correspondent who had made the charge now contradicted. I have therefore written to him to inquire how he came to make the serious charge. It is a matter of joy to me that ladies now a days resent the imputation that they would regard as pollution the presence of the so-called untouchables at meetings attended by them.

*Young India*, 20-6-1929, p. 204 at p. 205

### 13. NEEDLESSLY AFRAID

(From "Almoda Impressions")

Untouchability is a snake with a thousand mouths through each of which it shows its poisonous fangs. It defies definition. It needs no sanction from Manu or the other ancient law-givers. It has its own local *smriti*. Thus in Almoda a whole class of people, whose occupation is, even according to the *Sanatandharma* so-called, innocent, are untouchables. They are all cultivators owning their own holdings. They are called *shilpi* farmers. Another similar class of people called Boras suffer in the same manner although they do not even eat carrion or take liquor and observe all the rules of sanitation as well as any. Tradition has condemned these as untouchables. Hinduism that refuses to think accepts the tradition unquestioningly and exposes itself to merited ridicule and worse. Reformers are trying to cope with the evil. I feel, however, that much more drastic methods are needed than are employed to rid Hinduism of the blot. We are needlessly afraid to wound the susceptibilities of orthodoxy.

We have to shed the fear, if we expect to end the evil in our own generation. This untouchability naturally recoils on the heads of those who are responsible for it. In Almoda the *choka* untouchability at the time of dining— has worked its insidious way even among castes and sub-castes till at last every man makes himself an untouchable. This *choka* exercises its evil sway even in national institutions like the Prem Vidyalaya. I was considerably relieved when upon inquiry I found that

none of the trustees believed in the *choka*, and that they were tolerating it so as not to scare the parents of the boys attending the institution.

*Young India*, 11-7-1929, p. 226

## 14. UNTOUCHABILITY—A GRIEVOUS CRIME

(From "Caste and Communal Question")

The untouchables are a class apart—a standing reproach to Hinduism. The castes are a handicap, they are no sin. Untouchability is a sin, a grievous crime, and will eat up Hinduism, if the latter does not kill the snake in time. Untouchables should no longer be the outcasts of Hinduism. They should be regarded as honoured members of Hindu society, and should belong to the *varna* for which their occupation fits them.

*Young India*, 4-6-1931, p. 129

## 15. VIRUS OF UNTOUCHABILITY

All lovers of Hinduism will read the following with painful interest:

Kugalur is a village in Coimbatore district (South India) and all the villagers are farmers. This village can boast of an ardent and sincere Congress worker Sjt. K. K. Subanagounder. His selfless work for the spread of khadi has earned him the name of "Gandhi Subanagounder". For the last six years he has been serving in the Taluk Congress Committee either as the President or Secretary. It is due to him that not only the people of this village but of this whole taluk realized the economy of khaddar and have taken to it. Being a subscriber of *Young India* he is in touch with your movement. During the last movement it was he who enlisted several volunteers and carried on picketing of liquor shops in many villages and he was successful. The district authorities tried various means to put him down but as he was prepared to stake all, their efforts were in vain. But for him the entire taluk would not have risen from its lethargy. In short he is one of the sincere and selfless workers in South India. Now such a situation has arisen in this village that the whole population of this village is against him and being a co-worker I beg to seek your help.

To explain the situation a short account of the social customs and manners of the villagers is necessary. The villagers are very very orthodox and they have a strong and blind faith in their tradition. No amount of reason or persuasion can turn them. If any one talks of "removal of untouchability" he will be pooh-poohed and condemned as a betrayer of Hinduism and Hindu *dharma*. In this village there are several families of the so-called "untouchables" and "un- approachables". They have a separate locality. They work in the lands of the high caste people and thus earn their bread. There is a well in the locality in which the "unapproachables" live but there is no well in the locality in which the "untouchables" (locally called "pallas") are put up.

Sjt. K. K. Subanagounder owns a garden near the locality of these "pallas" (untouchables) and for a long time he had an idea to allow the "pallas" to fetch water from well in his garden. Just a month ago one morning he and one of his friends went



to his garden, allowed two untouchables to go to his well to fetch water and after they had gone he and his friend took a bath in the same well. At once this news that Sjt. K. K. Subanagounder had allowed two "pallas" to take water from his well and bathed in the same well, spread like wild fire throughout the village. In the eyes of the villagers this was a most heinous crime that a Hindu could commit. They condemned him and all his servants gave up their services as they thought it a despicable sin to serve under a man who had allowed a "palla" to take water from his well and afterwards bathed in it. Thus the village has been split into two parties—Sjt. K. K. Subanagounder and four of his friends on one side and the whole village including two or three mischief-mongers on the other side. The more orthodox of the villagers declared that Sjt. K. K. Subanagounder and his friends had committed a crime and they should purify themselves by drinking holy water administered by the Brahmins. But Sjt. Subanagounder refused and the villagers have resolved that they should have no dealings with him and his friends. People are prohibited and threatened from working even in his fields and those of his friends.

A few days after the above incident a man who is still in the service of Sjt. Subanagounder went to fetch water from a public well. The villagers present prevented him from getting into the well on the ground that he was still in the service of Sjt. K. K. Subanagounder and that the water would be polluted if they allowed him to get into the well. This man at once ran and reported the matter to Sjt. Subanagounder. The well being a public well Sjt. Subanagounder and four of his friends thinking that every individual has a right to enter into it went to the well with the same man and asked him to fetch water from the well. The villagers who had gathered there in hundreds threatened him with blows if he got down and obstructed him. Sjt. Subanagounder under the pressure of his friends reported the matter to the police and the police after conducting an investigation reported the matter to the Magistrate and the hearing is postponed to June 1st.

Though many people outside this village applaud the work started by Sjt. Subanagounder, the whole village steeped in blind orthodoxy is against him. Sjt. Subanagounder is firm and would not give up his cause. The villagers would not allow

him to carry on his work. Not only his cause but the domestic work of Sjt. Subanagounder and his friends suffer very much. This religious sentiment of the mob and the personal animosity of some of the mischief-mongers are doing much harm to the few who are with Sjt. K.K. Subanagounder. Sjt. Subanagoundejr and his fellow sufferers have not even the privileges of getting into a public well or the village temple.

I am a co-worker and well-wisher of Sjt. Subanagounder and at this juncture a word from you as to what path Sjt. Subanagounder should adopt as to pacify the villagers without injuring his own cause will be helpful.

Sjt. Subanagounder deserves warm congratulations for his bravery and pertinacity. The only advice I can give him is that he should take all risks in protecting the untouchables of his village and yet bear no ill-will to the villagers. He will find in the end that the villagers will cease to worry him. They will at first mistake his goodness for weakness and then perceive the strength lying behind his goodness. For they will soon find their mistake when they see that whilst he is gentle and forbearing towards them he is firm like a rock in his action in protecting the untouchables. As time passes, the villagers will forfeit all sympathy and Sjt. Subanagounder will gain the active sympathy and help of the public. The only condition is that he must be prepared to sacrifice everything, suffer even his fields to lie fallow if the sinful boycott by the villagers succeeds in scaring labour away from him. It is some consolation that he has four friends who stand by him. . But he should be prepared to carry out his resolution, even if he loses these friends, for I am sure that he will lose only to gain. God sometimes does try to the uttermost those whom He wishes to bless.

*Young India*, 11-6-1931, p. 140

## 16. PRECARIOUS UNTOUCHABILITY

Q.: Is not untouchability determined merely by the name of the caste to which one may belong?

A.: The answer to the question is in the affirmative. That just shows how precarious untouchability is. If the Harijans would conceal their caste name and simply declare themselves as Hindus they will, as in many cases they do, pass muster except in their immediate neighbourhood. But from the standpoint that I have suggested such subterfuge can only protract the agnoy. It cannot cure "the high classes" of the taint of superiority and touch-me-not-ism.

*Harijan, 12-8-1933, p. 4*

## 17. WE LOSE ALSO MATERIALLY

(From a speech delivered at a public meeting at Amravati on 16-11-1933 which appeared under the title "Religious Obligation".)

The Municipal address naturally refers to Harijans. I suggest to the Municipality that the condition of Harijan dwellings cannot be a matter of satisfaction to its members. I admit that Amravati does not stand alone in the shoddiness of its Harijan buildings. It can be demonstrated that by our shoddy treatment of the Harijans we not only lose spiritually, but also materially. Western science has made the discovery that a society that is indifferent to the welfare of its servants suffers a heavy material loss. It should be easy enough for us to realize that society at large will gain much materially by treating its Harijans well and giving them instruction in matters of hygiene and sanitation. True material welfare is not inconsistent with performance of religious obligations. Nearly 50 years' observation of the working of a religious life confirms the above observation. Indeed, it can be shown that conduct which is inconsistent with true religion results in earthly loss. I go a step further and contend that, if we would act correctly towards Harijans and purify our hearts of untouchability, we should find that we had taken a long stride towards the achievement of communal unity.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1933, p. 4

## 18. A MESSAGE TO TRAVANCORE

(The following is the full text of the speech delivered by Gandhiji at the public meeting in Trivandrum on the 22nd January, 1934.)

### WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A VETA

I am no stranger to Travancore or Trivandrum. If you will permit me, I should say I am with you a fellow citizen of Travancore. And I shall tell you why I would love to become a citizen of Travancore. I have had the audacity, if you like to call it, or courage as I would call it, to say that Malabar, which includes Travancore and Cochin was the blackest spot in the untouchability map of India. The worst forms of untouchability are to be found in Malabar. And Malabar is the home of Shankaracharya, the teacher of the *advaita* doctrine. How untouchability of the worst type can be consistent with the teaching of Shankar passes my comprehension. But since I have become a Harijan by choice, I should love to suffer with the Harijans who are supposed to occupy the lowest rung of the ladder even in the Harijan scale. I cannot possibly do so unless I could take out a naturalization certificate and become a citizen of Travancore. For, do you know what I saw this morning when I went to a Harijan school? There I saw two Harijan boys belonging to what are called the Vetas. One lives and learns on this earth. I learnt then and there that Vetas are invisible like the Nayadis—synonymous terms. In the note that was passed to me, it was stated that Vetas had the greatest difficulty in finding pure drinking water. Once during the Boer War, as a humble member of the Ambulance Corps that I was, I found myself in the position of the Vetas. Not that there was any prohibition against the soldiers and ambulance men who

were marching through that scorching country, but it happened to be a waterless desert; it was a decree of prohibition from Providence itself. The mid-day sun shone scorching overhead. We were all white soldiers and brown ambulance men—parched with thirst. Suddenly we came upon a little pool filled with dirty water. That was to serve as drinking water for us. This morning I immediately recalled that scene and said to myself how infinitely worse the Vetas must feel when day in and day out they are consigned to dirty pools for drinking water, not in a waterless desert, but in a place where ample fresh water is perennial. Are you now surprised that I should love to identify myself with a Veta and feel with him by living with him and seeing what you feel when you see fresh water all around and are debarred from using it? If God wills it, He will give me the strength and the will to go through the fire. You now understand the nature of the message that I want to deliver to you this evening.

#### **THE DUTY OF THE STATE**

But there is always a ray of light even through apparently impenetrable darkness. The communique of the Maharajah's Government in connection with this untouchability business was this morning placed in my hands. I was able at the meeting, where I saw the order of His Highness the Maharajah's Government, to tender my congratulations. As I then read this order, it seemed to me in short that there would be no State recognition for those public institutions which debarred untouchables from their use. Whilst it was possible for me to tender my congratulations, you must not run away with the belief that such relief of a very modified type can give me satisfaction. This deep-seated disease requires not a temporizing but a drastic remedy. If the Hindu patient is

to live, then this disease has to be removed root and branch. I wish that the young Maharaja and his advisers may take courage into their hands and apply the only remedy that can undo this mischief. The remedy is incredibly simple. They have simply to say that there will be no State recognition in any shape or form of untouchability, unapproachability or invisibility. As an ex-lawyer who still has some memory of legal lore, I make bold to say that such a legislation or such a proclamation will not amount to any interference with any single individual's religious belief or practice. It is the bounden duty of a State which has subjects entertaining different faiths to take an impartial and detached view in matters of religion. By identifying itself with practices prevalent among a section of its subjects and by giving legal protection to those practices, the State interferes with the progress of reform and interferes with the free play of people's conscience. All that the State has got to do is to say to its subject: "The State has nothing to do with your religious beliefs and practices. We will interfere when you, in prosecuting your religious practices, will interfere with common law rights or with the peace of the State." But the existing State recognition of untouchability makes it a current coin.

I feel that an extremely heavy responsibility rests upon Hindu princes when, as I feel, the very Hindu religion runs the risk of being utterly destroyed if this virus of untouchability is not expelled from the Hindu body. Those who feel as deeply as I do about this matter cannot possibly rest until the so-called Harijans are clothed with precisely the same rights as non-Harijan Hindus possess today.

#### **INDIVIDUAL'S DUTY**

Now one or two words only with reference to the individual duty of everyone in this audience, man or woman. This is a movement essentially of self-purification, of *savarna* Hindus frankly acknowledging the debt that they owe to Harijans, and rendering full reparation to them. This can only be brought about by a complete change of heart on our part. As I have already described to you, the State aid can only be of a negative character. The State cannot possibly change the individual heart. This can only be made by prayer to Almighty. It is not possible for a single human being to change the heart of a fellow being. I know that I cannot do it. I can only make an appeal to your reason and to your heart. But it is God alone who can arm the word that I speak to you with the power to shoot like an arrow and make a lodgment in your heart. If you can believe the word of a man who is perpetually seeking after truth, believe me that throughout all my waking hours, and if I can say so, during my sleep also, my one constant prayer to God is that He may give that power to my words, so that the Hindu heart can be touched and it may be purged of the virus of untouchability and Hindus and Hinduism may be saved from this impending doom.

Please remember that your duty and my duty does not end with merely recognizing the Harijans as blood-brothers and blood-sisters. That is the beginning of the end. The end is that we should rid ourselves of every form of untouchability that is eating into the vitals of Hindu society. As an address reminded me only this morning, it was not enough to treat Pulayas, Nayadis and others as blood-brothers; for untouchability existed among *savarna* Hindus themselves, caste against caste. It is true that the poison has corrupted the whole of our society. What, therefore, you and I



have to do is to forget that there is anybody high or low on this earth. That, being the children of the same Creator, the same God, no matter to what faith we may belong, no matter what hue we may have, we are all equal in the eyes of our Maker....

#### **AN INSIGNIFICANT PURSE**

Now you will understand why I consider insignificant the purse you have been good enough to give me, considering that Trivandrum is the capital of a great State of India. Do you know that both Bangalore and Calicut have given no less than six to seven thousand rupees to the Harijan purse? If you were to tell me that poverty had hit Travancore harder than Calicut or Bangalore, I must refuse to believe it. Bangalore at least is not a land flowing with milk and honey as Travancore is. As somebody was saying, no man need die of positive hunger in Kerala. You have got the richest milk that mother coconut can yield, and you can have all the sweetness you desire from the banana, which is very cheap here. When I was travelling through the South in 1915, I lived four days together on bananas and coconuts; and as an expert diet reformer, I can tell you that you can well hold body and soul together for many days, indeed many years, on bananas and coconuts. So if you were to advance the plea of poverty as against Harijans, you would be absolutely out of court. While, therefore, I am in Trivandrum, I expect all of you, who are here and who have listened to me, to make up for this very serious defect in your purse. Sisters can copy little Kaumudi, who lives not very many miles from you, and discard all the jewellery that they wear. And you, the citizens of Travancore, can put your heads together and decide that your purse should be the richest, because you represent the blackest

spot, and you can undertake to make up for the defect I have shown to you.

### **SERIOUSNESS OF THE MISSION**

But you will permit me to point out another serious defect. Since I have been travelling in Travancore, I have discovered that the people have paid like misers, but the organizers have spent money like spendthrifts. Therefore, as it has astounded me, it will astound you, to learn that the feeding charges of my party, which certainly descends like locusts on a field, and such other expenses which should never be deducted from purses given for the Harijan cause, have been deducted. You will be astonished to know that in many cases more than 50 per cent have been spent. What would God tell me when I say to Him that in the name of Harijans so many thousand rupees were collected and 50 per cent were deducted for feeding and entertaining me? I know that, if I did not protest against such expenses, my claim to represent the Harijans would be summarily dismissed by divinity. The fact of the matter is that you have not treated this Harijan question as seriously as it should have been treated. It is a deeply religious question. It affects the well-being of the poorest in the land. It affects the well-being of those who are despised by society.

I wish you and I and everyone of us would hang down our heads in shame, if we were guilty of misusing or using improperly a single pie collected on behalf of the Harijans. I assure you that I do not want a single convenience which cannot be cheaply supplied. One little flickering light will suffice for my purpose. I want no flags or buntings for me and my party. If you gave me the open sky and the velvety sand of Travancore to lie

upon, I should never utter a single word of reproach. But I will reproach everyone connected with this cause who misspends a single pie when it might have been saved for the Harijan cause. I want you all to understand the seriousness of this mission. I want you then to be stir yourselves, put your shoulders to the wheel and make a Herculean effort, whilst there is yet time, to save ourselves and the ancient faith from the impending doom. I do not wish to convey the meaning that only the committees in Travancore have been guilty of useless expenditure. God alone knows how many other committees have been guilty of this. But this I can tell you that, ever since this tour began, I have been cross questioning every committee, and I have called for accounts of receipts and expenditure from every committee and am awaiting accounts from them. There is no reflection here on the honesty of a single person. But those of you, who are studying law or who are lawyers, will at once understand when I say that neglect or carelessness on the part of a trustee, which every one connected with this movement is, amounts to a crime. A trustee is expected to give greater attention and care to the protection of his ward than he would bestow on his own protection.

*Harijan, 2-2-1934, p. 9*

## 19. NO SACRIFICE TOO GREAT

(Gandhiji delivered the following speech before the public meeting at Calicut on the 14th inst.)

As I have said from many a platform after entering Malabar, if there was a map of untouchability made for the whole of India, Malabar would be marked as the blackest spot in all the land; and as matters stand today, I suppose you will admit that you will have to plead guilty to the charge. Then if you are convinced of the sin of Malabar, as confessedly you are convinced by the very fact of your giving me this purse, you will admit that Malabar has to make the greatest reparation in order to rid itself of the greatest sin. It does not matter, and it ought not to matter, the least little bit that some of you who are moneyed men do not originally come from Malabar. Those who make their livelihood or their fortunes in Malabar should realize that every pie they get is tainted with this sin. Therefore, in the matter of separation and repentance, they stand exactly on the same footing as the original Malayalees.

This morning they took me to a most beautiful bit of Malabar, they took me up the hills with most romantic scenery. There I was taken to a village called Kal- patta, and I recalled a hymn—I think it was composed by Bishop Heber. But whether it was composed by him or some other Bishop, this is the line that I single out from that hymn for your edification. It is said that, as he was approaching this Western coast of India, involuntarily this line came to his lips or to his pen: "Every prospect pleases and only man is vile." I have no doubt he had this black spot of untouchability in his mind when he wrote this line. The orthodox

interpretation of this line is wholly different from the one that I put upon it. But poets can never be confined even in cages of their own construction. Poets write for eternity. Their words are charged with a meaning of which they have no conception when they utter or write them. Scented breezes come from plantations that Nature has designed for man in Malabar. But through untouchability he has violated Nature and thus become vile. We have endeavoured to disfigure God's mightiest creation, namely, man. The soul of man presents a beauty never to be surpassed by any ravishing beauty of vegetation. But the so-called *savarna* Hindus or the so-called high class Hindus arrogated to themselves the right of suppressing a portion of Hindu humanity. They endeavoured, however, vainly as we shall presently see in a few years, perhaps. But man has left no stone unturned to suppress, in the name of divinity itself, the soul of man by putting thousands outside the pale of society.

I will tell you what I saw today in Kalpatta in the midst of the ravishing beauty of vegetation. I saw wild specimens of humanity, with a stinking odour. Please do not say hastily that that is why they are untouchables. I want you to think with me a little more deeply than possibly you are prepared to do and realize with me that for this indescribably painful scene you and I are responsible. These very men, in an hour's time if you desire, can be transformed into beings cleanly and outwardly as respectable as you and I may be. A little hot water, or soap, a little white khaddar, and you will immediately find that they are just as presentable as you and I are. Internally, God alone can be the judge between them and us. It is quite possible, in fact, in my opinion it is quite certain, that we are much more sinful or much viler than they can be. Our slates are

sullied with writings not particularly creditable to us. Their slates have still to be written upon. Are you now surprised that, when I saw these countrymen of ours, I involuntarily said in my mind to the poet, you were right in saying "Every prospect pleases, man alone is vile?" Now, put your hands upon your hearts and tell me whether, if you gave up all your wealth and all sisters discarded every article of jewellery of which they are possessed, it would be a sufficient reparation for the injuries that you have been partners in inflicting on these countrymen of ours? I wish to suggest to you that you will be fit servants of the Harijans when you have begun the act of reparation by discarding all your possessions for their sake. But I know that is an ideal state of things, and I know also that, if I could possibly carry you along those ideal lines, then India would again be really a land of thirty crores of Gods.

But I am labouring under no such delusion. I consider myself a practical idealist. I take from human nature what it yields and go my way. My business is to present to you the realities of the situation, to stimulate your intelligence and your imagination, to touch your hearts and then leave you to do the very best that you can possibly do for a cause so noble and so sacred as that of the Harijans.

I would like you, lastly, to realize that, if we, the so-called *savarna* Hindus, failed in this elementary duty by the Harijans during this brief period of probation, Hinduism will be a thing of the past. History teaches us that many a civilization, many a culture perished beyond redemption because of the inherent weakness of the representatives of those by-gone civilizations. Do not, therefore, run away with the belief that Hinduism will be an exception and escape the impending doom, if we,

Hindus, prove unworthy representatives of the priceless treasures that the *Rishis* have left for us.

*Harijan*, 2-2-1934, p. 15

## 20. UNTOUCHABILITY IS ARTIFICIAL

(From "Implications of Untouchability")

Q.: Is untouchability natural or artificial? Does it not depend upon the moral and intellectual development, mode of life, etc., of the people composing the society? Can you give a picture of a society where untouchability is completely removed?

A.: In my opinion, untouchability is a wholly artificial product. It has no connection with moral or intellectual development of people, for the simple reason that in Hindu society there are to be seen men described as untouchables who are in every way equal in moral and intellectual development to the highest among caste Hindus and yet who are treated as untouchables. My picture of a society free from untouchability is one in which no one will consider himself superior to another. It is obvious that in a society so composed there will be no unseemly rivalry or quarrelling.

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

## 21. NO SIN MORE HEINOUS THAN UNTOUCHABILITY

(From a speech by Gandhiji in Bombay)

I am certain that we shall be blotted out of the Book of Life, if we do not completely destroy untouchability while still there is time. I do not know of a sin more heinous than that in the whole catalogue of sins, for it is practised in the name of religion. It is one thing to fall because we are weak; it is another thing altogether to fall and to imagine at the same time that we are rising

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

## 22. FAMILIARITY

Familiarity is man's greatest enemy. It blinds him to the beauty of all the good round him as well as to the ugliness of all the evils. It makes him take everything to which he is used so much as a matter of routine that nothing short of a cataclysm is able to shake him out of his apathy. How few of us, for instance, look up and admire the magnificent panorama of the Sun, the Moon and the Stars in the sky and of their regular march on their appointed courses! How few among us, again, are prepared to give battle to the common evils of every day life that grind millions of our fellow beings into utter misery! These have been so much a part of our environment ever since we drew breath that we do not even notice their existence. Our quiescence in the presence of evil and sin may, therefore, be' due, not more to the innate baseness in man than to too much familiarity with them and their various manifestations in life.



The practice of untouchability is a case in point. It is so essentially inhuman that, if it were not for our familiarity with its various forms, the greatest indignation and horror would be evoked in us against it. But we are so used to the many and subtle forms of the evil that we see nothing cruel in them and that a section of our people are even prepared to defend the evil as Heaven born! And every one is ready to denounce all forms of the evil except that with which he is most familiar!

It would appear, therefore, that, next to the egoism of man and his consequent desire to suppress and exploit weaker brethren, it is familiarity with the custom that blinds the eyes of its protagonists to its real nature. Between these two forces, man finds himself almost helpless and comes in course of time to hug the chain that fetters him. The situation is, indeed, difficult, as in trying to give up the practice of untouchability, man finds himself attacked at his weakest point and deserves some sympathy. But this is no reason for despair, or for turning away from the still, small, voice which ever whispers that men are all equally children of God. It only calls for a greater searching of the heart, for the placing of ourselves always in the other man's position, for the exercise of the greatest vigilance against self-deception and for the constant practice of universal benevolence. Sincere, unremitting endeavours in these directions will sooner or later be crowned with God's Grace, and Man shall fulfil his high destiny, seeing Truth face to face.

*Harijan, 27-7-1934, p. 188*

## 23. UNTOUCHABILITY—A BIG FALSEHOOD

(From "God or No God")

Untouchability is a big falsehood. We have proved it for ourselves, or we should not be devotees of the cause. We can transmit the truth to others only by diligence and due observance of the conditions of success which have been often enough set forth in these columns.

*Harijan*, 21-9-1934, p. 252

## 24. UNTOUCHABILITY BASED ON CENSUS REPORTS

(Originally appeared under the title "My Supposed Inconsistency".)

The Editor has sent the following received by him for answer:

In the *Harijan* of the 9th March Gandhiji is reported to have said that "there was no warrant in the shastras for untouchability". One of the most prominent Pandits who supports Mahatmaji's movement is Mahamahopadhyaya Pramath Nath Tarkabhushan of Benares Hindu University. He has published the letter which he wrote to Gandhiji last year, quoting scriptures in support of Gandhiji. The Pandit wrote that, although there are texts in support of untouchability, there are other texts, which stated that an untouchable could be made pure by *deeksha* (initiation) and devotion to God. Thus, according to the Pandit, those *chandalas* who were not initiated nor devoted to God were untouchables, according to the shastras. Gandhiji's opinion that there is no sanction for untouchability is, therefore, not supported by this Pandit.

Will you kindly state which Pandits have told Gandhiji that there is no sanction for untouchability in the shastras?

Gandhiji himself wrote before that *sanatanists* had supplied him with many texts from the shastras in support of untouchability but that he did not accept the authority of such passages as they were against the fundamental principles of morality.

Gandhiji's present statement that there is no sanction for untouchability in the shastras does not seem to accord with his previous statement, which was that there is such sanction but he did not accept the authority of such passages because they were immoral.

Will you kindly explain the appatent inconsistency, through the columns of the *Harijan*?

I make no hobgoblin of consistency. If I am true to myself from moment to moment, I do not mind all the inconsistencies that may be flung in my face. But in the letter quoted, there is no inconsistency. If I reject certain texts in the shastras as interpolations or inconsistent with the fundamental principles they lay down or with universal morality, surely, I am entitled to say that there is no warrant in the shastras for the practice or belief that the objectionable texts prescribe. I have quoted the opinion of not one but several learned men in support of the contention that shastras do not enjoin untouchability as it is practised today. Of course, there is untouchability in the shastras, but it is all curable in accordance with the simple methods prescribed by them. We all become untouchables everyday when we attend to natural functions, and our untouchability is cured by simple ablutions. Indeed, even wicked thoughts make us untouchables, but we are cured by resisting them and purifying ourselves by taking the name of God as Rama or Vasudev or Narayan or Shiva and invoking His never failing protection. Even so is a Harijan, whose occupation may render him untouchable, cured by prescribed purification. And certain *sanatanists* claim that there is an incurable

untouchability which is handed down from father to son for generations and which will live to the end of time. And what is the saddest of all is that the *sanatanists* claim that such untouchables are to be counted by the millions. Their warrant for the belief in the existence of several million untouchables is not a shastra but census reports, which change from time to time and which are prepared by a host of enumerators who have no knowledge of the Hindu shastras and, in numerous cases, are not themselves Hindus. It is thus superstitious belief against which every lover of Hinduism should rise in rebellion.

*Harijan*, 9-11-1934, p. 308

## 25. EXTENSION OF UNTOUCHABILITY

(From "What Is It?")

To me, the campaign against untouchability has begun to imply ever so much more than the eradication of the ceremonial untouchability of those who are labelled untouchables. For the city dweller, the villages have become untouchable. He does not know them, he will not live in them, and if he finds himself in a village, he will want to reproduce the city life there. This would be tolerable, if we could bring into being cities which could accommodate 30 crores of human beings.

*Harijan*, 30-11-1934, p. 332

## 26. A MONSTROUS IMPOSITION

(From "Notes")

In a note in *Harijanbandhu*, recently I reproduced a note from a correspondent saying that there were moneylenders in and around Sidhpur in the Gaekwad territories who lent money at exorbitant rates of interest and exacted security for due payment of capital and interest. The money-lenders, among other things, had a lien on the young girls of the borrowers. The result of this shameful imposition has been that sometimes parents have been obliged to part with their girls when they have not been able to pay interest ranging from 100 per cent upwards. I understand that some workers have brought this thing to the notice of the District Officers of Sidhpur, but nothing seems to have been visibly done in the matter. If the facts are as stated by my correspondent—and there seems to be no cause to disbelieve him—the matter demands immediate redress.

*Harijan*, 11-9-1937, p. 250

## 27. LEST WE FORGET

A Harijan Sevak reminds me that nowadays Harijans, for whom this weekly was started, have receded into the background and its columns are devoted to all sorts of subjects. He is half right. I have begun to discuss questions which have been hitherto deliberately excluded. The reason for exclusion no longer exists. The contrary is the case now. In the greater part of India the Congress is both in office and power. It is true that the power is limited. But it is limited in terms of complete Independence, not otherwise. India is one vast prison with high walls of suppression choking her mind and body. But its Superintendent has seen fit to give a large part of the prisoners the power to appoint from among themselves the governing officials with full powers of administration, at any rate enough for growing strong, so long as they recognize that they are still prisoners. Well, they have chosen to take advantage of this freedom in the hope that by never requiring the assistance of his admitted physical superiority they will convince the Superintendent that he is no longer wanted.

Anyway, that being my interpretation of the Government of India Act and office acceptance, I must strive to show to the co-workers, who have become Ministres, how in my opinion they can achieve the end. And if I succeed in so doing, the battle against untouchability is almost won.

But I need hardly say that removal of untouchability from the Hindu heart is, like communal unity, an indispensable condition of success through the non-violent action that is implicit in office acceptance. Therefore

Harijan Sevaks have to redouble their efforts to touch the caste Hindu heart as well as the Harijan heart. We must constantly remind Hindu orthodoxy of the solemn oath taken at the All-India Meeting held in Bombay on the 25th September 1932 under the presidentship of Madan Mohan Malaviya. Here is the oath:

This Conference resolves that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth, and that those who have been so regarded hitherto shall have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and all other public institutions. This right shall have statutory recognition at the first opportunity, and shall be one of the earliest acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before that time.

It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples.

*Harijan, 2-10-1937, p. 277*

## 2. THE BOND THAT BINDS

### 28. I AND THE SUPPRESSED CLASSES

(Originally appealed under the title "Mr. Gandhi and the Suppressed Classes".)

Mr. Gandhi presided at the Suppressed Classes Conference held in Ahmedabad on the 13th and 14th instant. There was a large attendance of ladies and gentlemen from the town, though the number of the untouchables was much less than expected, a rumour having spread in the town that Government would arrest those of them who attended.

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

Coming to the subject he said: I do not know how I am to convince those who oppose the reform, of the wrong position they have taken. How am I to plead with those who regard any contact with the members of the suppressed community as entailing defilement and of which they cannot



be cleansed without necessary ablutions and who thus regard omission to perform the ablutions a sin? I can only place before them my innermost convictions.

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

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

While at school I would often happen to touch the "untouchables", and as I never would conceal the fact from my parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification after the unholy touch was to cancel the touch by touching any Musalman passing by. And simply out of reverence and regard for my mother I often did so, but never did so

believing it to be a religious obligation. After some time we shifted to Porbandar, where I made my first acquaintance with Sanskrit. I was not yet put to an English school, and my brother and I were placed in charge of a Brahman, who taught us *Ram Raksha* and *Vishnu Punjar*. The texts "*Jale Vishnuh" sthale Vishnuh*" (there is the Lord (present) in water, there is the Lord (present) in earth) have never gone out of my memory. A motherly old dame used to live close by. Now it happened that I was very timid then, and would conjure up ghosts and goblins whenever the lights went out, and it was dark. The old mother, to disabuse me of fears, suggested that I should mutter the *Ramaraksha* texts whenever I was afraid, and all evil spirits would fly away. This I did and, as I thought, with good effect. I could never believe then that there was any text in the *Ramraksha* pointing to the contact of the 'untouchables' as a sin. I did not understand its meaning then, or understood it very imperfectly. But I was confident that *Ramaraksha*, which could destroy all fear of ghosts, could not be countenancing any such thing as fear of contact with the 'untouchables'.

The *Ramayana* used to be regularly read in our family. A Brahman called Ladha Maharaj used to read it. He was stricken with leprosy, and he was confident that a regular reading of the *Ramayana* would cure him of leprosy, and, indeed, he was cured of it. "How can the *Ramayana*" I thought to myself, "in which one who is regarded nowadays as an untouchable took Rama across the Ganges in his boat, countenance the idea of any human beings being 'untouchables', on the ground that they were polluted souls?" The fact that we addressed God as the "purifier of the polluted" and by similar appellations, shows that it is a sin to regard

anyone born in Hinduism as polluted or untouchable—that it is satanic to do so. I have hence been never tired of repeating that it is a great sin. I do not pretend that this thing had crystallized as a conviction in me at the age of twelve, but I do say that I did then regard "untouchability as a sin. I narrate this story for the information of the Vaishnavas and orthodox Hindus.

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

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

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

True, Hinduism does not regard untouchability as a sin. I do not want to enter into any controversy regarding the interpretation of the shastras. It might be difficult for me to establish my point by quoting authorities from the *Bhagavat* or *Manusmriti*. But I claim to have understood the spirit of Hinduism. Hinduism has sinned in giving sanction to untouchability. It has degraded us, made us pariahs of the Empire. Even

the Musalmans caught the sinful contagion from us, and in S. Africa, in E. Africa and in Canada the Musalmans no less than Hindus came to be regarded as pariahs. All this evil has resulted from the sin of untouchability.

\* \* \*

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

Today is much more solemn than the sixth. It is hallowed by the memory of the massacre of thousands of innocents. And I prayed, therefore, also today that if I should die with any of my desires unfructified, with my service of the untouchables unfinished, with my Hinduism unfulfilled I may be born again amongst the untouchables to bring my Hinduism to its fulfilment.

I love scavenging. In my Ashram, an eighteen-year-old Brahman is doing the scavenger's work in order to teach the Ashram scavenger cleanliness. The lad is no reformer. He was born and bred in orthodoxy. He is a regular reader of the *Gita* and faithfully performs *sandhya vandana*. His pronunciation of Sanskrit verses is more faultless than mine. When he conducts the prayer his soft sweet melodies melt into

love. But he felt that his accomplishments were incomplete until he had become also a perfect sweeper, and that if he wanted the Ashram sweeper to do his work well he must do it himself and set an example.

You should realize that you are cleaning Hindu society. You have therefore to purify your lives. You should cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so that no one may point his finger at you. Use alkali ash or earth if you cannot afford to use soap, to keep yourselves clean. Some of you are given to drinking and gambling which you must get rid of. You will point your finger at the Brahmans and say even they are given to these vices. But they are not looked upon as polluted; and you are. You must not ask the Hindus to emancipate you as a matter of favour. Hindus must do so, if they want, in their own interests. You should, therefore, make them feel ashamed by your own purity and cleanliness. I believe that we shall have purified ourselves within the next five months. If my expectations are not fulfilled, I will think that although my proposition was fundamentally correct, yet I was wrong in my calculation; and I will again say that I had erred in my calculation.

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

If you want to ameliorate your condition, if you want to obtain Swaraj, you should be self-reliant. I was told in Bombay that some of you are opposed to N.C.O. and believe that salvation is only possible through the British Government. Let me tell you that you will never be able to obtain

redress by discarding Hindu religion and courting the favour of a third party. Your emancipation lies in your own hands.

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

You should now cease to accept leavings from plates however clean they may be represented to be. Receive grain only—good, sound grain, not rotten grain, and that too if it is courteously offered. If you are able to do all I have asked you to do, you will secure your emancipation, not in four or five months, but in so many days.

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

*Young India*, 27-4-1921, p. 135 and 4-5-1921, p. 143

## 29. THE INSEPARABLE PURSUIT

(From "I Cry to Conquer" being a summary of the reply of Gandhiji to an address given him by the Representative Assembly of Rajkot State.)

Whilst, then, I thank you I must register my complaint about one or two things. You have omitted all mention of them in the address, whether purposely or not I do not know. You have rightly mentioned that truth and non-violence are my guiding principles. I would indeed be a lifeless corpse without those two life principles. But I am surprised that you have studiously omitted all references to the two things, pursuits of which is inseparable from the practice of truth and non-violence. I refer to khaddar and removal of untouchability. These two things are in a manner more important than Hindu- Muslim unity, for that unity is impossible without them. So long as we have not rid Hinduism of the stain of untouchability, it is impossible to achieve real Hindu-Muslim unity.

A very thoughtful Musalman once told me that so long as there was untouchability in Hinduism it was difficult for Musalmans to entertain any regard for that faith or its followers. I have repeated times without number that an "untouchable" community is unknown to the *shastras*. The weaver and the scavenger are not classed as untouchables by *shastras*. I am both. My mother was certainly a scavenger inasmuch as she cleaned me when I was a child. But she did not, on that account, become an untouchable. Why then should a *bhangi* who renders similar necessary service, be regarded as untouchable? Even if the whole world of *shastris* were to be against me, I would proclaim from the house tops

that they are wrong in considering untouchability to be part of the Hindu religion.

*Young India*, 26-2-1925, p. 69



### 30. REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY AN INTEGRAL PART OF MY LIFE

(From "With Gandhiji in Gujarat" by M. D.)

I cannot close this without referring to the address presented to Gandhiji by the Jambusar Municipality and his reply to it. The address studiously omitted all reference to Gandhiji's efforts for the removal of untouchability, but was otherwise full of warm praise.

"I see" said Gandhiji, "that you have committed the error of omitting the untouchables. A municipality that ignores the untouchables hardly deserves the name. The fact is that you wanted to flatter yourself that you were honouring me, and you thought you could do so by referring only to a part of my activities. You can surely refer to a part of the activities provided they are divisible. But I have so often said that my effort for the removal of untouchability is an integral part of my life, and you cannot isolate it from my other activities. I would not be a true Hindu, unless I live and move and have my being in trying to rid Hinduism of this curse. Those therefore who do believe in untouchability as part of Hinduism, or who are indifferent in the matter cannot give me an address of welcome. I am no official, nor a Sirdar, that you should give me a conventional address. Not that any conventional address of welcome can be called one. But I deserve it the least. I am a *bhangi*, a scavenger, a spinner, a weaver and a labourer, and I want, if at all, to be honoured as such. We shall be the laughing stock of humanity if we hug this curse, and the religion that nurses it shall stand condemned by the world. You

should not therefore have presented to me this address. It will, however, serve as a beaconiight to me. I hope that no association will trouble to present me with a addresses if it cannot endorse my work for and among the untouchables."

*Young India*, 23-4-1925, p. 138 at p. 139

### 31. WHY DO I STAKE MY LIFE ON THIS ISSUE?

(From an address at a public meeting on the 8th instant, reported to have been attended by over 30,000 people, Gandhiji said as follows:)

I am deeply grateful to you for the manifestation of this great affection. Thanks be to God that you have assembled in such numbers to listen to my message. The chairman is right when he says that this Harijan work is essentially religious from my standpoint. That it has many other results is equally true. There never has been a single truly religious activity but has had its influence on many departments of life. That perhaps is one of the tests by which we recognize a great religious movement. I would like to say in all humility but with perfect confidence that I have taken up this movement in no spirit of antagonism to any other religion or community. It would be impossible for any person to point to a single act of mine during the past 50 years which could be proved to have been antagonistic to any person or community. I have never believed anyone to be my enemy. My faith demands that I should consider no one as such. I may not wish ill to anything that lives. It is my certain conviction that, if the Hindu heart is completely purged of the taint of untouchability, the event will have its inevitable influence not only upon all the communities in India but on the whole world. This belief is daily becoming stronger. I cannot remove from my heart untouchability regarding several millions of human beings and harbour it towards some other millions. The very act of the Hindu heart getting rid of distinctions of high and low must cure us of mutual jealousies and distrusts of and among other communities. It is for that reason that I have staked my life on this issue... If we believe that

we are all children of one and the same God and that God is Truth and Justice, how can there be untouchability amongstus, His children? God of Truth and Justice can never create distinctions of high and low among His own children. I, therefore, invite all without distinction of race and religion to assist this movement by praying for its complete success, so that we may all live in peace and friendship.

#### APPEAL TO SANATANISTS

And if I want concord amongst all the communities professing different faiths, I cannot desire discord among the so-called *sanatanists* and reformers. I can harbour no ill-will against *sanatanists*. I ask them to extend the same toleration to reformers that they would have the latter to extend towards themselves. If they tolerate the faith and practice of others, why will they not tolerate the faith and practice of the reformers? They may not help, so long as they regard untouchability as an integral part of Hinduism. I and fellow reformers firmly believe that untouchability is an evil; and if it is so and if the reformers will continue to exercise patience and gentleness, the heart of the *sanatanists* must melt. There can be no room for compulsion or violence in this great movement. I endeavour to place before the vast mass of Hindus the results of a belief derived from such prayerful study of the Hindu scriptures as has been possible for me, and from association with those who are learned in them and, what is more, from my practice based upon that belief. Surely, that cannot promote internal dissensions. I observe that many who oppose this movement have not taken the trouble to understand its implications. The object of this tour is to place the position of the reformers clearly before the public. And I am hoping that,

as the scope of the activities of the Servants of the Untouchables Society becomes known, the opposition to it will melt away. We want to change the hearts of those who today oppose the movement. We want to remove their distrust. We do not desire to compel them to act against their belief. We want to win them over to the reform by gentlest persuasion, by appealing to their reason and to their hearts. Love can never express itself by imposing sufferings on others. It can only express itself by self-suffering, by self-purification. I am convinced that, if the reformers will show in their own lives an increasing purity, self-denial, and capacity for suffering, they will be sure to melt the hearts of those who are today saturated with untouchability, believing it to be a desirable part of Hinduism. It is said that untouchables are so because of the evil in them. But are the untouchables better? Are they sinless? Indeed, defenders of untouchability claim that some people are always untouchable and that no amount of pure conduct can cure them of the taint with which they are born. They must remain social lepers for ever. The fact is that whatever weaknesses we may notice about untouchables are a reflection of our own weaknesses and sins. They are a direct result of the ill-treatment that we have heaped upon their devoted heads. Their real rise, therefore, depends upon the removing of untouchability root and branch and upon showing a growing purity in our lives. Thus the movement is dependent, not so much upon pecuniary help, as upon correct conduct. Pecuniary help is to be an earnest of our determination to rid ourselves of the evil and to achieve self purification.

*Harijan, 17-11-1933, p. 4*

## 32. THE BREATH OF MY LIFE

God's ways are inscrutable! The most unexpected event of my life has happened, I have been used to the most unexpected things in the course of a very long public life, but this is the most unexpected of all. What is now in store for me? How shall I use this life out of prison, I do not know. But I must say this that whether in prison or outside prison, Harijan service will be always after my heart and will be the breath of life for me, more precious than the daily bread. I can live for some days at least without the daily bread, but I cannot live without Harijan service for one single minute. It is a constant prayer to the Almighty that this blot of untouchability may be removed in its entirety from Hinduism and that the millions of caste Hindus may see the Sun of Truth which shines upon us, if we would only remove the scales from our eyes, as I have repeatedly said in these columns. My life is a dedication to this cause and I shall consider no penance too great for the vindication of this Truth.

*Harijan, 26-8-1933, p. 1*

### 33. MY ONLY BUSINESS

(From a speech made by Gandhiji at Palluruthi on 18-1-1934 which appeared under the title "To Harijan Sceptics".)

Lastly, let me in all humility tell you that I have not come to help those who feel their strength. I know that no word of offence which you use against the *savarna* Hindus will be too strong. I know also that, if your resentment expresses itself in acts, *savarna* Hindus will deserve those acts. But I know infinitely more than you do what Harijans are, where they live, what their number is and to what condition they have been reduced. You can speak of this place, possibly of the whole of Cochin, possibly of Cochin and Travancore, still more possibly of Malabar. But I claim to be able to speak of Harijans from the North to the South, the East and the West of India, and I know their abject position. My only business is, if it is at all possible, to lift those who are in the mire. I want to do it because I want to lift myself. With their abjectness I feel myself also abject. I know that, if Hindus were freed from the coil of untouchability, you would find that all the corroding distinctions, not between Hindus and Hindus only, but also between Hindus and non-Hindus, will disappear as if by a magic touch. I have delivered during the brief period at my disposal the whole of my message. The choice is entirely yours. You may accept this reparation or it is perfectly open to you to reject it.

If you still fail to understand me, I can only pray in the lines of a celebrated English hymn:

We shall know each other better

When the mists have rolled away.

*Hariian*, 2-2-1934, p. 6 at p. 7

### 34. WHAT VALUE THEIR WELCOME?

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Shocking if True".)

The Joint Secretary of the Gujarat Harijan Sevak Sangh, Shri Hemantkumar, writes that apart from Karadi nowhere are temples open to Harijans and nowhere may they use public wells.

If this is true, I may say it is a good thing that I have been unable to go to Bardoli. How can those Gujaratis who do not look upon Harijans as part and parcel of themselves, who do not permit them to draw water from public wells nor enter temples for the worship of God, who even attribute epidemics to Harijans and are prepared to beat them for practices which superstition attributes to them, how can they welcome me ? Or what value can their welcome hold for me?

I have long since counted myself as a *bhangī* in my speech, in my actions and above all in mind and spirit. Anyone who looks upon them with contempt does the same to me. Indeed I hold it an honour to be among the despised Harijans and among them *bhangīs*. Any welcome to me under the circumstances would be tantamount to an insult.

Therefore, I make this request to Gujaratis that they atone for the grievous wrong they continue to do to fellow human beings. I shall consider their repentance adequate when they admit Harijans into their fold and only then will I consider them capable of maintaining Swaraj.



I do hope that the people of Bardoli Taluka will understand and respond to my message in a special manner.

Bombay, 11-3-1946

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

*Harijan*, 24-3-1946, p. 49

### 35. WHY BHANGI QUARTERS?

Friends are puzzled over my keen desire to reside in *bhangi* quarters in the cities or towns I may visit. To ask why I have not entertained that desire all these years would be more pertinent. To answer why I did not have the desire long ago must be reserved for a future occasion. Just now I must answer why the desire has come upon me at all.

I have for some time been saying that we must all be *bhangis* or untouchables. But it has worried me that I have not accorded the statement with corresponding action. It may not be possible to establish complete accordance with the wish. But it ought to be done so far as possible. Whilst this thought was agitating me, I got the news which I have already shared with the readers that in Gujarat only one well and one temple is shared with Harijans and this in Karadi. Whether the news is true or not is immaterial here. The material thing is the reaction produced on my mind by the news. To be angry was madness. The news quickened the desire for residence in untouchable quarters. I said to myself: "If I lived apart from Harijans, what right had I to question the action of others who went further in their adherence to untouchability? But whether the others changed their mode or not was not for me to

judge. If it was duty to reside in Harijan quarters I must perform it irrespective of the reaction of the step on the others." This is the thought which is possessing me and goading me to the adumbrated action.

Consequently I have asked Sheth R. D. Birla to arrange, if at all possible, for my residence in untouchable quarters when I happen to be in Bombay. I have also wired to Sheth G. D. Birla to arrange likewise for Delhi and

Shri Brijkishen Chandiwalla has already asked for my approval of some arrangement he has made. It goes without saying that I must not impose myself on Harijans anywhere. I must not wound their feelings, if they will not tolerate my presence in their midst. But I fear no such thing.

*Harijan*, 31-3-1946, p. 57

### **36. I WILL NEVER FORGET THE HARIJANS**

(From "Gandhiji's Bihar Tour Diary")

Lastly, Gandhiji referred to a letter he had received from the Harijans asking him to visit their quarters and to live with them. He would have loved to do both the things; but he had to restrict himself to the mission that had brought him to Bihar. But having made himself a *bhangi* in thought and deed, he could never forget the Harijans. He was sorry to say that the latter were still suffering from any disabilities at all and that they did not get really redress of their grievances.

*Harijan*, 30-3-1947, p. 84, at p. 87

### 37. NO POLITICAL OBJECT

(From a speech delivered at Amravati on 16-11-1933, which appeared under the title "Religious obligations".)

I would ask you to believe me when I say that there is no political motive behind my Harijan work. The political consequences of the removal of untouchability have no attraction for me. Indeed I believe that, if we approached this question with a political motive, we should fail to serve the Harijans and we should damage Hinduism. That real removal of untouchability will have political consequences is true enough. A duty religiously performed carries with it many other important consequences. "Seek Ye first the Kingdom of God and everything else will be added unto you", is to my mind a scientific truth.

*Harijan*, 1-12-1933, p. 4

### 38. THE ONLY MOTIVE

(From "An Adi-Dravida's Difficulties")

Q.: Are you really interested in the welfare of Harijans or are you actuated by any ulterior motive so as to show an increase in the population of the Hindus?

A.: The correspondent claims to be an Adi-Dravida and, therefore, he has every right to suspect my motive. The best answer, therefore, I can return to his first question is that he should await my death for forming a final judgment. Meanwhile, if he is prepared to accept my word, I would assure him that I set no value upon an increase in the number of Hindus so-called. False professors of a creed not only do no service to it but may kill it. The only motive, therefore, that guides me in working for the Harijan cause is to see Hinduism purified of the curse of untouchability. And if, in so becoming, it is represented only by one Hindu, I would have no repentance but real joy that it was not dead.

*Harijan*, 6-4-1934, p. 60

### 39. WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN US, MAHATMAJEE?

(From "A Harijan's Questions Answered")

A Harijan sends the following questions for me to answer:

1. Mahatmajee, why are you so much interested in our cause?
2. In what way will our people be benefited, if untouchability is removed?
3. Arya and un-Arya are the divisions created for us. What harm is there if we remain separated?
4. Even in untouchables there are many sub-castes. What do you propose to do with this problem?

\* \* \*

1. I am interested in the Harijan cause for the sake of purifying myself of the taint of untouchability and doing penance for the sin; and, being jealous of the reputation of the faith I profess, I am anxious that fellow members of the faith should also purge themselves of the same.
2. In many ways, I enumerate some below:
  - I. Caste Hindus will be purified by their repentance.
  - II. The economic, moral, social and political status of Harijans will be improved at a bound by the removal of an artificial barrier which has been stunting their growth all along.
  - III. Untouchability that is imposed on untouchables is such a poison that it has overtaken those living within its zone. And, therefore,

Hindus, Christians, Musalmans and others have become untouchables to one another. Real removal of untouchability must bring us all together and thus promote a heart unity of the different communities of India.

- IV. Removal of untouchability with all its implications must mean a great contribution to the promotion of universal brotherhood.
3. He would be a bold man who is able to say today with any degree of success who is Arya and who is un-Arya. Historians tell us that a blending of the two took place centuries ago. If now a sharp division is attempted, it will harm not only Hindus, both caste and out-caste, but it will harm the whole of India and, by implication, the whole of humanity.
4. When untouchability practised by caste Hindus is radically removed, its offshoot among untouchables will automatically wither.

*Harijan, 20-4-1934, p. 76*

## 40. ACCOUNTS OF COLLECTIONS FOR HARIJANS

(Originally appeared under the title "Harijan Finance".)

Correspondents sometimes ask why the public do not know what moneys are being received during the tour and how they are being spent. Those who thus ask or write in the columns of the press evidently do not care to look at the *Harijan*. Accounts have been and are being published from time to time in these columns giving as full details as possible of the receipts. The reader will find therein all the purses, individual donations and prices realized for jewellery. Three account-keepers travel with the party and work day and night under the direct control of Thakkar Bapa, the ever vigilant Secretary of the Central Board. More often than not, they have to burn midnight oil in order to cope with thousands of copper and silver pieces and to tally cash from day to day. These moneys are all sent to the Central Board at Delhi and there safely banked. Of course, an accurate system of account-keeping has been devised at Delhi and every pice received or spent is to be found in the account books. Accounts are audited and produced before the Board meetings from time to time. All the transactions of the Board are public and duly recorded. In other words the Board follows the accurate methods of banks and regards itself as a public institution responsible to the public regarding its financial and other management.

The public will be interested to know that up to 2nd March Rs. 3,52,130-9-7 had been received during the year.

As to expenses, they will be largely regulated by the provinces which have produced the moneys, subject to sanction by the Central Board.

The draft rules for the disposal of the funds were published the week before last and criticism has been invited. More than this it is humanly impossible, and even unnecessary, to do.

*Harijan*, 16-3-1934, p. 36

## 41. HARIJAN COLLECTIONS

(From "Notes")

If the collections I make at railway stations and at evening prayer when I am out of Sevagram are any index to the progress of the removal of untouchability it must be very substantial, for I notice that the response is more liberal than before. Hardly a bystander at stations or a visitor to the prayer meeting refrains from giving his mite. Much need not be made of the response. But there can be no doubt that if the cause did not make any appeal, the responses would be meagre, if any. Whereas it was hearty and willing. It gave me great joy as I studied the smiling faces of those who gave. The Bombay collection for the seven meetings was Rs. 4,000. Each day's collection showed a substantial rise on the previous day. Thus the first day's collection was Rs. 205-5-6 and the last Rs. 1342-10-9.

On the way to Wardha, 18-5-1942

*Harijan*, 24-5-1942, p. 161



### 3. WHY "HARIJAN"?

#### 42. WHY "HARIJAN"?

I

Several correspondents have asked me why I have adopted the name "Harijan" for "untouchable". Some English friends have asked me for its meaning. It is not a name of my coining. Some years ago, several untouchable correspondents complained that I used the word *asprishya* in the pages of *Navajivan*. *Asprishya* means literally untouchable. I then invited them to suggest a better name, and one of the untouchable correspondents suggested the adoption of the name "Harijan", on the strength of its having been used by the first known poet saint of Gujarat. Though the quotation he sent me did not exactly fit the case he wanted to make out for the adoption, I thought that it was a good word. Harijan means "a man of God". All the religions of the world describe God pre-eminently as the Friend of the friendless, Help of the the helpless and Protector of the weak. The rest of the world apart, in India who can be more friendless, helpless or weaker than the forty million or more Hindus of India who are classified as untouchables? If, therefore, anybody of people can be fitly described as men of God, they are surely these helpless, friendless and despised people. Hence, in the pages of *Navajivan*, since the correspondence, I have always adopted "Harijan" as the name signifying untouchables. And, when God chose to entrust me with their service even whilst undergoing imprisonment, I could not use any other word for describing them. I recoil with horror from that word and all it implies. Not that the change of name brings about any change

of status, but one may at least be spared the use of a term which is itself one of reproach. When caste Hindus have of their own inner conviction and, therefore, voluntarily, got rid of the present-day untouchability, we shall all be called Harijans, for according to my humble opinion, caste Hindus will then have found favour with God and may, therefore, be fitly described as His men.

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

## II

(From "Weekly Letter—No. 13" by C. S.)

**Q.:** You gave us the name Harijan. We feel, therefore, as if we are a separate community to be known by a separate name. Are you not wounding our susceptibilities by giving us this name?

**A.:** I may be wounding the susceptibilities of half a dozen, but not of others. No other name has been received all round with so much approbation as this has. You should remember that it is not of my coining. So long as they have to be separately designated, some name is necessary. Then why not one that is inoffensive? I have so many rationalist friends. One of them complimented me and said, "You speak like a rationalist!" I said, "What else did you think me to be?" You are rationalists in name; I am a rationalist in spirit. But I tell you this much: let us agree to differ in the matter of temple entry, and let us agree to work together where we do not differ.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1934, p. 1 at p. 3

### 43. A RIGHT STEP

(From "Notes")

The C. P. Government deserves congratulations for announcing that henceforth the so-called depressed classes are to be known as Harijans, and criminal tribes as wandering tribes. Both the names "depressed classes" and "criminal tribes" were certainly offensive. And let us hope that the other Governments will copy the good example set by the G. P. Government.

*Harijan*, 15-6-1934, p. 139

### 44. WHY NOT "HARIJAN"?

To

The Editor,

The *Harijan*,

Sir,

I was rather pained to find that the keen intellect of Mr. M. D. missed the real point involved in the representation made by "some friends who met Gandhiji claiming to be representatives of the Harijans or rather "depressed classes" as they preferred to call them" (See *Harijan* of August 10th, 1934, page 206, col. 2). The "bad odour" attaching to the term depressed classes is a surety of its ultimate extinction and complete disappearance along with the development of consciousness amongst these classes leading to the unification and consequent solidification of the general Hindu community at large, which, we all know, is the aim of Gandhiji in his great and unique endeavour. But the sweetness of the term "Harijan" is likely to perpetuate the gulf between them and the *savarna* Hindus, which is surely not desired by Gandhiji.

This point should have been noticed by Mr. M. D. whose use of the adjective "curious" appears to be remarkable and at the same time regrettable, coming as it does from one of the closest associates of the Mahatma.

I myself feel interested in the matter as one belonging to this great class, but feel indifferent to the appellation that others may choose to give, excepting, of course, the result it is likely to have on the future position of the great community in the large Hindu fold. Will you kindly show this to Mr. M.D.?

*I am, etc.,*

H. K. MULLICK

[M. D. has passed the foregoing to me. I know Sjt. Mullick, as I had the pleasure of meeting him in Calcutta during the recent visit. I can share his nervousness and his preference for an odious appellation so long as the stigma of untouchability persists. But I invite Sjt. Mullick to enter into the feeling of reformers who have no untouchability in them and who, therefore, have a horror of using an odious name for those whom they love and are eager to serve to the best of their ability. And to this the fact that tens of thousands of untouchables do not like the word *achhut*, *asprishya*, and the like and that they do like the word "Harijan". The aim of us all is the same total extinction of untouchability. When that happy day arrives, either the word Harijan will disappear or we shall all be proud to be called Harijans devotees of God deserving to be so described, having been free of the virus of high and low. M.K.G.]

*Harijan*, 14-9-1934, p. 242

## 45. WHAT IS IN A NAME?

Q: From the psychological point of view, I think, the name "Harijan" instils into the minds of the people to whom it is applied a feeling of inferiority, however sacred that name may be. This feeling is very difficult to wipe out from them to whatever extent they are advanced if they are always called "Harijan". Similarly, if a man in the street is asked about a "Harijan" the first thing he will speak of is "untouchability and the depressed class". Would it not be possible to save the "Harijan" from involuntarily acquiring such an inferiority feeling and other people from thinking about them without the "qualification" usually ascribed to them? Would it not be preferable to choose a name which could also bring in its fold people from other sects?

A.: This subject was years ago dealt with in the pages of *Young India*. The name "Harijan" has sacred associations. It was suggested by a Harijan as a substitute for *asprishya* (untouchable), *dalita* (depressed), or for the different categories of untouchables such as *bhangis*, *mehtars*, *chamars*, *pariahs*, etc. The Government officers put them in a schedule and therefore called them the Scheduled Classes, thus making confusion worse confounded. Those who were not untouchables were classed among the scheduled and the ones who could be so-called were excluded. We have now arrived at a stage, thanks to the Government policy, when to be included among the Scheduled Classes is to be coveted. The Government have created a separate electorate agitating for seats in all elective institutions. I do not mind such ambition, if it carries honest merit with it. But it becomes positively mischievous, when seats are coveted irrespective of merit. The wish to be so educated as to be

qualified for the highest post is to be appreciated and encouraged, the wish to be appointed to such a post on the basis of belonging to a caste or a class is essentially to be deprecated and discouraged.

The real remedy has been suggested by me. The feeling of inferiority must go. It is going, but too slowly. The process can be accelerated, if every Hindu would deliberately shed his superiority and in practice becomes a Harijan or, if you like, a *mehtar*, the lowest class among Harijans. Then we will all become true children of God as the word "Harijan" means. Until this is done, no matter which word signifies untouchables it will smell of inferiority. The process has to be carried out thoroughly in every walk of life till the last trace of untouchability is removed. When that happy day arrives, every quarter will be a Harijan quarter and cleanliness of the heart and home will be the order of the day.

New Delhi, 5-4-1946

*Harijan*, 14-4-1946, p. 77

## 46. WHY NOT CALL US HINDUS?

(Part of a dialogue between Gandhiji and a number of Harijan Sevak of Delhi which appeared in "Weekly Letter" by M.D. is given below.)

Q.: But why should we be called Harijans and not Hindus?

A.: I know that a small section of you resents the name but you may know the genesis of the name. You used to be called "depressed classes or *asprishyas* or *achhuts* (untouchables)". All these names the vast mass of you naturally resented. Some of you sent their protests to me and asked me to find out a better name. In English I had adopted a better word than "depressed" viz., "suppressed", but whilst I was casting about for a good Indian word a friend suggested the word "Harijan" taken from the song of one of the best of our saints. It appealed to me because it best described your condition and still had no bad odour about it. It means a devotee of God, and as GOG is the Help of the helpless, and as it is the helpless who naturally turn to God, I thought you deserved the name better than I for instance. For whilst I have to aspire to become a Harijan you are Harijans in the very nature of things. But you will say, "when your objective is to make Harijans Hindus why don't you start by calling them Hindus straight away?" What am I to do until I have not succeeded in abolishing untouchability?

*Harijan*, 4-4-1936, p. 57 at p. 58

## II

(Originally appeared under the title "Unfortunate but Indispensable".)

The Secretary of the local Harijan Sevak Sangh of Jamshedpur applied to a lady among others for a subscription and he received the following reply:

It is some time since your letter of 5th February appealing for funds was received by me.

I appreciate the good work your Association is doing at Jamshedpur, but on principle, I cannot bring myself to send any subscription to any Association that calls itself "Harijan" just because of the interpretation put upon that word in this country.

I am convinced that as long as any member of a society is classified by a name that savours of inferiority, that section of society will never be raised. I would abolish from our vocabulary the words "Harijan", "Depressed Classes", and all such other appellations of the same meaning, which are used to distinguish people who should never be separately described from their fellow beings.

The objection raised by the lady is not new. The adoption of the name "Harijan" was not a matter of choice, it was one of compulsion. So long as the suppressed classes exist, it will be necessary to have some designation for them. Thus Indians in South Africa were popularly distinguished from the rest as "coolies" or "sammies". This was resented by them. Protests were made with more or less effect not against a distinguishing name but against a name which in itself carried reproach and signified inferiority. So ultimately they came to be classified as Indians as they should have been from the beginning. Even thus were untouchables called by various names denoting reproach and inferiority. The Government officers have devised names such as "depressed", "backward". Now they are known as "scheduled classes". For



the reformers, the name "Harijan" was suggested by someone who belonged to the suppressed classes. And that name has been adopted by the Harijan Sevak Sangh, being in its meaning absolutely free from reproach and even fitting in the sense that the despised of man are the dear ones of God, which is what "Harijan" means. What, therefore, is possible and is being done is to remove the last trace of inferiority, but it is not possible to do away with a special name for those whose inferiority is abolished even from the hearts of caste Hindus, so long as the necessity for knowing the liberated ones from the rest exists. I hope, therefore, that the objecting lady will recognize the inevitability of a separate designation for the suppressed class, but appreciate the fact that the word chosen by the Sangh has absolutely no reproach about it, and therefore give her subscription and become an active helper in a cause than which none can be found worthier.

*Harijan*, 26-6-1937, p. 153

## 47. THE STRAIGHTEST AND QUICKEST METHOD

(Originally appeared under the title "Why not simple Hindu?")

In the course of a letter a caste-Hindu correspondent writes:

If these depressed classes are finally to be merged in the Hindus, was it not better that instead of "Harijans" they should have been given the name "Hindus" which would have applied to both the caste Hindus and the depressed classes? It is still time that the word "Harijan" is given up in favour of the "Hindu", so that the caste Hindus and the Hindu depressed classes are known in common parlance as well as in Government papers as only Hindus.

The correspondent is too late with his suggestion. If a separate register of untouchable classes had not come to stay, at least for the time being, the common name might have answered the purpose. But the separate register makes it absolutely necessary to know the untouchable classes by some name, and if such is the case, why not give them a name that truly befits them and has no ill-flavour about it? I regard "Harijan" as a fitting name, because the caste Hindus cannot be properly considered God's children, but the untouchables certainly can.

I have suggested the real method of abolishing the distinction between caste Hindus and Harijans, namely, by caste Hindus performing the purification ceremony of ridding themselves of untouchability and becoming Harijans themselves. And if it is open to any one to be classified as untouchables in the register for untouchables, I should most decidedly advise caste Hindus to declare themselves as such and to live

also as such. That will be a substantial and organic method of amalgamating the two into one body.

This is the proper place for referring to the same suggestion made by a Harijan friend but from a different standpoint. He says that the best way of getting rid of untouchability is to advise Harijans to adopt names that will never signify an untouchable and to declare themselves also as mere Hindus or as mere Brahmins, Kshatriyas or Vaishyas. This suggestion was made to me even as early as 1915 when I began to crusade against untouchability. This Harijan had his own experiences and told me that he had travelled from one end of India to the other, that he had freely entered all the principal places of pilgrimage without let or hindrance and that he had taken with him a party.

When he was introduced to me, I saw no mark about him of being a Harijan. He was dressed like a Brahman, had a *tilak* on his forehead, a *mala* of *tulsi* or *rudraksh* I forget which and his speech was that of an ordinary Gujarati. He and his party took up their abode in *dharma shalas* and never had the slightest difficulty, having unhesitatingly proclaimed themselves as belonging to one *varna* or the other.

My visitor told me that this practice of untouchables hiding their identity was quite a common thing amongst them and that it was growing. He unfortunately received no encouragement from me. I told him that that practice might be convenient for him and the few who could afford the means and had sufficient training to be able to shed some of the habits which marked out an untouchable from the rest, but that the practice of a few, apart from its being dishonest and, therefore, tending to

deterioration of manhood, would make no impression upon the tens of thousands of untouchables who could not even stir out of their villages.

The reply that I then gave applies with equal force even today. The straightest and the quickest method, therefore, is to conduct the movement openly, to know the untouchables as such and yet for caste Hindus to treat them on terms of absolute equality with themselves; and as the movement has begun on a very large scale and the declaration was made on behalf of caste Hindus in September last that untouchability was gone, it surely became necessary to know untouchables by an inoffensive name whilst the process of amalgamation was going on. "Harijan" in my opinion was the best name to know them by.

*Harijan*, 11-3-1933, p. 5

## 4. TO CASTE HINDUS

### 48. A QUESTION OF DOUBLE EDUCATION

(From "Notes")

Removal of untouchability is a question of double education, that of "touchables" as well as "untouchables". "Touchables" have to be taught patiently by precept and example that untouchability is a sin against God and humanity, and the "untouchables" that they should cease to fear the "touchables" and shed untouchability among themselves. I know that that is very easily said. But I have found nothing else. Living in the midst of both, I know how hard the work is among both. If Hinduism is to live, the work has to be done, however difficult and even hopeless it may appear to be.

*Harijan*, 8-6-1940, p. 153

## 49. THE SIN OF UNTOUCHABILITY

(From a speech at Weavers' Meeting in Dohad)

I am pained to see [some],\* *Antyaja* brothers [standing away from others].\* I have studied Hindu religion [according]\* to my lights and I try to carry out its principles as far as I can. I believe that no nation can really progress without religion. But I cannot believe that there is any religion in regarding it a sin to touch any particular community. To me even to *think* that it is pollution to touch any creation of God is sinful. To me it is the height of irreligion to look upon every custom as part and parcel of religion. Customs may be good or bad. I think it to be a bad custom not to touch the *Antyajas*. A little thinking would show that it is improper not to touch them on the score of their occupation. If their occupation is dishonourable, ask them to leave it off. If it is a sin to sweep our latrines, have done with it, and imagine the plight of your town under that circumstance. Every mother removes the excreta of her child, she does it with pleasure and thinks it to be her duty. And all of us bow to our mothers. I do not use the language of exaggeration when I say that the *bhangi* also likewise deserves our obeisances. If it is argued that *bhangis* are a dirty people, that they eat meat and drink, I may say that we touch many who do such things, and that we do not refuse to associate with men and women who are dirtier than the *Antyajas*. I do not want to put the prejudice of untouchability on a level with food and marriage regulations based on caste distinctions. The latter is a matter admitting differences of opinion. For it is a question of choice. We are not bound to subscribe to promiscuous inter-dining and inter-marriage.

But to regard any of God's creatures as untouchable appears to me to be a sin. I wish that the Hindus of Dohad may be free from this sin.

*Young India*, 10-9-1919

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XVI, p. 81

\* Words in square brackets are supplied from the report of the speech in *Navajivan*, 7-9-1919.

## 50. A DIE HARD

Prejudices die hard. Though the atrocious injustice done by the Hindus to the suppressed classes is admitted generally by even the orthodox Hindu society, there are men, otherwise liberal minded, so blinded by prejudice that they see no injustice in the treatment meted out to our suppressed countrymen. Thus a correspondent writes:

I am a very humble follower of yours though I do not claim to belong to the front rank. On the untouchability question I am sorry to confess that I do not feel as strongly as you do. I do not agree with people who say that the untouchables are oppressed and suppressed. I feel it my duty to submit to you that the so-called untouchables have been enjoying their freedom and were well-off before. If I survey the past and the present of the Panchamas, I cannot well congratulate them upon their consciousness because it has taken them nowhere. The thirst after the so-called education and for the loaves and fishes of office is being copied by them only to make them worse helots. Any man who abandons manual labour and takes up office or service always changes for the worse. That has been the painful experience of us Brahmins. I well remember the day when the Panchama was considered to be one of the members of the family, he being provided every month for his maintenance and clothing. But all this is now gone. Most of the untouchables have either migrated to the other parts of the world to slave under foreigners or have become an unconscious tool of the bureaucracy to serve the military for the princely salary of Rs. 15. I am afraid that your mission to elevate them, to place them on an equal footing with other communities of the country, is doomed to failure. Personally, though I feel that much should be done to elevate them socially, it cannot be done as if by magic in a single day. Millions of money will have to be spent to educate them, to free them from economic distress, to persuade them to abandon the vices of drinking and killing cows and eating dead animals which have been their age-long custom and which were alone mainly responsible for confining them to a corner in each and every village. If



this is not done and if the other classes are asked to embrace the untouchables, it will be a degradation of society which I do not think you would like.

Degradation lies in not touching the untouchable. What though a man drinks, kills cows and eats carrion? He is no doubt an evil-doer though no greater than the one who commits secret and more deadly sins. But he is not to be treated as an untouchable even as society does not treat the secret sinner as one. Sinners are not to be despised, but pitied and helped to rid themselves of their sinfulness. The existence of untouchability among Hindus is a denial of the doctrine of Ahimsa on which we pride ourselves. We are responsible for the evils among the untouchables of which the writer complains. What have we done to wean them from their ways? Do we not spend a fortune to reform members of our own families? Are the untouchables not members of the great Hindu family? Indeed, Hinduism teaches us to regard the whole of humanity as one indivisible and undivided family and holds each one of us responsible for the misdeeds of all. But if it is not possible to act up to the grand doctrine for its vastness, let us at least understand the unity of the "untouchables" with us since we regard them as Hindus.

And what is worse, eating carrion or thinking carrion? We daily create, harbour and nourish millions of untouchable thoughts. Let us shed them, for they are the true untouchables deserving to be hated and cast out. And let us do penance for our past injustice towards the untouchable brothers by lovingly embracing them. The correspondent does not question the duty of serving the untouchables. How are we to serve them if their very sight offends and pollutes us?

*Young India*, 13-5-1926, p. 176

## 51. THE HYDRA-HEADED MONSTER

A friend has sent me a gist of what appears in the Southern vernacular Press from the pen of a learned Pandit. He summarizes the Pandit's plea for untouchability in this fashion:

- 1) The fact that once Adi-Shankara asked a *chandala* to be aloof from him, and the fact that *Trishanku* when he was condemned to be a *chandala* was shunned by all people, prove that untouchability is not of recent growth.
- 2) The *chandalas* are the outcastes of the Aryan Society.
- 3) The untouchables themselves are not free from the sin of untouchability.
- 4) The untouchables are so because they kill animals and because they have constantly to do with flesh, blood, bones and night-soil.
- 5) The untouchables must be isolated even as slaughterhouses, toddy-shops and houses of ill-fame are or should be.
- 6) It should be enough that untouchables are not denied the privileges of the other world.
- 7) A Gandhi may touch these people, but so can he fast. We may neither fast nor touch the untouchables.
- 8) Untouchability is a necessity for man's growth.
- 9) Man has magnetic powers about him. This *shakti* is like milk. It will be damaged by improper contacts. If one can keep musk and onion together one may mix Brah- mans and untouchables.

These are the chief points summarized by the correspondent. Untouchability is a hydra headed monster. It is therefore necessary, each time the monster lifts its head, to deal with it. The stories told in the *Puranas* are some of them most dangerous, if we do not know their

bearing on the present conditions. The shastras would be death traps if we were to regulate our conduct according to every detail given in them or according to that of the characters therein described. They help us only to define and argue out fundamental principles. If some well-known character in religious books sinned against God or man, is that a warrant for our repeating the sin? It is enough for us to be told once for all, Truth is the only thing that matters in the world, that *Truth* is God. It is irrelevant to be told that even Yudhishtira was betrayed into an untruth. It is more relevant for us to know that when he spoke an untruth, he had to suffer for it that very moment and that his great name in no way protected him from punishment. Similarly, it is irrelevant for us to be told that Adi-Shankara avoided a *chandala*. It is enough for us to know that a religion that teaches us to treat all that lives as we treat ourselves, cannot possibly countenance the inhuman treatment of a single creature, let alone a whole class of perfectly innocent human beings. Moreover we have not even all the facts before us to judge what Adi-Shankara did or did not do. Still less, do we know the meaning of the word "*chandala*" where it occurs. It has admittedly many meanings, one of which is a sinner. But, if all sinners are to be regarded as untouchables, it is very much to be feared that we should all, not excluding the Pandit himself be under the ban of untouchability. That untouchability is an old institution, nobody has ever denied. But, if it is an evil, it cannot be defended on the ground of its antiquity.

If the untouchables are the outcastes of the Aryan society, so much the worse for that society. And, if the Aryan at some stage in their progress regarded a certain class of people as outcastes by way of punishment,

there is no reason why that punishment should descend upon their progeny irrespective of the causes for which their ancestors were punished.

That there is untouchability even amongst untouchables merely demonstrates that evil cannot be confined and that its deadening effect is all pervading. The existence of untouchability amongst untouchables is an additional reason for cultured Hindu society to rid itself of the curse with the quickest despatch.

If the untouchables are so because they kill animals and because they have to do with flesh, blood, bones and night-soil, every nurse and every doctor should become an untouchable and so should Christians, Musalmans and the so-called high-class Hindus who kill animals for food or sacrifice.

The argument that because slaughter houses, toddy shops, and houses of ill-fame are or should be isolated, untouchables should likewise be isolated betrays gross prejudice. Slaughter-houses and toddy-shops are and should be isolated. But neither butchers nor publicans are isolated. Prostitutes should be isolated because their occupation is revolting and detrimental to the well-being of society. Whereas the occupation of untouchables is not only desirable but a necessity for the well-being of the society.

To say that untouchables are not denied privileges of the other world is the acme of insolence. If it was possible to deny them the privileges of the other world, it is highly likely that the defenders of the monster would isolate them even in the other world.

It is throwing dust in the eyes of the people to say that "a Gandhi may touch the untouchables, not so the other people", as if the touching and service of untouchables was so injurious as to require for it men specially proof against untouchable germs. Heaven only knows what punishment is in store for Musalmans, Christians and others who do not believe in untouchability!

The plea of animal magnetism is altogether overdone. The high-class men are not all sweet-smelling like musk nor are untouchables foul-smelling like onion. There are thousands of untouchables who are any day infinitely superior to the so-called high-class people.

It is painful to discover that even after five years of continuous propaganda against untouchability, there are learned people enough found to support such an immoral and evil custom. That belief in untouchability can co-exist with learning in the same person, adds no status to untouchability but makes one despair of mere learning being any aid to character or sanity.

*Young India*, 29-7-1926, p. 268

## 52. REDEEMING A DEBT

(Originally appeared under the title "Essentially A Reformer".)

[What looked apparently a small unimportant function was the occasion of a remarkable speech by Gandhiji in Ahmedabad on the 2nd instant. Readers of *Young India* who read my Nainital letter will remember that mainly at the instance of Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj, Sir Chinubhai Madhavlal and his mother gave a promise to Gandhiji to throw open the doors of the family temple at Ahmedabad to the so-called untouchable Hindus. Jamnalalji anxious to see the promise made to him redeemed and add one more free temple to his credit, saw Sir Chinubhai and insisted on the good thing being done whilst Gandhiji was in Ahmedabad. So the thing was fixed up on the 2nd of August, and the temple as well as the well attached to it were declared by Gandhiji to be open for the use of the so called untouchables as of the other Hindus. A casual remark in Sir Chinubhai's speech to the effect that whilst Gandhiji was preoccupied with things of great political importance, he should not have been asked to find time for a comparatively small thing, drew from Gandhiji a speech which threw a flood of light on Gandhiji's way of looking at things and made an aspect of his life clearer than ever before. I am giving here a condensed summary of the speech. —M.D.]

### A CONFESSION

I must say that the service of the so-called untouchables does not rank with me in any way subordinate to any kind of political work. Just a moment ago I met two missionary friends who drew the same distinction

and therefore came in for some gentle rebuke from me. I suggested to them that my work of social reform was in no way less than or subordinate to political work. The fact is, that when I saw that to a certain extent my social work would be impossible without the help of political work, I took to the latter and only to the extent that it helped the former. I must therefore confess that work of social reform or self-purification of this nature is a hundred times dearer to me than what is called purely political work.

#### **SERVICE OF THE UNTOUCHABLES**

For what does service of the untouchables or rendering justice to them mean? It means nothing less than redeeming a debt which is centuries over due, and, to expiate in some measure the sin we have been guilty of for ages, viz., that of oppressing and insulting our own kith and kin. We have behaved towards these unfortunate brethren of ours nothing better than a man turned monster behaves towards brother man. And the programme of removal of untouchability that we have set before us is just some little expiation for a monstrous wrong. And as it is essentially by way of expiation or self-purification, it cannot be prompted by any fear or favour. If we take up this work, fearing that the so-called untouchables would go over to another faith, or that they would wreak vengeance on us, or as a sort of political trumpcard, we shall have betrayed our ignorance of Hinduism and our gratefulness to those who have served us for ages. I admit that it was I who pushed the item to the forefront of the Congress programme, and any one bent on cavilling at me might say that it was a clever bait held out by me to the untouchables. Let me say at once that that charge is idle. It grew on me

very early in life that those who believed themselves to be Hindus must perform the penance in the shape of wiping out this stain before they could be proud of Hinduism, and as the majority of Congressmen were Hindus, and as the programme then put before the nation was not one of self-purification, I put it in forefront of the Congress programme, in the conviction that unless the Hindus were prepared to wipe out this stain they could not regard themselves as fit for Swaraj. That conviction has come upon me as a self-evident proposition. If we came into power, with the stain of untouchability uneffaced, I am positive that the untouchables would be far worse under that Swaraj than they are now, for the simple reason that our weaknesses and our failings would then be buttressed up by the accession of power. That in brief is my position and I have always held that this self-purification is an indispensable condition of Swaraj. It is not a position that I have arrived at today. It is as old as when I began to think of Swaraj. That is why I thank God for enabling me to participate in this function today. I have always prized opportunities for doing this kind of work, and have often put aside so-called political work for work of this nature. I know that those to whom only the exciting thing called "politics" has an exclusive appeal will laugh at this kind of thing. But for me it is nearest and dearest to my heart.

#### **WHEN THE TEST COMES**

As for you, Lady Chinubhai, you need no congratulations from me for having done what was an obvious duty and an act of self-purification. But the occasion for my congratulations for ought we can say, soon arise. The Brahman priests in this temple have reconciled themselves today to the position. But it is possible that they may one day turn against you and say



that they would have nothing to do with worship in your temple. Indeed the whole Brahman community, the whole of the orthodox Nagar community may conspire against you. Even then I hope and pray that you will hold fast to your conviction and rejoice in the belief that that day the stone image of Shiva in the temple is invested with the living presence of God. That will be the acme of your penance, and the day you are excommunicated by your community for having dared to do this necessary act of self-purification, I shall congratulate you most heartily.

#### **TO THE HINDUS OF AHMEDABAD**

Let those who are present here today understand that we have not been able yet to win Swaraj because of the load of sin that we are still carrying on our backs. If all the so-called "touchable" Hindus did real penance for having wronged their untouchable brethren, Swaraj would be automatically in our hands. And pray understand mere removal of physical untouchability does not mean expiation. The removal of untouchability means the removal of all distinctions of superiority and inferiority attaching to birth. *Varnashramadharma* is a beautiful institution, but if it is used to buttress up social superiority of one section over another, it will be a monstrosity. Let removal of untouchability result from a living conviction that all are one in the eyes of God that the Father in Heaven will deal with us all with even-handed justice.

This is a private temple, but if the doors of this private temple are thrown open to the "untouchables" how long will the doors of public temples here remain closed? Let today's function be an eye-opener to all the Hindus of Ahmedabad. Let this be the auspicious beginning of a process which will end in throwing open all the Hindu temples of

Ahmedabad to the untouchables. But even there as in every other thing I should ask you to avoid compulsion. Untouchability cannot long endure. Some years ago we obstinately clung to it, today we are indifferent. It will be a thing of the past only when the indifference is translated into a conscious deliberate awakening to a sense of the duty of self-purification. Even the indifference or sufference would have been impossible fifteen years ago. The willing act of self-purification will, let us hope and pray, be the next step.

Only the other day a friend suggested to me that the word Harijan (man of God) be substituted for the word "*Antyaja* (the last-born) that is being used for untouchables." It was a word used by the great saint Narasinha Mehta, who by the bye belonged to the Nagar Brahman community and who defied the whole community by claiming the untouchables as his own. I am delighted to adopt that word which is sanctified by having been used by such a great saint, but it has for me a deeper meaning than you may imagine. The untouchable, to me, is, compared to us, really a Harijan a man of God, and we are *Durjana* (men of evil) for whilst the untouchable has toiled and moiled and dirtied his hands so that we may live in comfort and cleanliness, we have delighted in suppressing him. We are solely responsible for all the short comings and faults that we lay at the door of these untouchables. It is still open to us to be Harijan ourselves, but we can only do so by heartily repenting of our sin against them.

*Young India*, 6-8-1931, p. 203

### 53. A CAMPAIGN OF ABUSE

Correspondents have been sending me cuttings from *sanatanist* newspapers containing distortions of conversations with me and attributing to me things I have never said.

There is a sheet in Tamil that the Editor has been kindly translating to me. It contains nothing but libels against reformers. There is in it what purports to be a report of my conversation with a Madura pandit who came to see me some time ago. One correspondent wonders if, as the report has tried to make out, I could have said that there were no chaste women in India. The whole report is a caricature, the most material portions having been omitted. But I must not fill the columns of *Harijan* with a transcript of the caricature and the true version of the conversation of which Mahadev Desai took notes at the time. But I reproduce the portion relating to women. Here is first a free translation of the Tamil report.

Gandhi: Should a pure woman consort with her husband when he is given up to sinful ways?

The Pandit: Yes. The sinful husband will be metamorphosed into a virtuous man by the chastity of the wife.

Gandhi: Are there chaste women in these days?

The Pandit: How can we say there are none? There may be virtuous women for all we know. But why wander from our topic of conversation? Let us go on with our discussion."

Be it noted that the Madura pandit or his friend took no notes.

Here is the relevant portion of Mahadev Desai's notes:

Pandit: The temples are intended for women and *Shudras*. According to shastras, *Shudras* only can enter the temples today, because they alone are observing their *swadharma*, viz., service, and chaste women have the same right. The others are burdened with *karmas* and duties, which now they have ceased to perform, and, therefore, not entitled to enter a temple.

Gandhi: So whilst a Brahman may be a *karma chandala*, his chaste wife may be entitled to enter a temple.

Pandit: The wife because of her chastity purifies her husband.

Gandhi: Then, the moment a man has a wife who is pure, he becomes pure, no matter what sort of life he lives.

Pandit: Yes; his wife saves him.

Gandhi: A man may go to the dogs, and yet if his wife is chaste, he becomes pure?

Pandit: Yes; his wife saves him; though what he does is wrong, his sins will be neutralized.

Gandhi: So, if a man wants to remain immune from the consequences of his acts, all that he has to do is to be armed with a chaste wife.

Pandit: Quite so.

Gandhi: Well, then, since we are not going to impute bad character to a single woman in India – for we must assume every one of them to be pure, unless, of course, she admits that she is impure or she has been found to be impure – every married man is pure and there should be no untouchability.

Pandit: She should be a true *Pativrata* – a genuinely chaste woman described in our religious books like *Ramayana*.

Gandhi: How are you to determine that a particular woman satisfies that definition?

Pandit: *Agni-pariksha*. She must prove her chastity by undergoing the ordeal through fire, as Sita did.

Gandhi: And so, those who cannot come scatheless out of it must be declared to be impure?

Pandit: Indeed.

Gandhi: I have done.

Enough, however, about the Tamil sheet. A Gujrati sheet, published by one claiming to be a *sanatanist* Shastri and now distributed, broadcast in Hindi by *sanatani* papers in North India, professes to publish excerpts from my writings – sixty in all, which have the effect of proving me to be the very embodiment of everything anti-Hindu. Excerpts are torn from their context and made to bear a meaning the opposite of what they have, when read in their context. Here is a sample of statements attributed to me:

My parents and Sita were *bhangis*.

The shastras are the productions of hypocrites and the sages are so many satans.

I regard a *bhangi* to be superior to a Brahmin.

I am an iconoclast.

Now my correspondents, some of them frankly puzzled, invite me to deal with these charges. I must respectfully but resolutely decline the invitation. If there are people who will believe of me the things that are said in the writings sent to me, no refutation will save me. The public must take me as I am. What is more, the cause is everything, I am nothing. If the campaign against untouchability is just and necessary for the very existence of Hinduism, it will survive the reputation of a thousand Gandhis.

What is, however sad, almost tragic, about these libellous statements is that they are made by responsible *sanatanists* reported to be learned men and presumed to be holy men fit to be religious teachers of unsophisticated simple folk. Their curious interpretations of the shastras, their refusal to read the signs of the times, their defence of obviously superstitious and even inhuman beliefs and customs, one can understand as being honestly held. What may appear as superstitious and inhuman to the reformer may not appear so to them. But the resort by responsible Pandits to untruths, distortions and suppression of truth is bound to do incalculable harm to Hindus and Hinduism. Let *sanatanists* put up as stubborn a fight as they like in defence of what they regard as a good cause. But I implore them to weed it of untruth.

*Harijan*, 25-2-1933, p. 7

## 54. DESPISING HARIJANS

(Originally appeared under the title "We Do Not Hate".)

One who is a *Vedanta* Shastri and Secretary of a branch Brahman Sabha writes:

*Sanatanists* do not hate untouchables but hate their customs and daily action. They are always ready to give all the Hindus whether touchables or untouchables, every help they can. They give the untouchables priests, preceptors, shastras with Ramanama etc. But there are so-called educated persons who always hate those untouchables. They are always keeping aloof from them and they want to pollute the *sanatanists* with the impurity brought by them from non-Hindus.

The foregoing I have taken from a fairly long letter and I have taken it as a sample from many such letters. "Hate" is perhaps the wrong word. I should use the word "despise". And if to relegate a body of people to distant locations, to regard their touch, approach or sight as pollution, to throw at them the leavings of one's food, to deny to them the use of public roads and institutions, even the use of public temples, is not to despise them, I do not know what the word "despise" means.

The writer says that the untouchables have priests and preceptors. My own experience and the experience of numerous reformers is to the contrary. Despairing of real priests, they have raised from among themselves what must be called "an apology for priests". The writer betrays the secret when he says that untouchables have the "Shastras with Ramanama" implying that they can have no access to any other shastras. What are their daily customs and daily actions which evoke hatred? Their daily action was described in graphic terms by the Poet in

his message for our first issue. Save for carrion-eating, their customs are the same as those of innumerable caste Hindus. And carrion eating is by no means common to all the untouchables so-called. If a census were taken, we would be astonished to find that there are so few. I hope to present the readers of *Harijan* with reliable statistics in this matter. And I have not a shadow of a doubt that caste Hindus are responsible for this habit of carrion-eating and that, immediately they are welcomed as brothers and sisters and are offered the ordinary amenities of life on the same terms as caste-Hindus, that habit will automatically drop out.

Lastly, the common experience is that whatever has been done for Harijans by the caste Hindus has been done by those who have received education or who are otherwise ranked as reformers. It will give me pleasure to know that *sanatanists*, as such, have done much or anything for Harijans. I would gladly publish the list of their charities or other acts of service rendered to Harijans.

*Harijan*, 25-2-1933, p. 8



## 55. WHAT THEY TEACH

The reader should study the tell-tale figures, collected by the Editor and published in another column,\* of the "depressed classes", otherwise called the "exterior castes" of the Madras Presidency. They have eighty-six subdivisions among them. The *sanatanists* would claim that they are all untouchables by birth! What are they before they were so classified in the census? It is interesting, too, to note that the criterion of untouchability has not been the same for all provinces, nor the same in every part of the same province, nor is the untouchable of Madras necessarily untouchable in Bombay or Bengal. The more one studies these figures, the stronger will grow the conviction that this untouchability is purely man-made. The census superintendents have been the sole judges. The reader will note also that the various Governments have differed in their views as to the classification. If the untouchables are God-made, why all these differences? The time is coming when there will be a bid on the part of caste Hindus for being classified as "untouchables". Signs have already begun to appear on the horizon. If untouchables were God-made, we should be able unfailingly to distinguish them without effort from the rest, as we distinguish one species from another.

And who will answer for these sub-divisions if not caste-Hindus? If they will give up untouchability, there is every hope of untouchables giving up the untouchability among themselves.

*Harijan*, 11-3-1933, p. 2

\* Omitted from this collection.

## 56. AN ABOMINABLE PRACTICE

(From "Students and Vacation")

I

The following is a condensed rendering of a Hindi letter received from a student in Dehra Dun:

In the hostel belonging to our college, hitherto the *bhangis* have taken the leavings of our dishes. But since the awakening we have stopped this practice and we have been giving them clean *chapatis* and *dal*. The Harijans are dissatisfied with this. In the leavings they get some *ghee* and delicacies. The students cannot afford to set apart all these things for Harijans. Then there is this difficulty. We may adhere to the new practice we have adopted, but Harijans will continue to receive leavings of caste dinners, etc. What is now to be done? . . .

The difficulty that the correspondent has raised is real. The Harijans have got so used to the leavings that they not only do not mind them but look forward to them. Not to receive them they will regard as a positive deprivation. But this tragic fact just shows the degradation of both of Harijans and of caste Hindus. The students need not worry about what happens in other places. The first thing is for them to be in the right and I suggest to them that they should resolutely set apart for their sweepers a liberal amount of the food that is ordinarily cooked for them. The Dehra Dun student has raised the question of cost. I know something of the hostel life all over India. It is my conviction that the general body of students spend far more on delicacies and luxuries than they should. I know, too, that many students consider it undignified not to leave their plates with ample remains of the helpings they had. I suggest to them

that to have any leavings whatsoever on their plates is undignified and a sign of disregard of the poor people. No one, least of all a student, has the right to take on his plate more than he could comfortably eat. A student has no business to multiply the delicacies and luxuries. The student-life is meant for the cultivation of self-restraint in everything and if they will follow the method of self-restraint and adopt the clean habit of not having any leavings on their plates, they would find that they would effect a saving in their expenses, in spite of setting apart of generous portion for their sweepers from the ordinary food that may be cooked for themselves. And then, after having done that, I should expect them to treat the Harijans as if they were their own blood relations, speak to them kindly and tell them why it is necessary for them to give up the unclean habit of eating the leavings of other people's plates and of making other reforms in their lives.

*Harijan*, 1-4-1933, p. 5

## II

(From comment in "Notes" which appeared under the title "Remember 30th April".)

The third thing that occurs to me is for the women workers all over the country to combine in order to do away with the unhuman practice of giving to Harijans the leavings of food. I have a letter from a Harijan in Karachi who asks in pitious terms that the women might at least shoulder the burden of having this reform accomplished at once. He says that they think nothing of giving to Harijans food that is rotten and unfit for human consumption, food that is stinking, that is dirty beyond description, and this too, lest they might be polluted, they throw from their balconies or from their verandahs into the laps of debased Harijans; and he adds in

agony, "the pity of it is that the Harijans would feel it a deprivation if these leavings were not given to them". It would certainly be a grand thing if earnest women all over banded themselves together and made it a point of seeing their sisters and weaning them from the practice. I have every hope that in this mission of mercy and humanity even the *sanatanists* will co-operate; but whether they do or not, the duty before the women who realize the abomination of the practice is to bestir themselves and quicken the conscience of their sisters who do not even perhaps know that they are offending humanity by making themselves responsible for the degradation of those who are, after all, their own kith and kin.

*Harijan*, 22-4-1933, p. 2

## 57. NO MERE MAKESHIFT

(From "The Wrong Way")

Caste Hindus are responsible for the present condition of the Harijans. We have, therefore, to receive them as they are and have faith that our contact and love will, if we are true, make them shed all those habits that may be repugnant to decent society. To blame the Harijans for their present condition is like a slave holder blaming his slave for the misery and squalor the latter may be living in. We would ridicule the slave holder, perhaps even accuse him of insincerity, if he made the removal of squalor by the slave as a condition precedent to the grant of freedom. It should also be borne in mind that the Harijans will enter temples subject to the same condition that is applicable to the rest of Hindus. Nature has not made of Harijans a separate species distinguished from caste Hindus by definite unmistakable signs. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Harijans enter temples without being detected. The studies of census reports published in these columns must make it clear to anybody that those who were not classified as untouchables must have entered temples without let or hindrance. The mere fact of a new enumeration, for the first time including certain classes and excluding certain other classes from the Harijan list, surely cannot be used as any test of untouchability or touchability. Only Hindus can claim no merit for the undetected entry of the so-called state-made untouchables into temples. What is now claimed is that caste Hindus should seek merit, in other words, purify themselves, by deliberately banishing untouchability from their midst as a sin. I cannot repeat too often that by untouchability

I mean the thing as it is practised today. Let the professor and those who think like him remember that the reform the anti-untouchability campaign stands for is no mere makeshift for placating Harijans. It stands for a fundamental change in Hindu practice, it stands for the total abolition of the practice of high-and-lowness that has crept into Hinduism in spite of its lofty and unequivocal declaration that all life is one and that differentiation is *Maya*, is false. Practice of equal treatment of all human beings should be at least direct outcome of that belief not reserved for *sanyasis* but for the ordinary man in his ordinary dealings with fellow men.

*Harijan*, 15-7-1933, p. 4

## 58. UNTOUCHABILITY – A SOCIAL EVIL

(Originally appeared under the title "A Common Platform".)

A correspondent sends me an essay by Sir Kumaraswamy Sastriar, ex-High Court Judge, Madras. It occupies three sides of a foolscap in print. It is written on behalf of *sanatanists*. It is an attempt to show that untouchability has existed from time immemorial and that the legislation such as is contemplated is futile. It, however, concludes with this significant paragraph:

Several social inequalities and exclusive outlooks are being softened or removed by time and education. The old order is changing, and with it the older conception of humanity. Several communities once considered depressed or servile have, owing to rise in education and material well-being, become possessed of rights and privileges. No lover of India would claim that communities and castes should be in a state of antagonism, or that social injustice and inequalities should not be adjusted. But nobody can view without pain and alarm the methods adopted and the aids sought, which will only accentuate the ill-feeling between the caste Hindus and the depressed classes, without any considerable material advantage to the latter. Their state of depression lies in other and deeper causes and its removal lies in combined effort by the caste Hindus to improve their material and educational state.

This paragraph, in my humble opinion, vitiates the prior reasoning in support of untouchability as a sacrosanct religious institution. It seems to admit that it is a social evil which the learned ex-Judge will gladly see up-rooted. And every reformer will agree with him when he says "nobody can view without pain and alarm the methods adopted and the aids sought which will only accentuate the ill-feeling between the caste Hindus and the depressed classes without any considerable material

advantage to the latter". Only, the reformer must add that Sir Kumaraswamy's fears are imaginary. Reformers have adopted no method and sought no aid so as to accentuate ill-feeling. Sir Kumaraswamy has not given himself time to study what the reformers are doing and how they are doing it. Indeed, I can show him that they are even postponing the material advantage to the Harijans where ill-feeling, already existing, is likely to grow into a fight with blows. Thus, for instance, reformers have been postponing summary action even regarding the use of certain public wells to which Harijans are beyond doubt entitled in law. As for the aids sought, reformers will readily agree that social prejudices cannot be removed by summoning the assistance of law. But they do invoke and insist on legal and legislative aid when the law is interpreted to uphold untouchability. No reform in respect of an evil can succeed in the teeth of legal protection thereof. It is hardly necessary to state that legislative obstacles can only be removed by legislation and in no other way. Reformers merely seek to remove legislative hindrance and nothing more. What they desire is that untouchability should have no legal sanction. They recognize that even when that is withdrawn as a social evil it will demand attention for a long time to come.

I welcome the last sentence of the paragraph. When there is "a combined effort by the caste Hindus to improve their (the Harijans') material educational state", untouchability will not be long in disappearing from the land. If the *sanatanists* distrust the reformers, let them work independently. Will Sir Kumaraswamy move the *sanatanists* to action? If he succeeds, there will be no ill- feeling left. Does he know that in the name of *sanatandharma* its so-called representatives have



burned the crops of innocent Harijans, assaulted them and otherwise molested them when in the exercise of their just and legal rights?

*Harijan*, 10-11-1933, p. 4

## 59. TWO CRUEL CASES

The record of steady progress reported from week to week in these pages is perhaps more than balanced by the revelations of inhumanity towards Harijans that come to light from time to time. At a village called Samarkha in the district of Kheda, Gujarat, the caste villagers are reported to have burnt the crops of Christian Harijans because one or more of them had had the courage to draw water from a public well. The case is now said to be pending before the Courts.

In the village of Dholka, in Ahmedabad district, caste men are reported to have horsewhipped some Harijans, two of them seriously, because one of them had the temerity to bathe in a public tank.

These are not the only cases of their kind. They are serious enough to have seen the light of day. We have no knowledge of the many petty assaults committed upon innocent Harijans for the exercise of human rights recognized by law.

These cases should open the eyes of *sanatanists*. I have not known a single *sanatanist* defend such inhumanity. Let them either co-operate with the reformers or act separately, but effectively, in preventing or dealing with such occurrences.

The duty before workers is clear. They may not hesitate to take such cases to Court, when it becomes necessary. But, before so doing, they should make every attempt to bring the wrong-doers to a sense of the wrong done and to induce them to make adequate reparation. I imagine that this can be done, if, for instance in the case of Samarkha well-

known men and women from Nadiad or even Ahmedabad, if necessary, went to the village and reasoned with the wrong-doers who have inherited the habit of thinking that caste Hindus may deal with Harijans as if they were chattels and not human beings. This dark ignorance of the elementary rights of human beings can be dispelled by the light of public opinion playing upon the darkness. I hope no Hindu thinks that he need not concern himself in the case of Christian Harijans. These have surely the same rights with Hindu Harijans to public activities that caste men have. If the latter do not want to make use of public institutions, it is open to them at their own expense to erect others, for their exclusive use. Sects and communities do build separate schools and hospitals for themselves out of funds they themselves subscribe. No one takes exception to these. But no one has the right to prevent any one else from using what belongs to the general public. And then, it should be remembered that Christian Harijans are our own creation. The evil of untouchability has spread in quarters wholly unexpected. We may not wince if now we have to pay the penalty for having harboured the evil for untold generations.

*Harijan*, 3-11-1933, p. 4

## 60. AN APPEAL TO WOMEN OF VIZAGAPATAM

(From "Weekly Letter —No. 8" by G. S.)

But I can never forget the ennobling sights of women showering their ornaments with a smile of satisfaction and joy beaming in their eyes. They have recognized Gandhiji's mission as a mission of liberation of oppressed humanity. They have expressed their gratefulness for his life-long service to the women of India to many of whom he has been "the cup of strength in some great agony". His call to them for some definite sacrifice, made at the ladies' meeting, at Vizagapatam was couched in words charged with the deepest emotion and needs reproduction. "The Harijan cause is like fire. The more *ghee* you put into fire, the more it requires. So also, the more you give to the Harijan cause, the more it requires. Those who give it to the cause gain, they never lose: and those who do not give undoubtedly lose. What you gain by giving is merit. What you lose by not giving is yourself. For men and women belonging to *savama* Hinducastes have been persecuting Harijans now for ages. And if we are just now passing through evil times, I am convinced that our treatment of Harijans has not a little to do with it. I have, therefore, been asking the women of India to drive away the ghost of untouchability from their hearts. It is wrong, it is sinful, to consider some people lower than ourselves. On God's earth nobody is low and nobody is high. We are all His creatures; and just as in the eyes of parents all their children are absolutely equal, so also in God's eyes all His creatures must be equal. Therefore I ask you to believe me when I tell you that there is no sanction in religion for untouchability. I would, therefore, ask you to give

a place in your hearts to all Harijans around you. Welcome Harijan children in your own homes. Go to Harijan quarters and look after their children and their homes; speak to Harijan women as to your own sisters.

"This cause of Harijans is essentially for the women of India to tackle; and I hope that you, the Hindu women of this place will do your duty. I hope those of you, who have the wish and the ability to surrender all or any part of your jewellery, will do so. There is one condition attached to the gift. If you give anything whatsoever, it must not be replaced. I want you to feel that you personally have given something to this cause, which you cannot do when you give rupees or notes. For they come from either your parents or your husbands. But jewellery is your own property. When you surrender your jewellery without any intention of having it replaced by your parents or husbands, it is definitely your own sacrifice. I want you all who have understood the spirit of the message I have delivered to you to make that definite sacrifice."

*Harijan*, 5-1-1934, p. 1 at p. 7

## 61. THIS PERIOD OF PROBATION

(From a report of Gandhiji's speech at Vizagapatam as it appeared in "Weekly Letter – No. 8" by G. S.)

I have said, and I repeat today, that we Hindus, are undergoing a period of probation. Whether we desire it or not, untouchability is going. But if during this period of probation we repent for the sin, if we reform and purify ourselves, history will record that one act as a supreme act of purification on the part of the Hindus. But if, through the working of the time spirit, we are compelled to do things against our will and Harijans come to their own, it will be no credit to the Hindus or to Hinduism. But I go a step further and say that, if we fail in this trial, Hinduism and Hindus will perish.

*Harijan*, 5-1-1934, p. 1 at p. 8

## 62. WANTED A CHANGE OF HEART

(From "Gandhiji's Mysore Speech")

But my mission covers a much wider theme than the economic welfare of Harijans. We are, no doubt, bound to jealously guard their economic and educational welfare. But this is not enough, if we are to do reparation to Harijans for the untold hardships to which we have subjected them for centuries past. They are entitled to precisely the same rights and privileges as any other citizens. And as Hindus they are entitled to the same social amenities and religious privileges that any other Hindu is entitled to. My mission, therefore, is to invite *savarna* Hindus to wash themselves clean of the guilt of untouchability. And if, during the short period of grace open to *savarna* Hindus, they fail to do this duty, I have not the shadow of a doubt that Hinduism will perish. You can now understand that this cannot be done by a Municipality or even the Maharaja Saheb himself. If you and I will not change our hearts, what can even Rajas and Maharajas do? It is, therefore, my privilege, as it is my duty, to invite you to cleanse your hearts of untouchability, the distinction of high and low. If you understand thoroughly the spirit of this message, the change of heart is an incredibly simple performance; and you can see in the twinkling of an eye how, if this change comes about in *savarna* Hindu hearts, the economic, social and religious progress of Harijans must follow. It will then be a sign and seal of this change of heart. All these purses you have been kind enough to give me I consider as an earnest of your determination to make that change of heart. May

God give you the strength to do it and save Hinduism from impending doom.

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

### 63. SAVARNA HINDUS ON PROBATION

(From "Weekly Letter –No. 9" by C. S.)

In the meanwhile, Gandhiji goes on sounding the note of warning. "If the caste Hindus do not listen to the warning voice," he said to his audience at Gudur, "I have not the shadow of a doubt that Hinduism will perish. I have, therefore, called this a period of probation. A period of probation comes in a man's or a society's life only once." "I am trying," he said at Nellore, "every moment of my life to be guided by Ahimsa, by love. I am essentially a lover of peace, I do not want to create dissensions. And I assure those who oppose me that I shall not do a single thing which I may know may be contrary to truth and love." "But," he said at another meeting, "we have created a hope in the hearts of Harijans. They have begun to feel that they are going to be freed from this serfdom. I expect of you that you will fulfil it."

*Harijan*, 12-1-1934, p. 5 at p. 8



## 64. REMOVING UNTOUCHABILITY BY CHANGE OF HEART

(From "Gandhiji's Guruvayur Speech")

Keenly and deeply as I feel the taint of untouchability and deeply as I feel convinced that, if this untouchability is not removed root and branch from Hinduism, Hinduism is bound to perish. I would not have untouchability removed by force or show of force or compulsion of any kind whatsoever. Removal of untouchability is not a matter of law or of compulsion. Removal of untouchability is a matter of change of heart, perfect purification on the part of millions of Hindus. And that can only be brought about by the sacrifice of thousands of workers themselves, and-not by causing injury to other people. . . . I will, therefore, beseech every one of you, who crowd round me wherever I go, to remember that this movement is a movement of personal, individual self-purification and self-conviction. And if you cannot approach this question from that point of view, I would far rather that I was deserted by you and that all the meetings were deserted by you.

*Harijan, 26-1-1934, p. 1*

## 65. FOR SANATANISTS

(From "Notes")

As attempts are being made during the tour to draw me to a public debate with Shankaracharyas and other learned men and as there is much misrepresentation about my replies to proposals for such interviews, I should like to repeat through these columns what I have said in my letters and verbal messages. I have no desire to engage in a public debate on the origin of untouchability. I do not believe in such debates, nor do I lay any claim to Sanskrit scholarship. But I am ready, nay eager, to hold friendly conversations with any *sanatanist* for the sake solely of arriving at a mutual understanding, discovering points of contact, and, generally elucidating truth. For instance, a challenge is often sent to me with reference to my oft-repeated statement that there is no warrant in the shastras for untouchability as it is practised today and that in the matter of the use of public temples there is no prohibition in the shastras against those who are today regarded as untouchables. I have explained in these pages more than once what I mean by shastras and what interpretation I put upon the verses that are commonly cited in support of untouchability in general and temple entry prohibition in particular. I do not expect all my critics to read the *Harijan*. I would, therefore, gladly explain my meaning to *sanatanist* friends and in my turn try to understand their objections. Surely it is possible to have much common action, even though there may be differences on some matters. The reader may also know that such friendly discussions have taken place often enough during the tour. But some persons have made it their

mission to discredit me anyhow. So they make suggestions for open debates which they know I have refused to adopt, or seek appointments which it is physically impossible for me to make unless I would cancel a whole day's programme and disappoint thousands of men and women. They are not to be placated by anything I may say or do. Time will do what no action of mine can.

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

## 66. THIS SUPERIORITY AND INFERIORITY COMPLEX

(From "Weekly Letter –No. 17" by V. G. D.)

At the public meeting in Kundapur Gandhiji said:

It is a good omen that we have as our chairman a gentleman 80 years old, which shows that old men also are not behindhand in appreciating the necessity of reform. You know what we are driving at. That untouchability in connection with Harijans must be done away with root and branch is a very simple proposition. But as I have said elsewhere, untouchability is a hydra-headed monster and has affected every branch of society. And therefore we have become untouchable, one to another. Similarly communities have become untouchable to one another; so that there is no caste or section which does not consider itself superior to another section or caste. There may be, there are, many other causes for it, but this superiority and inferiority complex is at the bottom of the communal trouble. Therefore the implication of this campaign is that we wish to achieve the brotherhood of man, which is unattainable so long as we believe that untouchability has divine sanction. It is, therefore, up to the caste-Hindus to consider and make their choice. They perpetuate untouchability, and they and Hinduism die. If they kill untouchability altogether, that is the only way for them to live. I have, therefore, called this a movement of self- purification, a movement of repentance and reparation to Harijans. We have suppressed them for centuries and, in suppressing them, degraded ourselves. Let us now learn the lesson before it is too late, and root out untouchability from our hearts.

*Harijan*, 9-3-1934, p. 25 at p. 30

## 67. THEIR PLIGHT

(From "Notes")

Sjt. P. Muzumdar writes:

For want of work, or more truly speaking, because of untouchability, which debars them from avenues of employment open to the rest, Harijans were reported to be living on the undigested grains picked out from droppings of cattle. I had the pain of recently witnessing such a disgusting scene in Gujarat. I was visiting a village in Bhal districts. In the *bhangi* quarters, I saw everywhere cattle dung spread for drying. On enquiry into the cause of this, the Harijans residing in the quarters told me that they had so little employment that they had to maintain themselves on grains picked out from cattle dung collected by them. After the dung was dried, they separated the undigested, half-chewed grains from the dung, washed them, dried them and ground them into powder which they eat in the form of *chapatis*.

I have not seen nor heard of such a practice amongst *savarna* Hindus anywhere. It is impossible to question the evidence given by Sjt. P. Muzumdar of what he has seen through his own eyes. Let caste Hindus understand what untouchability is doing to a portion of Hindu humanity.

*Harijan*, 13-4-1934, p. 67

## 68. THREE UNHAPPY INCIDENTS

On the 25th April I commenced the Harijan tour in South Bihar. The first place to be visited was Arrah. On the way I had to motor to visit the temple of a Zamindar, who had opened it to Harijans, and to receive a purse from him. As the Reception Committee had feared obstruction by black flag *sanatanists*, they suggested that I should go in a lorry, in the hope that it might escape molestation, the *sanatanists* not suspecting that I would be thus stolen away. But, unfortunately for the members and for me, the black-flaggers had anticipated the ruse, and so soon as the lorry entered the dense crowd which contained them, they made a dash for it. They were but a drop in the ocean and were soon overpowered and torn away bodily from the lorry wheels to which they were clinging. I could not bear the sight. That nobody was seriously hurt was mere good luck. The crowd was certainly in no mood to tolerate the obstruction. Terrific shouts of पकड़ो पकड़ो (seize, seize) filled the air. The handling was none too gentle. The black-flaggers were determined to court injury, as the leader had assured me even when his party had begun the plan of obstruction. They were, therefore, resisting the seizure of their persons.

I was the helpless onlooker of the wretched scene. I had no present method of dealing with the situation, unless I was to turn back from my mission. I had, therefore, to allow the black-flaggers to be bodily removed. The police were on the spot and they, too, were trying to remove the obstructionists without hurting them. But though there was no serious hurt caused to anybody, the sight was enough to move me to

the marrow. An indescribable sensation crept over me and I felt like swooning. I began the conscious recital of Ramanama, which unconsciously goes on continually in me. It steadied me. I was able to go through the day's work without anybody knowing what had happened to me or what was going on in my heart.

We reached the temple, received the purse and motored to Arrah to attend its meeting which, owing to the din and noise, it was impossible to address beyond saying a few words in response to the address and a purse. From Arrah we took the train for Buxar, which we reached at noon. There was a flag demonstration at Buxar. My car passed safely, but Mirabehn's came in for a *lathi* blow on the hood of her car. Within 15 minutes of my arrival, I heard that there was a scuffle between the reception volunteers and the black-flaggers, who must have numbered not more than thirty in a vast crowd. This news was followed by three volunteers walking in, two with broken heads. The third had a swollen arm. They told me that they were injured while they were averting the blows of the *sanatanists* and pacifying the infuriated crowd, which was angry over the boisterous behaviour of the demonstrators. They told me also that some *sanatanists* were undoubtedly injured.

The time for attending the public meeting was approaching. I was ill at ease. The Arrah incident was still fresh in my mind. In consultation with Thakkar Bapa and Vindhya Babu, I decided to walk to the meeting. I felt that the car was a red rag to the bull and that my walking would perhaps disarm the black- flaggers' anger and sober the crowd of sympathisers and admirers. Vindhya Babu went in advance to tell the crowds that I proposed to walk to the meeting and that they should neither shout, nor

attempt to touch my feet nor molest the black-flags if they wished to demonstrate. The whole route, less than a mile, was lined on either side by a dense row of people, leaving a clear broad passage for" me. The walk for me was a pilgrimage. Thakkar Bapa and Vindhya Babu had accompanied me. The meeting was most successful. The enormous crowd listened to me in perfect silence. I described what I had heard and seen and said that my apology was due to the demonstrators, if any injury was done to them by the reception volunteers, and gave my assurance that I would inquire further into the happenings.

The meeting was over, I walked back to the residence. Immediately on my reaching there, I found a *sanatanist* volunteer, who showed an injury in his head and told me that there were others hurt, of whom one would surely die. They were all at the hospital. I sent Thakkar Bapa to the hospital, whilst I was preparing for going to the station. On finishing the preparation, I followed him to the hospital and saw the injured men. I saw four in all, of whom the one who was reported to be dying was certainly not in any such condition. He was injured in the head. He was awaiting examination. He was able to carry on a sustained conversation with me and quite in his senses. I should not describe his injuries as serious. The medical officer entertained no fear about his condition. The other three were not much hurt. All said they could recognize one of their assailants who had the reception committee ribbon. As I was unable to make a detailed enquiry, I asked them to send me the names or description of their assailants and a full account of what had happened. I told them what the injured volunteers had told me and assured them that I would do such penance as was possible for me, if I found that the volun-



teers had assaulted them or had incited others to do so, and that for me they were just as dear as the volunteers. It was a hurried visit to the hospital. I had to hasten to the station to catch the train for Jassidi, the junction for Deogarh, which I was to reach at 2-10 a.m. the next day, i.e., 26th.

The night was disturbed by Pandit Lalnath and his party, who were travelling with us, getting out at every station and vigorously singing out, "We shall not let him proceed on his mission" and the other slogans. To my knowledge, they were in no way molested whilst they were going through the performance. Indeed, the crowds who had come to greet me, as they did practically at every station, remained still whilst the *sanatanists* were trying to provoke me into stopping the tour or the public into seriously molesting him and his party. Thus we reached Jassidi which was a seething mass of humanity. The station was ill-lighted. I therefore could not see faces. The police were certainly there. They took part side by side with the volunteers in escorting me.

After we had arrived with difficulty at the station gate where tickets were collected, we passed through a suffocating crowd interspersed with numerous black flag demonstrators. With the greatest difficulty the police officials and the volunteers showed me into the car. Thakkar Bapa, who was to have got into it with me, simply could not do so, and it was considered dangerous to detain the car for him. So the car proceeded, making its way very slowly through the crowd. Heavy blows descended on the hood of the car. I momentarily expected it to break to pieces. Meanwhile came a blow on the pane of the back of the hood. The broken bits fell at my side. Shashi Babu, who was occupying the front seat, was

sure it was a stone that was aimed at the pane. I was not sure. But I knew that I had escaped serious hurt, if not worse.

I felt sorry and humiliated to find *sanatandharma* so vulgarly and violently represented. I can find no justification for the conduct of the few men who are organizing these demonstrations in the name of Varnashram Swaraj Sangh.

*Harijan*, 4-5-1934, p. 92

## 69. MY SORROW

[The following is the summary of a speech in Hindi delivered by Gandhiji at Deogarh after the incident that happened at Jassidi station. The summary is prepared by Gandhiji himself.]

It is a matter of great pleasure to me to have been able to revisit this holy place. My ancestors had visited it. But I admit that I was not fired with the same kind of motive that they had. You may not also know that this was one of the places where, on my return from South Africa to India in 1915, I was invited to open the Ashram. During my last visit, practically all the *Pandas* (priests) were volunteers, lavishing their affectionate services on me and my party. They knew that I had the same convictions about untouchability that I have today. They knew too, that there was hardly a meeting at which I did not speak on untouchability in those days. But, alas! on this occasion they are divided into two camps; one serving me and my party, and the other, be it ever so small, resisting me. I know that it is not given to man to retain the affection of all men for all time. I know of myself that such a possibility has existed for me, a very imperfect man, only in imagination. It is, therefore, neither a matter for surprise or sorrow that some of my old friends, the *Pandas*, I find in the opposite camp. But the manner of resistance is a matter for deep grief to me. I suppose they are responsible for the circulation of leaflets full of untruths and half truths about myself designed to wean the people from me. Decency of language has been thrown to the winds. One of the leaflets is supposed to have been issued under the instructions of the

Maha- raj Saheb of Gidhaur. But unless I had authentic proof, I should refuse to believe that he had lent his name to it.\*

Black-flag demonstrations took place also at some places during my tour in the South. But they were carried out gracefully. It was merely a demonstration that those who held the black flags were opposed to the movement. Many of them were urchins who did not hesitate to return my greetings, which invariably went to the black flaggers as to the others, and even to take part in the shouts of joy. And I have little doubt that they would have said with their distinguished ancestors, Drona and Bhishma, that they were doing it for the sake of their bellies. Here, alas! not only has decency of language been thrown away, they have resorted to violence. Early in the morning, at half past two, when I alighted at Jassidi, they filled the air with yells of denunciation. They even became violent. If they could have done so, they would certainly have smashed the hood of the car to pieces. Heavy blows descended on it. The pane at the back was smashed and I had a Providential escape from being seriously hurt. I believe that they do not want to do me bodily injury, and by landing *lathi* blows on the hood and breaking the pane, they had intended merely to make a demonstration of their anger against me. But whatever their intention, their action was undoubtedly violent. It might have ended in a manner which they would themselves have deplored. I should like to contrast the behaviour of this morning with that of the very correct behaviour of the Zamorin of Calicut. I went to Guruvayur. The Zamorin had certainly some cause for indignation when the battle was raging round that famous temple of the South, and yet he had prohibited any demonstration, even the black flags, against me, and he received me

with marked cordiality in his palace. He frankly recognized that on each side it was a battle of principle against principle. The Pandas of Deogarh and the local Varnashram Swaraj Sangh have not had even a pretext, which the Zamorin would have had, for making a demonstration against me. And what is this opposition for and why this arrogation of possession of *sanatan* truth by the self-styled *sanatanists*? I have put forth the same claim that they have of trying to follow *Sanatandharma*. They have as much or as littleright as I have to the exclusive interpretation of what it is. I swear by the same shastras that they do. There undoubtedly is a difference between them and me. But that is purely in the matter of interpretation. Such differences there always will be. Surely they should be satisfied with the assurance that I do not seek to impose my views on anybody. I utterly disbelieve in methods of compulsion. I seek to bring people round to my view of truth by an appeal to their reason and to their hearts.

Take, for instance, the temple-entry question. In the course of my tour, I have had the privilege of declaring open many temples amidst the acclamations of thousands of people, practically without a dissentient voice. In the single instance where there was an appreciable minority against the opening, I refused to open the temple till the minority was won over or it had at least ample time to act upon the majority. If I discovered that a single temple was opened without such consent or by compulsion in any form, I should move heaven and earth to have the temple re-closed to Harijans. Then, take the temple entry bill. I do believe that it is the bounden duty of every caste Hindu to adopt every legitimate means to redeem the pledge given to Harijans in Bombay

during my fast in 1932. That pledge included resort to legislation when it was necessary. I may be allowed to say that the temple-entry bill or an equivalent is absolutely necessary if the will of the majority is to prevail. Today, according to legal opinion, even one dissentient voice is enough to keep a temple closed to Harijans. But I would be no party even to such enabling legislation being passed, if there is not a clear majority of caste Hindus in favour of it. What, therefore, the *sanatanist* opposition means is that I must not even cultivate public opinion in favour of such legislation under self-imposed restrictions, which several of my friends and co-workers consider to be ludicrous. For, I do not even take the votes at public meetings. Though I know that the majority will vote in favour of such legislation, I refrain, because I believe that it will be wrong to take the votes of the general body of people in technical matters. The question of necessity and advisability of such a law as the temple-entry bill is one to be decided by technical experts, that is, in this instance, lawyers. I have said repeatedly that the votes of only caste Hindus should count in the matter of opening temples. For, if they are unwilling to open their temples to Harijans, it shows that they have not cleansed themselves of untouchability. And it would be of little avail to me, if all the temples were opened but caste Hindus were against such opening. There is no such thing as bringing about purity by compulsion. I have tried, therefore, to discover the cause of the opposition, and I have failed, unless it be that public opinion is fast changing and untouchability is on its last lap and that, therefore, by hook or by crook my tour should be brought to a standstill, no matter how scrupulously fair my means may be of converting Hindu opinion. I have, therefore, no hesitation in saying

that by this morning's behaviour the *sanatanists* lowered the *sanatanist* flag in this sacred place, even as the great Yudhishtira lowered it by uttering a half truth. For, has not the reputed author of *Mahabharata* told us that, when Yudhishtira uttered the fateful half truth, the wheel of his chariot sank some feet into the ground and that he had to make amends even after death? I, therefore, implore the *sanatanist* friends to repent of their behaviour in the sanctuary of their hearts and resolve never to repeat the violence of this morning. To the reformers, I say, you are in an overwhelming majority. Those who are organizing the opposition are to be counted on one's finger tips. You should try to win them by your patience, gentleness and personal purity. This movement is one of self-purification, and only the pure of heart can have place in it. There ought to be no interference with the demonstrators. They have every right to express their resentment by carrying flags, if they like, so that I may know how many are opposed to this movement. The difficulty comes in only when they obstruct my passage or show their resentment by resorting to other species of violence. In any case, you must, especially as you are in an overwhelming majority, be gentle and patient with the *sanatanist* friends, seek to win them over by persuasion and trust that, even if persuasion fails, time will bring them round to the truth if you are really representing it. There should be no retaliation on the part of reformers. You should know that in this movement of self-purification any violence done by the reformers may involve serious penance on my part.

Now, a word to the audience. I understand that there are several lakhs of Santhals, who call themselves Hindus, observe Hindu customs and

manners, worship the Hindu deities and yet are regarded as untouchables to all intents and purposes. Those of them who do not call themselves Hindus are not regarded by you as untouchables; but those who do call themselves Hindus are almost punished for doing so. What is the wrong they have done? They have given up intoxicating liquors. They worship the cow as you do and I do or should do. They have even adopted vegetarianism. They utter Ramanama with perhaps greater zest and certainly greater faith than you or I do. They utilise their idle hours by spinning and weaving and thus add to the wealth of the country. They deserve to be treated with affectionate consideration, instead of as pariahs of society. There is no warrant in the shastras for regarding them as untouchables. If there is, the sooner we perish, the better it will be for us and the world. And to the Santhals, I would say, "if you have faith in Ramanama, you will have it in spite of your being rejected by your fellows. That sacred name, and not they, will save you and give you peace and joy, of which no one can rob you.'

*Harijan*, 4-5-1934 p. 93

\* The Maharaja Bahadur of Gidhaur by a letter which was published in *Harijan* dated 11-5-1934 disclaimed any responsibility for the statements attributed to him.



## 70. AVOID EXAGGERATION

(From "Notes")

Pandit Lalnath draws my attention to the fact that some newspapers which favour removal of untouchability have exaggerated the Deogarh incident and ascribed to those who delivered *lathi* blows on the hood of my car designs upon my life. There is no warrant for ascribing any murderous motive to the authors of the demonstration. From the same source comes an unsigned printed leaflet which threatens death to those who might arrange demonstrations against the reformers. I refuse to believe that this anonymous leaflet is the work of any responsible body or person at all. So far as I know, no injury was done and no counter demonstration was made against *sanatanists* in Calcutta on the day which they had fixed for anti-temple entry bill demonstration. Nevertheless, I cannot be too insistent on reformers being and remaining non-violent in thought, word and deed. Let them ignore these *sanatani* demonstrations. So far as I have seen and I could not help seeing, these *sanatani* demonstrations have little, if any, backing from the public. In any case, we have to win them over by showing regard for their sentiments. We must not repel or acerbate them by making irritating or offensive remarks about their activity.

*Harijan*, 25-5-1934, p. 115

## 71. UNTOUCHABILITY AS IT EXISTS TODAY

The Editor sends me the following from his box. A correspondent who gives his name and address but prefers to remain unknown to the readers of *Harijan* says:

In the *Harijan* of the 9th March, Gandhiji is reported to have said that "there was no warrant in the shastras for untouchability". One of the most prominent pandits who supports Mahatmaji's movement is Mahamahopadhyaya Pra-matha Nath Tarkabhushan of Benares Hindu University. He has published the letter which he wrote to Gandhiji last year quoting scriptures in support of Gandhiji. The pandit wrote that, although there are texts in support of untouchability, there are other texts which stated that untouchable could be made pure by *diksha* (initiation) and devotion to God. Thus, according to the pandit, those *chandalas* who were not initiated nor devoted to God were untouchables, according to the shastras. Gandhiji's opinion that there is no sanction for untouchability is, therefore, not supported by this pandit.

Will you kindly state which pandits have told Gandhiji that there is no sanction for untouchability in the shastras?

Gandhiji himself wrote before that *sanatanists* had supplied him with many texts from the shastras in support of untouchability, but that he did not accept the authority of such passages as they were against the fundamental principles of morality.

Gandhiji's present statement that there is no sanction for untouchability in the shastras does not seem to accord with his previous statement which was that there is such sanction but he did not accept the authority of such passages because they were immoral.

Will you kindly explain the apparent inconsistency through the columns of the *Harijan*?

I have not verified the quotation from the *Harijan* of 9th March. But everybody knows by this time that, whenever I speak on untouchability, it has reference to untouchability as it is practised today or known to us today. And I do repeat here, as I have said on a thousand platforms, that there is no warrant in the shastras for untouchability as we practise it today. I well remember Mahamahopadhyaya Pramatha Nath Tarkabhushan's letter to me. His argument is an enforcing argument combating the doctrine of ineradicable untouchability. The letter not only does not contravene my proposition but supports it in the sense that no single untouchable need always remain untouchable. When once it is admitted that an untouchable can become touchable by simply reciting the *Bhagavat* twelve lettered *Mantra*, the citadel of untouchability is destroyed. For the support of my position, I cite even the *sanatanists* themselves, for, they have not as yet produced a single verse in support of untouchability as it is practised today. Innumerable castes are at one time enumerated as untouchables in the census report and at another removed from that list and some new ones are enumerated. Surely, there is no warrant in the shastras for accepting census figures for branding persons as untouchables, and untouchability as we practise it today has reference only to these several crores of men and women who are classified as untouchables in census reports. Nor is there any warrant in the shastras for the treatment that is meted out to these people their respective provinces or districts. I have, indeed, said that the verses produced by *sanatanists* in support of untouchability as they describe it are wholly inconsistent with the fundamental principles of Hinduism. Therefore under the canons of interpretation laid down in the shastras

themselves, such verses must be repudiated as devoid of authority. There is, therefore, no inconsistency in my writing or sayings when I say that there is no warrant for untouchability as it is practised today. Of course, there is ample authority in the shastras for temporary untouchability on sanitary grounds. That is not an untouchability that is contrary to reason or to ethics. The untouchability against which I am carrying on war is an internal taint which is supposed to apply to a man by birth and of which no amount of expiation can purge a man.

*Harijan*, 1-6-1934, p. 124

## 72. THE MOVEMENT WILL NOT END WITH THE FAST

[The expected has happened. By undergoing a penitential fast of seven days from the 7th of August, Gandhiji will make a vicarious atonement for the sin of some over-zealous volunteers. Readers will remember how, while in Ajmer, as the result of a scuffle between the volunteers and the leader of the "black-flaggers", Pandit Lalnath, the latter sustained an injury on the head. It may be recollected, too, that Gandhiji said on the occasion that, if, as he feared, the volunteers were found responsible for the incident, he would have to do penance. He has now examined the details of the occurrence and issued the following statement, which is self-explanatory.—Ed.]

Inquiry made by me into the unfortunate incident at Ajmer resulting in the cut received by Pandit Lalnath on the head shows that the black-flag demonstration enraged those who saw the processionists, and, according to Pandit Lalnath, the public, which included volunteers, seized the flags and trampled them under foot. A scuffle ensued in which Pandit Lalnath received the injury mentioned. Happily, none of the other demonstrators received injuries worth the name. But the guilt is enhanced by the fact that those in charge of the volunteers had specific instructions to see that the black-flag demonstrators were fully protected from molestation by the public. It is no answer in defence that Pandit Lalnath and his party came in of advance the time appointed. In my opinion, responsible men should have been posted at all points to afford protection to the demonstrators, and notices should have been put up all over the meeting ground, warning the public against interfering with them in any shape or form.

That precaution was not taken and the pledge, given to Pandit Lalnath, that he and his party would be free from molestation when they made the demonstration, was broken. The pledge was given by me in the full faith that the captain of the volunteers was willing and able to carry it out. I have no doubt he was a willing partner to the pledge. That he was unable to redeem the pledge was quite clear. But there can be no doubt that the final responsibility rests with me. Indeed, no pledge was necessary. In a movement claimed to be purely religious, non-violence on the part of the public sympathising with the movement must be presumed. If I mentioned the pledge, I have done so to enhance the magnitude of the guilt and demonstrate the greater necessity of public penance on my part. Pandit Lalnath always warned me that my persistence in the movement must result in widespread violence on the part of the sympathising public. I did not share his fear, nor do I share it now, in spite of his ability to show stray cases of violence done to black-flag demonstrators.

But it is necessary for me to emphasise the fact that the movement which is purely religious, admits of no violence on the part of reformers even in spite of provocations. The movement can only succeed by appealing to reason and touching the hearts of the opponents. This is possible only through the purity and penance of reformers. After much searching of the heart, I have decided to impose upon myself a fast of seven days, to commence on Tuesday noon August 7th, i.e., two days after my reaching Wardha, which I expect to do on the 5th of August next. This is the least penance I owe to Pandit Lalnath and those *sanatanists* whom he represents. God willing, the Harijan tour will finish

at Benares on the 2nd of August next. It is perhaps, fitting that the end will be signalised by a penitential fast. May it cover all errors, conscious or unconscious, of omission or commission, of me and my co-workers. The movement will not end with the fast. Let it open a new and cleaner chapter in this struggle for the emancipation of nearly fifty million human beings from thralldom imposed in the sacred name of religion. Let it also be a warning to those who are in, or will join, the movement that they must approach it with clean hand and hearts free from untruth and violence in thought, word and deed. I hope no one will feel tempted to imitate the fast. The cause will be best served by greater dedication.

*Harijan, 13-7-1934 p. 172*

### 73. AN UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT

(From "Weekly Letter – No. 32" by V. G. D.)

The public meeting at Ajmer was marred by an unfortunate incident. Pandit Lalnath came to Gandhiji in the afternoon and expressed a desire to attend and address the public meeting, as he had done in Cuttack and elsewhere. Gandhiji readily agreed, but asked the Pandit to come to the meeting after he had arrived. The Pandit somehow came before Gandhiji with his fellow black-flaggers, and there was a scuffle between them and some members of the public with the result that the Pandit received a *lathi* blow on the head, which began to bleed. Referring to this, Gandhiji said that the Pandit was perfectly entitled to attend the meeting with the black-flaggers and record his protest against the movement. Whoever had assaulted him had exhibited gross incivility. Black flags could do them no harm, but the assault on the Pandit had certainly damaged the cause they had all at heart. The Pandit's assailant had committed a great sin in the eyes of God as well as man. *Sanatanists* and reformers had occasionally come to blows before, but the Ajmer assault was unpardonable, as he had made himself responsible for the Pandit's safety. Untouchability could never be abolished by violent methods, which would only recoil on their own heads. He would consider what penance he should undergo as reparation for the untoward incident, for people ought to know the conditions on which he could invite their co-operation. Reformers might not assault others, but should suffer assaults without retaliation, as thus only could hearts be moved and untouchability abolished. He was confident that religion could not be served or saved by



violence, untruth or anger, but only by self-denial, self-restraint and self-suffering. He could not bear with violence even in politics; much less could he brook it in religion.

Gandhiji then called upon the Pandit to speak and asked the audience to accord him a patient hearing. When he had spoken for a couple of minutes, members of the public interrupted him. Upon this Gandhiji said that it was an exhibition of gross discourtesy. Some of them had already committed one incivility in molesting him, and they were committing another in refusing to hear him. If they were not here prepared to hear the Pandit, it meant that they were not prepared to hear him either. He never claimed infallibility for himself. On the other hand, he had confessed to Himalayan blunders. If he could say with impunity that untouchability was a sin, the Pandit had an equal right to assert that the movement directed against untouchability was irreligious in his opinion. If they cried "shame" when the Pandit expressed his honest opinion, the shame was not his but theirs. They must not thus betray intolerance, which was but a form of violence. A man who did not listen to opponents could never be capable of truly religious conduct. Harijan service was a religious movement in which there was no room for intolerance or physical violence. Supposing some violence was offered to him and it was even of a fatal character, would they lose their senses and indulge in orgies of violence? If so, he would have lived his life before them in vain. They would kill the great movement, whereas, if they restrained themselves, untouchability would die with him.

*Harijan*, 20-7-1934, p. 180 at p. 182

## 74. I COME TO BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

(From "The Cawnpore Speech" delivered at a public meeting on 22-7-1934.)

I have regard for the black-flaggers no less than for the reformers and, if it was at all possible, I would gladly go away as they wish me to do. But I consider it my religious duty to bear witness to the truth as I see it, and any number of black flags, or even a bomb or a revolver cannot prevent me from discharging it by such means as are open to me. I am but an imperfect being and not a *tapasvi* who could blow away untouchability with a breath from the Himalayas. I can only speak to such as are inclined to hear me, and for this I am going about from place to place, although I long for rest from the toil of continuous travel.

Let me tell the *sanatanists* who claim to be monopolists of religious truth that I believe in the same shastras as they do. I have profound disagreement with them as regards interpretation. These shastras lay down that, when there is a conflict of interpretation, one must follow the promptings of one's own conscience. And that is exactly what I am doing. I would be the *sanatanists'* slave, if they could convince me that I was wrong. Meanwhile I will say even with my last breath that, if we do not wash out the stain of untouchability, Hindus and Hinduism will be wiped out from the face of the earth.

\* \* \*

I thank you for the peacefulness of the proceedings, but I cannot lose sight of the fact that we are under the shade of the elaborate police precautions we see around us. I would very much wish they were away

but they, too, must discharge their duty. Reformers as well as *sanatanists* should be ashamed that the presence of the police should be required for my protection or for ensuring peace during my stay in your midst. Reformers and *sanatanists* should realize the importance of maintaining self-imposed discipline so as to render police precautions wholly unnecessary. As it is, however distasteful their presence may be to me, I must also testify to the exemplary manner in which the police have behaved throughout the trying tour.

*Harijan*, 3-8-1934, p. 194

## 75. GOD BE PRAISED

Happily nobody questioned the propriety of the fast just finished. On the contrary, those who have written about it have recognized the necessity of it. Its spiritual value for me has been inestimable. Why. I do not know, but it is a fact that man clings most to God when he is in distress, even as a child clings to its mother when it is in suffering. Though I was cheerful, I had my due share of physical suffering attendant upon all fasts except when required by ill-health.

I was able during the seven days to understand more fully than hitherto the implications of what I had meant when from a hundred platforms I had declared that untouchability was not to be removed without the workers showing in their lives great purity of character. Therefore, so far as the fast was directed towards myself, it has I hope, served its purpose. That I may fail to come up to the standard I visualized during the fast is possible, nay probable. But no fast has ever proved an insurance against human frailties. We can only mount to success through failures.

The fast was primarily and nominally intended as a penance for the hurt caused to Swami Lalnath and his friends at Ajmer at the hands of sympathisers with the movement. But in reality, it is a call to all the workers and sympathisers to be most exact and correct in approaching opponents. Utmost consideration and courtesy shown to them is the best propaganda for the movement. The fast was taken to impress upon the workers the truth that we can only win over the opponent by love, never by hate. Hate is the subtlest form of violence. We cannot be really non-

violent and yet have hate in us. The dullest brain cannot fail to perceive that it is impossible by violence to wean millions of caste Hindus from the evil of untouchability, which they have hitherto even taught to regard as an article of faith.

Evidence so far received shows that the fast has operated to quicken the conscience of many workers. Time alone can show the extent of its influence. It is not for me to measure the influence of the fast. It was for me humbly to perform what was a clear duty. God be praised that He permitted me safely to go through the fast. Let the reader join me in the prayer that He may give me greater purity and strength of purpose to fulfil the mission He has entrusted me with.

*Harijan, 17-8-1934, p. 212*

## 76. AJMER INCIDENT

(From "Notes")

Although Shri Ramnarayan Chaudhri and Shri Durgaprasad Chaudhri, captain of the volunteers in Ajmer, do not in any way wish to be absolved from any blame that may attach to them for forgetfulness or negligence in connection with the Ajmer incident, they are most anxious to have the blame removed from the volunteers who have been condemned in the Press and whom they hold to be utterly blameless. They have made careful investigations and find that not a single volunteer was involved in doing injury to Swami Lalnath or his party. The investigation papers have been sent to me. The only deadly piece of evidence in favour of the theory of the guilt of the volunteers has been utterly discredited. The confessor appears to have been altogether a fictitious person, no trace can be found of him. The newspaper that published the confession has failed to produce the name of the writer, and the Editor has made such acknowledgment in his paper and expressed regret for having published an authentic letter. All the evidence, therefore, that I have hitherto received goes to show that no volunteer was involved in the affray. My own statement has nothing in it to warrant the inference that the volunteers had actually assaulted Swami Lalnath or any of his party. I had simply said that Swami Lalnath had said that volunteers were involved. But in this belief he was utterly mistaken. No trace was found of the volunteer described by him. Since the Ajmer volunteers have come in for a great deal of public criticism, it was necessary to give my own opinion in the matter. The fact, however, that in my opinion no volunteer seems

to have committed the assault does not imply that the fast was in any way unnecessary. That the assault was committed is not be denied, nor can it be denied that those who took part in the affray were of the reformer group. The fact also remains that Shri Ramnarayan Chaudhri forgot to give the necessary instructions and take adequate precautions against the mishap. The fast was, therefore, clearly necessary, and I am thankful to God that He gave me strength to take and go through it. Those who handle purity movements cannot be too vigilant. The legal maxim has it that "Law", i.e., God, "helps the wakeful, never the sleepy."

*Harijan*, 24-8-1934, p. 223

## 77. THE DUTY OF SAVARNAS IN GUJARAT

(Originally appeared-under the title "Our Duty".)

Perhaps the burden of untouchability falls on Harijans in one way nowhere so heavily as in Gujarat. In Dholka a Harijan was done to death by a *savarna* Hindu and the murderer escaped with a fine of Rs. 300/-. In Kavitha the so-called Rajputs mercilessly attacked helpless Harijans for daring to send their children to a public school. In Kathiawad just now in various villages in its various provinces *savarnas* persecute Harijans because a plague has broken out among the cattle. They do so under the superstitious belief that the disease is caused owing to the incantations or some other machinations of Harijans. The Harijan is in perpetual fear of injury to his person or property. The reformer feels helpless; the State is indifferent or is itself also helpless in the face of the powerful *savarnas*. The reason is obvious. The Harijan does not know how to secure redress. He has no will to defend himself. He is wholly unconscious of his human dignity or innate ability to protect himself against the insolence of fellow human beings. The reformer has to carry the torch of knowledge among the persecutors, for they know not what they are doing. Leaflets may be distributed among them. But the *savarna* lynchers rarely read newspapers or leaflets. They are self-contained and self-satisfied. Personal contact is the only way of approach to them. They must be visited if need be in their own homes. Meetings should be addressed in their villages. No amount of anger or declamation will cure them of their ignorance. The quickest way to combat ignorance is the spread of the knowledge that would tell them how cattle diseases are



contracted and how by careful treatment they may be prevented or cured.

All this means patient labour on the part of those who will carry on the propaganda. The States concerned should also be moved to protect the poor Harijans who are molested. Where the reformers are fairly numerous they may have to settle in the midst of Harijans and themselves share their hardships, if their presence does not prevent molestation. In this campaign against ignorance the *sanatanists*" assistance should also be invoked. I am sure no sane *sanatanist* will defend the cruel persecution of the utterly innocent Harijans by ignorant, misguided *savarnas*.

*Harijan*, 31-8-1935, p. 229

## 78. HARIJANS AS DOMESTIC SERVANTS

(From "Some Questions")

Q: Will it not hasten the removal of untouchability if caste Hindus took Harijans as domestic servants?

A.: This is no new advice. Swami Shraddhanandji used to lay very great emphasis on the necessity of caste Hindus employing Harijans as domestic servants precisely on the same terms as any other. But I fear that receiving Harijans as domestic servants will be, when it becomes at all general, not a spur to the removal of untouchability but a sign of removal. Nevertheless, it is the duty of every reformer who has got rid of untouchability from his own household to have a Harijan domestic servant. No doubt, for the reformer it would be better still if he would take a Harijan boy or girl, not as a servant, but as a member of his family.

*Harijan*, 16-9-1933, p. 4

## 79. TRAINING HARIJANS AS COOKS

(From "Question Box")

Q.: Don't you think that, if the Congress started a plan for training Harijans as expert cooks for Hindu homes and made it a rule to man every ashram or a mess meant for Congress workers with Harijan cooks thus trained, it would prove a short cut to the removal or untouchability?

A.: Our ambition should be to enable Harijan to rise to the highest rank. But while that must be the ideal it will be a good thing to train some Harijans to become accomplished cooks. I have observed that the more we draw them into the domestic circle, the quicker is the pace of the reform. Harijans who become absorbed in our homes lose all sense of inferiority and become a living link between other Harijans and *savarna* Hindus.

Sevagram, 19-5-1940

*Harijan*, 25-5-1940, p. 137

## 80. HARIJAN COOKS

(From "Notes")

A correspondent suggests that at the next session of the Congress all the cooks should be Harijans and to that end a corps of Harijan cooks should be trained in the observance of cleanliness and the art of cooking scientifically and as behoves a poor country like ours. He would have this privilege and duty given to the Congressmen in the province in which the Congress session is to be held. After the session these cooks should be taken over by those Congressmen who can afford it and keep cooks. Any suggestion like this which shows in practice that untouchability is a thing of the past is to be welcomed. I would only add that Congressmen who endorse it need not wait for the session. They should from now take up Harijans not merely as their cooks but have them in all other capacities. What is more, let those who can afford it take Harijans in their families as their own children and give them proper training. All this can only happen if men and women are sincere in their professions and if the truth has gone home that under the garb of religion Hinduism is said to have consigned to untouchability their own kith and kin for no fault of theirs.

Simla, 8-5-1946

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

## 81. IN CLARIFICATION

Q.: There is a suggestion made by you that a society which disregards its servants suffers. Do you imply that Harijans are servants?

A.: I do. I have stated a fact. Harijans today are as a body servants of the society, and as such they are treated in a disgraceful manner. He who runs may see how the society suffers in a thousand ways for its criminal neglect of its most useful servants. This neglect accounts for a tremendous economic, social, sanitary and moral waste. My statement of fact does not imply that Harijans should be compelled to remain servants for ever.

*Harijan, 2-2-1934, p. 8*

## 82. PROPAGANDA AMONG CASTE HINDUS

(From "Harijan Sevak Sangh")

Harijan service has really developed into mere Harijan uplift. Practically no work is done among caste Hindus for the removal of untouchability. What is the remedy for this?

A.: Experience shows that propaganda among caste Hindus can only be successfully carried out by influential persons whose word carries weight with the general public. Such persons are hard to find. But it is within the capacity of every Harijan worker to carry on mute propaganda. Our caste Hindu workers are often satisfied with mere uplift work among the Harijans, which is not sufficient. Many workers, while they do not observe untouchability themselves, are unable even to convert their own families. How then can they influence the outside world? Moreover it is my confirmed opinion that every Harijan worker has to make it a point to beg for even one pice for Harijans from those caste Hindus with whom he comes in contact. If all devoted themselves, heart and soul, to this task, very good results would ensue.

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

### 83. THAT OBSTINATE DISEASE

Thus writes Shri Tatachar who is an ardent lover of Harijans:

Some time ago there was a riot at Nallathur Cheri. Castemen attacked the Adidravida *bhajanai* and inflicted injuries on several members of the party. In this riot castemen received a few injuries. Adidravidas complained of the riot to the police. The police took no notice of their complaint. Caste- men filed private complaints in court against 5 Adidravidas. These 5 Adidravidas were convicted and fined Rs. 25/- each and one month's rigorous imprisonment in default. Appeals were filed and heard on 26-5-1939. Judgment was reserved and was pronounced today in favour of the appellant accused. In accordance with the directions of the appellate court, the appellants asked the trying court on 27-5-1939 to postpone the recovery of the fines, until judgments were pronounced in the appeals. The lower court refused to grant them time and sent them to jail. . . . This grave act of injustice must satisfy you that the problem of the removal of untouchability is not going to solve itself.

He has sent me also copious notes which I have read with painful interest. The letter from which I have quoted bare facts is filled with biting strictures of the police and the first court which is reported to have refused to stay execution although appeal was admitted and the appellate court is said to have recommended stay of execution. I have asked Shri Tatachar for further particulars. Allegations that the police refused to register the complaints of the Harijans while private complaints against them were readily entertained and that the trying magistrate refused to suspend execution of sentences, are serious enough to warrant a departmental enquiry. There is no doubt that if the virus of untouchability is to be eradicated, ceaseless vigilance by the central authority is necessary.

Abbottabad, 14-7-1939

*Harijan*, 22-7-1939, p. 205 at p. 206

## II

(Originally appeared under the title "Case for Inquiry".)

I published some time ago facts relating to Nallathur Harijans. Shri K. Tatachar sent me some time ago the notes from his diary of the no less serious ill-treatment of the Harijans of Tenpatnam Cheri I publish them below in full.\*

\* \* \*

This seems to be a case of gross failure of justice, and the matter, though comparatively old, requires investigation. There has been no remissness on the part of the people or their friends to secure redress. But if Shri Tatachar's recital is accurate, justice was denied to the Harijans because they were Harijans. The police belonging to the lowest grade should be taught that they have to serve Harijans equally with the others. Harijans ought to be able to feel that during the Congress regime at least they can get justice.

On the train to Simla, 3-9-1939

*Harijan*, 9-9-1939, p. 266

\* Omitted from this collection.



## 84. THE ONLY REMEDY

(Originally appeared under the title "Persecution of Harijans".)

Shri Parikshitlal Mazumdar writes:

There was high mortality due to some epidemic in a village in Wadhwan State, Kathiawad. The superstition of the villagers ascribed this misfortune to Harijans and they began to intimidate the *bhangi* families. The latter fled from the village through fright. Harijan workers, as soon as they learnt of the incident, approached the State authorities to take immediate steps to protect the *bhangis* and did their level best to dispel the superstition from the minds of the ignorant villagers. The State acted promptly and the families returned. This year Kathiawad Harijans have had to suffer more than usual because of the outbreak of disease among cattle. The poor folk have to pay dearly for the superstition of the villagers.

The only remedy for this kind of superstition is the spread of correct knowledge. The reason for its existence in Kathiawad seems to be that the reform movement has not yet touched the villages there. Workers must make herculean efforts to remedy this defect. But wherefrom are such workers to come? Even those already working in Kathiawad fight shy of going to the villages. And even if they go, one can well imagine the immense difficulty of the task confronting them. Man's endeavour at its highest consists in continuing to perform one's duty undeterred by difficulties. The Kathiawad incident must be taken to heart. Both the State and the people understood their duty and took prompt and firm measures in the instance quoted and the difficulty was surmounted for the time being. If this example were to be widely followed it would cut at the very root of superstition. And that would be true education.

Poona, 6-3-1946

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

*Harijan*, 17-3-1946, p. 48

## 85. TRUE INNER CHANGE

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "No Publicity Required".)

A Brahman correspondent asks me to publish the fact that he has become a Harijan and wants to eliminate his name as a caste Hindu from the census too. This is a sequence to my having asked all caste Hindus to look upon themselves as Harijans of the so-called lowest stratum. But what is the point in giving publicity to an inner change? The real proof is for the convert to practise the change in his daily life. He will, therefore, mix freely with *bhangis* and take an active part in their life. If possible, he will live with them or get a *bhangi* to live with him. He will give his children in marriage to Harijans and on being questioned he will say that he has become a, Harijan of his own free will and will register his name either as a Harijan or *bhangi* in the census when he has to classify himself. But having done so he will on no account arrogate to himself any of the rights of Harijans as, for example, he will not enter his name as a voter on their list. In other words, he will undertake to fulfil all the duties of a Harijan without seeking any of the rights that pertain to them. So long as separate voting lists are maintained he will cease to be a voter.

New Delhi, 9-6-1946

(From *Harijansevak*)

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

## 86. THE SACRED DUTY OF CASTE HINDUS

(From "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary")

Q.: How can the caste Hindus look after the interests of the untouchables? How can they realize the feelings of the classes who have suffered so long at their hands? Is it not then better to entrust the interests of the untouchables to men of their own caste?

A.: He was of the opinion that the caste Hindu owed a sacred duty to the so-called untouchables. He must become a *bhangi* in name and action. When that happened the untouchables would rise at a bound and Hinduism would leave a rich legacy to the world. If that happened, the system of cleaning closets would undergo transformation. In England real *bhangis* were famous engineers and sanitarians. That could not happen in India so long as society was sluggish and slothful.

*Harijan*, 23-3-1947, p. 78

## 5. TO HARIJANS

### 87. DON'T I PREACH TO HARIJANS?

(From "Some Conundrums")

Q.: Why don't you preach to Harijans cleanliness, abstention from carrion-eating and the like, just as you preach to caste Hindus removal of untouchability?

A.: I do preach to the Harijans cleanliness, abstention from carrion-eating and intoxicating drinks and drugs, necessity of taking education themselves and giving it to their children, also abstention from eating the leavings from caste Hindus' plates, etc. Only, I do not put these before Harijans as conditions precedent to the removal of untouchability. On the contrary, I suggest to caste Hindus that the shortcomings are not inherent in Harijans but that they are due to our criminal neglect of even deliberate suppression of these brethren of ours. Therefore, the disappearance of these shortcomings will take place sooner for our fraternizing with Harijans even as they are and then helping them to become better men and women. That is the least penance caste Hindus can do for the past wrongs. We must approach Harijans as penitents or debtors, not as their patrons or creditors extending generosity to the undeserving.

*Harijan*, 28-9-1934, p. 257

## 88. THE ATMOSPHERE IS CHANGING

(From the substance of a speech at a meeting of *Antyajias* in Dohad)

I am immensely pleased whenever I come in contact with an *Antyaja* member or get an opportunity of visiting them in their own place. It has been my custom to practise what I believe. Hence to come in contact with and touch the *Antyajias* is with me an object-lesson. It is my request to the *Antyajias* to keep patience. The Hindu atmosphere is changing, though slowly but steadily. Even the orthodox Hindus have begun to realize the sin of untouchability, and it is very probable that this sin will not last long. I also wish that the *Antyajias* should make great efforts to remedy their own shortcomings. When I was at Godhra last year, many *Antyajias* decided to give up their habit of drinking. I also wish the *Antyajias* of this place will follow suit.

*Young India*, 10-9-1919

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XVI, p. 83

## 89. WHAT SHOULD HARIJANS DO?

(From "Some Questions")

Q.: What should Harijans do in the present drive against untouchability?

A.: I can only repeat the answer I have given so often before. They should carry on vigorous internal reform among themselves and remove every cause of reproach.

*Harijan*, 16-9-1933, p. 4

## 90. INVERTED UNTOUCHABILITY

(From "Notes")

A correspondent writes:

You have answered a correspondent's query as to how to remove the untouchability obtaining amongst the untouchables themselves. Let me put another query similar to it.

Perhaps you do not know that some of the untouchables themselves labour under a sense of sin attaching to the act of touching a touchable, or approaching within a particular distance of him, or drawing water from his well, or entering his temple, or doing any such thing in relation to the touchable – though allowed and even invited to do so. The untouchable thinks that he would be transgressing his *maryada* and be guilty of sin in doing any such acts. This is the inverse of the untouchability usually so-called and known to obtain amongst the higher castes (touchables and untouchables) against the lower ones. This is untouchability up side down. It may be the case – and the touchables may flatter themselves with the thought – that this sort of untouchability (little known, but as strong as the other) is not retaliatory in spirit. All the same it is there – and even the special correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* who interviewed you in Sabarmati Jail and toured India in 1922, noted it in Anand and Bardoli taluks in Gujarat. What, I wonder is the remedy you would advise anti-untouchability workers to adopt to cure the untouchables of this inverse of untouchability? Is this also a sin like the other sort? Does not the so-called *maryada dharma* come in our way here? Is it possible for a conscientious untouchable believer in this *dharma* to rescue a drowning Brahman whom he otherwise could?

I am not unaware of the atrocious result of untouchability observed by the correspondent. Sometimes I find it difficult to make the untouchables approach me, much less to touch me. I do not believe that it is question primarily of religion with the untouchables notto touch the touchables. They simply do not realize the possibility of touching those who have

hitherto regarded them as untouchables. In the majority of cases, therefore, it is fear that defers the untouchables even under permission from touching the touchables. The case is on a par with that of the French prisoner who having been for years locked up in the dungeons of Bastille could not, when discharged, bear the light of the day. He had almost lost the sense of sight. But I have come across in Bengal a suggestion made to the so-called untouchables that they should, by way of retaliation, regard the so-called higher class Hindus as untouchables, refuse to them all the services they are now rendering and refuse also water or food at their hands. I should deplore the day that such retaliation comes. But in this age of freedom and also licence, it need cause no surprise if what is now an object of mere talk is translated into action and retaliation descends upon the devoted heads of the so-called higher classes. Nature gives us ninety-nine chances of reform and if we do not take advantage of any of them the hundredth time she compels obedience and accompanies it with a punishment which at least makes us feel uneasy.

*Young India*, 21-5-1925, p. 179

## 91. THE DOUBLE DISTILLED POISON

(From "Notes")

The curse of untouchability has permeated even the untouchables. And so we have grades of untouchability amongst them, the higher grade refusing contact with the lower. A Thiyya friend writes from Calicut:

We Thiyyas, a supposed low-castes people but in education and social status much improved, and almost equal to any other community in Malabar, have a temple here in Calicut. A meeting was arranged to consider the question of giving entry to our Panchama brothers on the birthday of our great Guru Sri Narayan Guru. This was opposed by a large majority and there was much hooliganism to give trouble to the supporters. We voted before the entry of the Panchama brethren but we were in a minority. We have, therefore, boycotted the temple and we go and worship at another temple where no such distinction is observed. We are determined to fight this battle to a finish.

I tender my congratulations to the small band of reformers. It was a right thing for them to refuse to use a privilege that was denied to the Panchamas. Those who claim justice must come with clear hands. The Thiyyas may not set up against others a barrier which they would break down when erected against themselves. That was the lesson Vykam taught. It must on no account be forgotten. Let the reformers then pursue their battle, in the true Satyagraha spirit, without anger and with quiet determination, and they will soon turn the minority into a majority. Time and tide are with them.

*Young India*, 9-9-1926, p. 317



## 92. THE DECIDING FACTOR

(Originally appeared under the title "Is Swaiaj Worth Having?")

The following letter will be read with painful interest:

I am a native of Vikrampur, and my home is only a few miles away from the home of Deshabandhu. I belong to the Namashudra community, one of the so-called depressed classes –now some term it as suppressed.

The clerks in the office, where I am working, numbering 50, are all so-called high caste Hindus and are natives of Bengal. Excepting only a few, all are men of my adjoining districts.

I am living here in the staff's mess quarters. Being a member of the so-called lower caste, I am looked upon here as a despised insect. I am served my meals in a way which a self-respecting man cannot tolerate. Even the servant refuses to wash and clear away my plates after I finish my meals. Although in cleanliness and decency I am not in any way inferior to any of the members here, I must be looked as if I am inferior even to the servant working here. Sanctity of the mind has no place in the Hindu society.

Will you tell me how long such a state of things will continue in this wretched land? Is Swaraj worth having when the mentality of the people is so cruel towards their fellow- countrymen? Will not the treatment of the so-called higher classes who occupy most of the top positions towards the so- called lower classes be terrible when the power is in their hands? In this caste-ridden country, do you expect that better treatment will be meted out to them?

I am in intense agony of mind, please reply sharp and also advise me what I am to do here.

As the writer does not wish to have his identity disclosed I have erased some parts of the letter. There is no doubt that what is happening to this Namashudra friend is the lot of many who are similarly placed. Though

untouchability is undoubtedly going, the suppressed classes who are daily growing more and more conscious and naturally resentful of the terrible treatment meted out to them by the so-called higher classes are becoming restive. Their fear, too, that if the things remain as they are when Swaraj is attained, the reformer's may be a voice in the wilderness and blind orthodoxy may reduce to naught even the little progress that has been made, has a surface justification. I wish the "suppressed" friends could be made to see that the fear is in reality groundless. They do not give sufficient credit to the reformers. It is the determination of the few that is going to be the deciding factor. Surely he who runs may see that in the forefront of the fight for freedom are to be found the reformers and not the reactionaries who even now seek the protection of the foreign power for sustaining their reactionary policy which they miscall religion. When therefore swaraj is attained it will be the reformers who must have the reins of Government in their hands.

Again the suppressed classes should know that in any constitution that can be conceived there are bound to be full legal safeguards for their rights.

And lastly they may not feel helpless and dependent on the aid of reformers. They have a just cause and they have themselves to defend it. True meaning of Swaraj is that every member of the commonwealth is capable of defending his liberty against the whole world. Swaraj is an inward growth. Their restiveness is the surest and the hopefulest sign of their and India's coming freedom. Healthy discontent is the prelude to progress. But meanwhile it behoves all the clerks and others who come in

contact with these classes to treat them with exemplary consideration and courtesy.

*Young India*, 1-8-1929, p. 249

### 93. EVILS A RESULT

In the Telugu district as well as the adjoining Tamil districts, *Madigas* and *Malas*, both of whom are at present untouchables, kill cows and buffaloes for purposes of sacrifice to *Matamma*, *Alariyamma* and *Gangamma*. There is no doubt that a certain number of caste people also take vows before these goddesses in times of emergency and calamity, but the actual sacrifice is done by the so-called outcastes. The untouchables not only sacrifice animals in public but eat the beef. They also eat carrion. Caste Hindus do not, but they do freely eat pork. I would request you, therefore, to advise the untouchables to give up this sacrifice and carrion-eating. The latter is responsible for their physical degeneration. Could you not also send a message for us who are working in the cause of anti-untouchability?

This is a condensed extract from a long letter, from the Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Ryots' Association. There is no doubt that this habit of carrion-eating, and especially beef-eating, has a great deal to do with the prevalent prejudice but in no other thing is the weakness of Hinduism, or rather of caste Hindus, betrayed so forcibly as in regarding a portion of fellow-Hindus to be untouchable and neglecting them in the cruellest manner possible. We have, therefore, only ourselves to thank that the untouchables are what they are. But it is not yet too late to

mend. The Harijans should realize that untouchability is dead and gone. Its evil effect will persist for a long time to come. The duration will be the measure of our joint-neglect. Greater by far is the responsibility of the caste Hindus. If they will do their duty and work whole-heartedly, they will certainly succeed in stopping these sacrifices and the habit of carrion-eating. Nothing but the spread of enlightenment is required to rid the community of evil superstition and evil habits. But I cannot too often remind the reformers and caste Hindus in general that they will not purify Harijans of any single one of the evil habits, if they will make the reform a condition of the removal of untouchability. Rather let us realize that the evils are a result, and not a cause, of untouchability any way most decidedly not at the present moment.

So far as carrion-eating is concerned, the reader will find concrete suggestions which I have in the Gujarati columns of *Harijanbandhu* and which have been translated for these columns.

*Harijan*, 18-3-1933, p. 2

## 94. WORK YOUR OWN SALVATION

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

Addressing the Harijans assembled to meet him, Gandhiji said:

The apathy of the high-caste Hindus seems to worry you. I am dealing with them as best I can, but this is not the occasion to give them a message. How can I convey them a message through you? I would ask you not to think of them, but to think of yourselves. This is a movement for the purification of Hinduism. Think what contribution you can make to it. If you bestir yourselves, if you shed your unclean habits, if you reform your way of living, irrespective of what the high-caste Hindus do, I assure you their superiority of birth will automatically disappear. Superiority consists in clean and pure living and I assure you that in spite of your unclean occupations you can live cleaner and purer lives than the rest of us. Yours is a service without which the community cannot do. I want you to be conscious of the dignity of your profession, to learn to practise it in a clean manner and I am sure you will be able to dictate your terms. Depend on yourselves, stand on your own legs and work your own salvation.

*Harijan, 29-7-1933, p. 5*

## 95. BOYCOTT BY CASTE HINDUS

(From "Some Questions")

In two villages of Kaira, Harijans have been boycotted by caste Hindus because they asked for adequate remuneration for carrying carcasses. What should the Harijans do in such cases?

A.: I am happy to be able to say that in one of these villages, owing to the efforts of workers of the local society, the boycott was lifted and the information as to the other village, at the time of writing this, is that there is every probability of a similar amicable settlement. But assuming that in some villages caste Hindus remain obstinate and persist in boycotting Harijans, if the latter have any self-consciousness they would persist in their refusal to render service without adequate remuneration, and, if the boycott proves to be too hot for them they would quietly vacate the offending village. I know that this is easier said than done. And I know also that there is not sufficient awakening among the Harijans to induce them to adopt the method suggested by me. But I have also no doubt that the time is coming soon when caste Hindus will have to think a hundred times before resorting to such boycotts.

*Harijan*, 16-9-1933, p. 4

## 96. THE OBJECT OF THE MOVEMENT

(From "Harijan v. Non-Harijan")

"Rather than do constructive work among Harijans, will it not be better to create intense dissatisfaction amongst them with their condition and thus promote such self-help as they can generate among themselves? It is no use your trying to convert the *savarnas*." This was one of the questions that was asked at a meeting of workers. As it is an important question, it is as well to give the gist of the answer given by me at the meeting. The question betrays ignorance of the whole scope of the movement. To create dissatisfaction among the Harijans can bring no immediate relief to them and can only tend to perpetuate a vicious division amongst Hindus. The object of the movement is to do away with this utterly unnatural division and to secure for Harijans the simple justice to which they are entitled at the hands of *savarna* Hindus. Thus the movement is one of repentance and reparation. Hence it is confined, on the one hand, to constructive work among Harijans and, on the other, to conversion of *savarnas* by persuasion, arguments and, above all, by correct conduct on the part of the reformers. If the latter have gentleness, forbearance and patience, what is scoffed at as irreligion by *sanatanists* will presently be regarded as the essence of religion. Has not Manu said, "Know that to be *dharma* which is generally observed by the learned, the good and those who are free from passion and hate and which is felt in one's heart"? If, therefore, the reformers possess the qualities insisted upon by Manu, there will be no doubt whatsoever that the hearts of the *sanatanists* will respond. Whether they do or not, the service rendered to suppressed

humanity by reformers will be a substantial contribution to human progress and will be its own reward. It will certainly find honourable mention in God's eternal book of life.

*Harijan*, 15-6-1934, p. 140

## 97. *DARIDRANARAYAN AND HARIJAN*

(From "Notes")

There is a struggle going on between *Daridranarayan* and Harijan. Which includes the other? Thoughtlessly the answer would be, "Of course, Harijan." But a moment's reflection shows that *Daridranarayan* is the larger form. Harijans are undoubtedly *Daridranarayan*, but they are ranked the lowest by the well-to-do. Hence they are the nearest and dearest to Hara or Hari – God. For, has He not called Himself Servant of His servants? And whom will He serve most, if not those who are the most neglected by the world? *Daridranarayan*, however, includes, besides Harijans, all those many millions who are not branded outcasts from their birth. Therefore, service of Harijans necessarily includes that of *Daridranarayan*, but that of *Daridranarayans* may not always be also service of Harijans. Writers for *Harijan* will therefore do well always to bear this distinction in mind. For they should remember that the *Harijan* is a weekly wholly devoted to the Harijan cause and, therefore, excludes everything that has no bearing on that cause either directly or indirectly. It is necessary to bear this distinction in mind, since I am devoting its columns freely to many matters which I have appeared to have hitherto excluded from them. The fact is that during the hurricane tour I had



little leisure to think, as I am now doing, of many efforts at construction, much less to write about them. For their all-round amelioration, there is limitless scope. Do they not represent numerically a large part of humanity and, in point of usefulness, rank perhaps the highest in society? Indian humanity would soon disintegrate, if they suddenly ceased to do the work they are doing at present with the brand of the outcaste on their foreheads for reward.

*Harijan*, 19-10-1934, p. 288

## 98. TO SCORN AS BAD AS COWING

(Originally appeared under the title "Not to Cow But to Scorn?")

A young Englishman who has lived in Madras for two years writes from his home in Essex:

An article in one of our Sunday newspapers, issued yesterday, referring to the untouchables of India, prompts me to indict this.

It is with much gladness that I have read of the deviation of your policy, from the agitation against the British influence in India to the release of the untouchables from their plight.

You now, Sir, are undertaking something really heroic. To free those of "low caste"—they that are shackled or "outlawed"—is, indeed, a noble inspiration. Strong opposition and antagonism will undoubtedly be met with, but I know that such as these will not turn you aside from your objective. No great deed was ever done without a struggle.

Courage and persistency will, in time, break down the most stubborn of barriers.

I believe that, of the Hindu population, untouchables are in the majority. Of course I may be wrong but if correct, then, I consider the most effective measure to adopt in righting and preventing the grievous humiliations put upon this great body of people is not to approach the perpetrators (high castes) but the development of a "line of defence" through the untouchables themselves.

The forming of a Brotherhood amongst themselves that will encourage the development of an existence, entirely independent of those, to whom they appear to be objectionable, should, by degrees, build up a "strong point" and cause these now humbled folk, not to cower, but to scorn and ignore the spurning and lashes now directed at them.

Such a body, built by the bond of sympathy and comradeship, would, in its independence, command respect and, perhaps envy too!

Brahmans or others that in this era look with expressions of repulsion and disgust upon the poor would hesitate before doing so, knowing that their scorn was as "water on a duck's back".

The writer evidently does not know that there is a cult among Harijans which is trying to do exactly what he advises me to do. But that way does not lie the salvation of Harijans, certainly not of caste Hindus. The logical result of what is preached by the correspondent must be another problem akin to the Hindu-Muslim one – only much more intense. That way is the way of hate which is violence. The way I am trying to follow is the way of love which is non-violence. Having belonged to the oppressor class and having by choice made the attempt to become one with the oppressed, I have learnt that the true way of securing justice is to inculcate mutual respect, in other words, to evoke the spirit of equality or brotherhood in the place of that of superiority and inferiority. This can best be done by the "superior" class being induced to descend from its fancied height. The so-called "inferior" class has to be taught, not to scorn, but to be induced to shed the fear that is born of a consciousness of inferiority.

Therefore the Harijan Sevak Sangh is performing the double duty of asking the caste Hindus, on the one hand, to repent of the injustice that they have done to the Harijans and is working, on the other hand, among the Harijans by spreading education among them and by bringing to their notice the evils that oppression always breeds among the oppressed. To deprive a man of his natural liberty and to deny to him the ordinary

amenities of life is worse than starving the body. It is starvation of the soul the dweller in the body. Harijans are a powerful illustration of this process of starvation of the soul. No amount of mere literary education or even economic betterment will restore the lost dignity of man. That restoration can only come when self-realization comes. This realization will not come without repentance on the part of the superior class. Superiority complex and inferiority complex are two faces of the same coin. Both are equally bad. Both require treatment. Mere transference of scorn from the "superior" caste Hindu to the "inferior" Harijans does not remedy the disease, it only aggravates it. "Not to cow" is sound advice. But "to scorn" is as bad as cowing. "Love one another" is, therefore, the only advice an impartial observer can give. And I hope that the writer of the letter sees the weakness of the formula.

*Harijan, 26-10-1934, p. 293*

## 99. NO WONDER!

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Not Bound".)

Some weavers of Piplav, Bhadran Taluka, Baroda State, write to say that two years ago they resolved to give up carrion-eating and to that end gave up carrying and flaying carcasses. But the tanners and the *bhangis* of the village have been doing that work. The Patidars of the village would not tolerate what they thought was presumption on the weavers' part and proclaimed a severe boycott of them, cutting off all social services. They polluted their well, and began throwing stones on their roofs. The writers ask for guidance.

The Baroda State is well known for its enlightened policy about untouchability. I trust that the authorities will go out of their way to save these helpless Harijans whenever they are persecuted by the so-called caste Hindus. It is also up to the many reformers of advanced Bhadran to befriend these poor weavers and persuade the Patidars of Piplav to desist from the reported ill-treatment of its weavers. The latter deserve congratulations on their having given up carrion-eating. They need not have, on that account, given up the carrying and flaying of dead cattle, which is a lucrative and honourable calling and a necessary social service. But they are in no way bound to do the carrying or the flaying. If an honourable calling is regarded as degrading, the responsibility for its being so regarded lies on *savarna* Hindus. No wonder if the weavers of Piplav, having become conscious of their degradation and being determined to get rid of it, decided to give up a calling that had led to

their being regarded as degraded people. It is well for the village of Piplav that it has tanners and scavengers who, not having attained class consciousness, are yet doing carcass carrying and flaying, which society wrongly considers degrading. The whole social structure must crumble to pieces if the so-called higher classes do not realize the obvious duty of abolishing the evil custom of considering any class of persons as lower than themselves. But, while that consummation is being reached, it is the duty of the authorities and the reformers to do everything in their power to protect the Harijans against the cruel treatment to which the poor weavers of Piplav are said to be subjected.

*Harijan*, 24-8-1935, p. 217

## 100. ON ITS LAST LEGS

Some critics have not hesitated to observe that it was preposterous for me to claim, in answer to Dr. Ambedkar's threat to accept some other faith than die a Hindu, that untouchability was on its last legs in spite of Kavitha. Indeed Kavitha itself supports my claim. Kavitha had gone on ever since its birth, living peacefully till an over zealous worker, not knowing his own limitations, had put up Kavitha Harijans to dare to send their children to the local school, though he knew that there was opposition from some Kavitha *savarnas*. He had hoped, as had happened elsewhere, that Harijans had successfully asserted their right to send their children to public schools. But Kavitha *savarnas* showed that they had not recognized the time spirit.

Only a few years ago the Kavitha incident would have attracted no notice. There were few reformers then. The few were to be found mostly in towns and cities. Now, thank God, their number is increasing and presently every village will have its quota. But a few years ago Harijans could not be induced to resist untouchability on any account whatsoever. It was part of their faith as it was of *savarnas*<sup>9</sup> faith. These columns contain sufficient evidence of the weekly progress made by the campaign against untouchability. Phenomenal though the progress has been, Kavitha and the like show that it has not yet affected the majority of *savarnas* in many places. The fact is a warning to the reformers and the Harijans that much has yet to be done before the hard hearts of *savarnas* are melted.

Let it be further observed that it was *savarna* reformers who advertised the Kavitha tragedy and gave it an all-India importance. It has agitated *savarna* conscience more than it has angered the Harijans. I have to note with shame and sorrow that even Kavitha Harijans no longer want to agitate for their rights. They have meekly submitted to the *savarna* impudence. In spite of all the help offered to them, they would not leave Kavitha. It is easy enough for the few that are there to earn their bread by honourable toil elsewhere. The attempt of the reformers to induce them to leave Kavitha under their protection has failed.

Even if change of faith, not on account of its inherent inadequacy but because of the unreasoning prejudice of many of its followers, were justified, in the present instance it can but defeat the cause intended to be served. Secession of stalwarts like Dr. Ambedkar can but weaken the defences of Harijans. We know, as a matter of fact, that non-Hindu Harijans, no matter how eminent they may be are not able to help Hindu Harijans. Indeed, they are a class apart still in their adopted faiths. Such is the hold untouchability of the Indian type has on the people in India.

Let not Dr. Ambedkar's just wrath deject the reformer, let it spur him to greater effort. For whilst it is true that the number of workers against untouchability has greatly increased, there can be no doubt that the number is yet too small to overtake the prejudice of ages. Nevertheless a movement which has attained the proportions that the anti-untouchability campaign has attained and in which the slightest untoward incident can attract worldwide attention cannot but be on its last legs. Humanity will not suffer it any longer.

*Harijan*, 26-10-1935, p. 292



## 101. VACATE KAVITHA

### I

Sjt. A. V. Thakkar says in a letter received last week:

The Associated Press announced on the 10th inst. that the caste Hindus of Kavitha agreed to admit Harijan boys to the village school in Kavitha and that matters were amicably settled. This was contradicted on the 13th inst. by the Secretary of the Ahmedabad Harijan Sevak Sangh, who said in his statement that the Harijans had undertaken (privately of course) not to send their children to the school. Such an undertaking was not given voluntarily, but was extorted from them by the caste Hindus, in this case the Garasias of the village, who had proclaimed a social boycott against poor Harijans – weavers, *chamars* and others, who number over 100 families. They were deprived of agricultural labour, their animals of grazing in the pasture land, and their children of buttermilk. Not only this, but a Harijan leader was compelled to take an oath by Mahadev that he and others would not hereafter even make an effort to reinstate their children in the school. The so-called settlement was brought about in this way.

But even after the bogus settlement reported on the 10th and the complete surrender by poor Harijans, the boycott was not lifted up to the 19th and partly up to the 22nd from the weavers. It was lifted somewhat earlier from the head of the *chamars*, as Garasias themselves could not remove the carcasses of their dead animals, and thus had to come to terms with the *chamars* earlier. As if the enormities perpetrated so far were not enough, kerosene was poured into the Harijans' well, once on the 15th inst. and again on the 19th inst. One can imagine what terrorism was thus practised on poor Harijans because they had dared to send their children to sit alongside of the "princely" Garasia boys.

I met the leaders of the Garasias on the morning of the 22nd. They said that they could not tolerate the idea of boys of *dheds* and *chamars* sitting by the side of their

own boys. I met also the District Magistrate of Ahmedabad on the 23rd with a view to finding out if he could do something to ease the situation, but without any result.

Harijan boys are thus practically banned from the village school with nobody to help them. This has caused despondency among the Harijans to such an extent that they are thinking of migrating in a body to some other village.

There is no help like self-help. God helps those who help themselves. If the Harijans concerned will carry out their reported resolve to wipe the dust of Kavitha off their feet, they will not only be happy themselves but they will pave the way for others who may be similarly treated. If people migrate in search of employment, how much more should they do so in search of self-respect? I hope that well-wishers of Harijans will help these poor families to vacate inhospitable Kavitha.

*Harijan*, 5-10-1935, p. 268

## II

(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.: It is not quite easy for the Harijans to leave their village where they feel like doing so, as in Kavitha. How can they get work?

A.: I still adhere to my advice. We should be ashamed of asking them to stay on in the village and suffer the continuing prosecution. It should not be impossible for us to find work for them. The number of those who will migrate will never be large.

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

## 102. NATTAR HARIJAN AGREEMENT

The following has been received from Shri L. N. Gopalaswami, Secretary, Tamil Nad Harijan Sevak Sangh:

I am very glad to communicate to you the very good news regarding the settlement of troubles between a big section of the Nattars called the Tennilai Nattars and the Harijans of that locality.

The following is the true translation of the agreement entered into between the heads of both the parties:

### Copy of the Agreement dated 24-2-1937

We, the Harijans and Nattars of Tennilai Nadu, have in the presence of Smt. Kamla Sivasubramaniam, Secretary, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Karaikudi, today resolved to forget and forgive all the differences in the past between the two communities. In token thereof we have set our hand to the conditions of the agreement referred to below:

1. The Harijans will not be forced to do labour. They are at perfect liberty to take wages for the work they do and refuse to do work for those who do not pay.
2. **Wearing of Dress:** The Harijans are entitled to use shirts and upper clothes as they like, and the women all kinds of ornaments as they please. But on the car day festival of Kandadevi and Eluvancottah, the males will not wear shirts as the chief Nattars themselves do not do so.
3. The Harijans can build any type of houses they please according to their wishes and capacities.

(Signed)

**Harijans**

VEMBAN

KALIAN

**Nattars**

P. N. KARUPPAIAH AMBALAN

C. KARUPPIAH AMBALAN

S. RAMASWAMI

P. CHIDAMBARA AMBALAN

S. PARANCHODHI PILLAI

This is indeed good news, and those who brought about the agreement deserve congratulations. One may hope also that the terms will be strictly observed by the Nattars. But it is humiliating to find that a portion of Indian humanity cannot wear the dress or ornaments they like and receive wages for their labour except by the grace of another supposed to be superior to them but in reality no better than the first.

Harijan, 27-3-1937, p. 56

### 103. RIDING TWO HORSES

(From the original in Hinduism)

There are a fair number of members of the *Tanti* caste in Utkal. Legally they are looked upon as Harijans. They are well known as *Pan-Tantis*. Many of them have gone to Kolhan in Singbhum District for earning a livelihood. They do not get themselves as Harijans with the result that they are not included among the Harijans of Bihar. They do not get themselves enlisted in Government records as Harijans. It is right that they do not. Why should there be any desire to be classed as Harijans? What benefit can accrue therefrom except that they would get the right of voting as also some help from the Government and the Harijans Sevak Sangh in the matter of education etc.? Is it proper to be classed untouchables for selfish ends? The very idea should sicken one. One may not stoop so low even for the sake of a livelihood.

A *Tanti* need not be a *Pan-Tanti*. Today we have popular governments whose duty it is to help all backward classes in the matter of education etc., as they do in the case of Harijans.

It was the British Government that created a separate class called Scheduled castes. In the eyes of popular governments there can be no distinction between rich and poor, literate or illiterate, high or low. All are one and there can be no distinctions on the score of religion either. All are Indians.

The *Tantis* should not try to count themselves as Harijans, they should not hanker after Government service. Whatever is possible for the crores

must also be possible for the *Tantis* and all others. My advice to the *Tantis* of Kolhan is that they should reform and raise themselves by means of honest work and the more fortunate should help them to do so.

New Delhi, 28-9-1946

*Harijan*, 6-10-1946, p. 344

## 104. HARIJANS NO WAY INFERIOR

(From "Gandhi Post-prayer Speeches")

The *bhajan* of the evening was sung by a Harijan inmate of the Harijan Nivas in Kingsway. Remarking upon the well-modulated speech of the Harijan, Gandhiji said that it was a matter of pleasure to him, as it must be to the audience, that man for man, given equal opportunity a Harijan was in no way inferior to any caste Hindu or any other man. Indeed, he had found that in certain things, as for instance, vocal and instrumental music or in artisanship, an average Harijan showed greater adaptability. He did not wish to convey that the Harijans were not as prone to vice as any other class of human beings. But he did wish to convey that in spite of the severe disability which untouchability had placed upon the Harijans, it did not prove any bar to equal progress provided equal opportunity was given to them.

*Harijan*, 16-11-1947, p. 409, at p. 411

## 6. SERVICE OF THE HARIJANS

### 105. ABOUT UNTOUCHABLES

Sjt. X". N. Sarma of Andhradesh came to me the other day at Calcutta and asked me certain questions, regarding the difficulties found in the path of those who were serving the Panchamas. He has now reduced my answers to writing and sent them to me to correct and publish if possible. As they are likely to help workers, I gladly find room for the questions and my answers.

1. What methods do you suggest for the propaganda for the removal of untouchability?

Not much lip propaganda is necessary now. Work is propaganda. You should work fearlessly unmindful of special ostracism for bettering the condition of the untouchables lectures may be arranged when leading men pay you a visit.

2. There are two shades of opinion in our Andhra Province, and a resolution was proposed to the effect that money should not be spent for the non-Panchamas to do propaganda work. Some people think that the Panchamas should be educated first, and the demand for the removal should come from them, while others think that paid propaganda should be done among the higher classes to change their hearts, and to make them feel that untouchability is a sin, and pandits and workers should be appointed to do this work.

I would not spend even a single pie over the pandits. If you pay them they become hirelings. They must work for pay. Money should be spent on the Panchamas to make them realize their own position. Our methods should always be non-violent. Men of the so-called higher classes must

change their attitude, and remove the ban for their own elevation and purification. If they do not do so and persist in supporting them, time must come when the untouchables will rebel against us, and may have recourse even to violent methods. I am trying my utmost to prevent such a catastrophe, and so must we all do who believe untouchability to be a sin.

3. Do you think that schools started exclusively for the Panchamas will help in any way in removing untouchability?

They must in the long run do so, as all education must. But such schools should not be exclusively Panchama schools as boys from other castes also should be welcomed. They will not come at present. But the prejudice will break down in time if the schools are well-managed. If you want mixed schools, you must start one in your locality. Suppose you own a house. Nobody can ask you to go away from your house. Bring an untouchable boy to your home and start a school with him. Induce other boys to come and attend that schools.

4. In our province encouragement is given to the schools, where the children of both the untouchables and the touchables read together.

Yes, you may encourage them. But you should not refuse help to schools or institutions where there are only untouchables.

5. In some Taluk Boards there are orders that schools will be abolished if admission is refused to the untouchables. Do you advise us to help the Panchamas at such places in getting admission through our propagandists?

Certainly you should help them. But there is no need for special propagandists. Your workers will do for that purpose.

6. Then what about the propaganda work? Do you think that silent work will do?



Yes. There is no good of propaganda when there is no solid work behind to elevate the Panchamas. (In this connection, Gandhiji referred to the Vaikam struggle and said that it had a very tremendous effect on the people of those parts.)

7. Shall we spend money freely for the propaganda at a time when such questions arise?

Not freely. Solid work is its own propaganda. At Vaikam most of the money is spent for constructive work.

8. Are you going to take up the question of untouchability more vigorously at any time in the near future?

I have already taken up that question as vigorously as possible. We are trying to start schools, dig wells and build temples etc., for them wherever it is possible. The work does not stop for want of money. Perhaps you are thinking that nothing is done for them, because it is not advertised in the papers.

*Young India*, 10-9-1925, p. 315

## 106. SERVICE OF THE SUPPRESSED

(Translated from *Navqjivan* by M.D.)

The servant of the suppressed serves both himself and the society, as the oppressor ultimately oppresses himself, and the engineer is always hoist with his own petard.

We were on the point of being pariahs of the world, having treated the bulk of our brethren as untouchables. We are however likely to escape that catastrophe, as the Hindu society is trying to remove this blot in various ways and in many provinces. By far the biggest and most successful of these efforts is perhaps the one conducted by Anasuyabehn in Ahmedabad.

I addressed two meetings last month, one under the auspices of the Sweepers' Mahajan and the other a gathering of the children of the Labour Union schools. Most of these children belonged to the suppressed classes. I take the following from the report that was read at the meeting:

The bulk of the labourers are ignorant, illiterate, badlyhoused, and in the grip of pernicious customs and vices. Infant marriages are still common amongst them, and 50 per cent of the infants die within a year of their birth. They are also heavily indebted and have to pay as much as 75 per cent interest. And yet they are not an inconsiderable portion of the city population, looking to their number and the office they perform. The prosperity of the great mill industry of the city depends largely on them and hence welfare work amongst them is most essential. The Labour Union is trying to serve them in various directions, but education would seem to be the very

basis of the whole effort. Here is a brief account of the educational work that is being done.

#### **DAY SCHOOLS**

There are at present 10 day schools with 699 students, 75 of whom are girls. 183 of these are Patidars, 60 Musalmans, 456 belong to the various untouchable communities. They are taught up to the Gujarati fourth standard, and special attention is paid to inculcating principles of sanitation, hygiene and temperance. As a result many of them who were never used to bathing and washing regularly do so now. Manual training is compulsory and almost all the students know *takli* spinning. Carding is also taught in the higher classes and so the schools have for the most part their own slivers. There is a steady improvement in speed, children in the higher classes spinning 100 yards an hour. A successful effort has been made in interesting the children in wearing khadi, three day-schools having all their children khadi wearing. The other schools are also trying to follow suit. The schools have stimulated a desire for education and there is a steady improvement in the number on the rolls as well as in attendance. In fact the demand for schools is too great to cope with.

#### **A MONTESSORI SCHOOL**

In order that the children may begin their training in clean and healthy habits from their very babyhood we have a Montessori school also with 50 children, 22 of whom are girls. These spend all their time between 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the school. The school has had a most salutary effect on their habits. We wish we could dot all the mill areas with a number of such schools.

#### **AN ASHRAM**

For grown-up boys of promise and character we have been having an Ashram since 1921, the selection being limited to 25, and attention is concentrated on bringing them into very close contact with teachers of culture and character who live all the 24 hours in their midst. All the processes of cloth making from carding to weaving are taught them, and it is expected that the Ashram will turn out good workers for social reform in their own communities.

### NIGHT SCHOOLS

The desire for education has been catching, so much so that the workers in the mills also have asked for schools for themselves. We have 16 night schools with 612 students, 36 Patidars, 100 Musalmans, and 576 belonging to the untouchable communities. The school hours are from 7.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. The school has had a wholesome influence in weaning the students from drink. There is a library and a reading room in each of the two mill areas.

### EXPENSES

The expenditure on education was Rs. 33,620 last year, out of which Rs. 6,250 were contributed by the Millowners' Association, and Rs. 5,658-4-8 were contributions from various donors. For this we are grateful to all the donors.

### TEACHERS

There are in all 45 teachers in the day schools and 38 teachers in the night schools. They take a lively interest in their work and are affecting the lives of the workmen for the better.

I do not know workmen's children elsewhere receiving education under such orderly and careful organization and in such numbers.

The millowners ought to welcome the enterprise. On the contrary they are reported to threaten to stop the monetary help they are at present giving. I do hope not only that it is a false alarm, but that they will yearly add to their contributions. In doing so I should humbly think they will be doing nothing beyond what they owe to their workmen.

A noteworthy feature of the enterprise is the large contribution of the workmen themselves towards the expenses, the ultimate aim being to conduct these schools wholly at their own expense. This of course presupposes their economic betterment, a stimulation in them of the desire for sacrifice and for the education of their children. In the

meanwhile the millowners and other philanthropists should keep the enterprise going.

The sweepers' meeting was remarkable for the things it brought to light. I heard them sing their songs with flawless pronunciation. They were comparatively unlettered, but no one who listened to their songs could say that they belonged to the suppressed classes. But they are indebted, underpaid, and addicted to drink. Most of them beg and live on leavings from plates given to them by Hindus of higher castes. Their condition makes the conclusion irresistible that we the so-called high caste Hindus are responsible for their failings, and only the inherent strength of Hinduism is responsible for their good points. Hinduism has helped them to retain some of their culture in spite of the oppression they have laboured under. They would never have been reduced to their present state if we had regarded them as our own kith and kin.

Anasuyabehn may carry on welfare work among them, but who will look to their housing? I have seen the hovels they live in. It is the duty of the millowners and the Municipality to provide them with better houses, and even if the former fail in their duty the latter may not do so, for better housing is essential as much for the health of the city as for that of the workmen.

#### UNTOUCHABLES AMONG UNTOUCHABLES

I addressed a third meeting which was full of painful experience. There is a suppressed class night school under the Gujarat Vidyapith conducted by the students of the Vidyalaya. They take considerable pains over the school which until a short time ago had a very large attendance of *dhed*

children. The teachers thought of the sweepers' children and induced the sweepers to send their children to the school but as soon as these came most of the *dheds* withdrew their children from the school! The teachers therefore turned to me to find a way out of the situation. So I went there. Very few *dhed* parents attended the meeting. One of them whom I tried to tackle said frankly taking his stand on the traditional religion: "How may a *dhed* touch a sweeper?" "But if the touch of the sweeper pollutes the *dhed*, why, should the higher castes touch the *dheds*?" I asked. "We never ask them to do so," he quickly rejoined and floored me. This is how we are hoist with our own petard. If untouchability had been allowed to go on unchecked, each one of us should have considered the other untouchable and we should have been doomed. But thank God, in spite of the orthodox *dheds* and Banias and Brahmans, the snake of untouchability is breathing its last.

The teachers of course ought to adhere to their resolve. They should not be angry with the *dheds*, but neither should they let go a single sweeper boy for the sake of the *dhed* boys. Let them shower all their love and attention on the sweeper boys, and there their duty ends. Their determination and faith will melt the hearts of the *dheds*, who as soon as they find the sweepers' children growing in cleanliness and character, will not help sending their children too. The anti-untouchability worker has to begin at the lowermost rung of the ladder. There are, I know some "reformers" who are apt to think: "Better reform and serve our own castes before we reform and serve the *dheds*" This way of thinking betrays impatience and ignorance, impatience because we fight shy of obstacles, and ignorance because we forget that all other reform of

Hinduism is nothing worth until the main reform, viz., the removal of untouchability is achieved. This blot poisons the whole system, even as a drop of arsenic would poison a tankful of milk. Remove this and you open the door for other reforms, retain this and you render other reforms nugatory. The disease of a consumptive unless the root cause is tackled remains just the same whether you remove or do not remove a few abscesses on his body.

*Young India*, 19-4-1928, p. 126

## 107. THE HARDEST OF ALL SERVICES

(Originally appeared under the title "A True Servant".)

Experience that is being daily gained shows that the service of Harijans is perhaps the hardest of all services. There are to my knowledge many girls and grown-up women performing daily personal service. One of them gives a graphic account of her experience in scavengers' quarters. It was with the greatest difficulty that she could restrain herself from vomiting when she first time went to these quarters. I am glad women are taking their due share in the movement.

How are the Harijans living in hideous filth to be served? They have no will to be served. They curse those who go to their quarters. Some even stone workers out of their streets. Still they must be served, if we will serve ourselves. They must be raised out of this state, if we will raise ourselves. We have pressed them down and in so doing we have gone down ourselves. Not every one can perform this high service. Let me sum up the qualities that I have found to be indispensable in a Harijan servant.

He must have true love for Harijans as if they were members of his own family.

He must have great patience and courage to bear physical injury and insults.

He must have a character above suspicion and reproach.

He must be prepared to live on the barest possible sustenance.



To go through all my correspondence and to have interviews with Harijans, *sanatanists* and workers is to pass through a raging fire. Harijans who have at all become vocal are naturally suspicious and often exacting. They are impatient. The *sanatanists* think that the Hinduism of their belief is in danger. They have money which they are using freely. New organs are daily coming into being. They impute motives, make the wildest statements about the reformers and distort the whole movement. The workers are not all an ideal team. I have seen how one worker can poison the whole atmosphere around him unless he is thoroughly trustworthy and is pure in mind and body.

If the worker is to satisfy both the Harijans and the *sanatanists*, he will do so, only by showing the highest character, deep humility and great charity. In other words, he will have to be a man of religion. This is a movement for the purification of religion. No religion has ever been purified by brag and bluster or by men with a loose character.

Workers will have to be most circumspect. *Sanatanists* are reported to be resorting to *goondaism* and not to hesitate to resort to force to break up meetings. This is no wonder. Evil has its own vested interests. These are undoubtedly in danger, and they will put up a fight for existence. Where, therefore, there is any danger of a disturbance, the workers must avoid it, even if they have to give up public meetings and the like. In such cases they must take up the message of deliverance from house to house. They must not engage in vain disputations or interpretation of shastras. They must rely upon the unfailing ability of Truth to protect itself. Truth is Life and it propagates itself the moment it has got a habitation in some human personality. Mute conduct is often the most effective speech.

Workers, therefore, need to have a living faith in themselves and the cause. But they know that by themselves they are nothing. Therefore, faith in themselves means faith in God. Those who empty themselves of all pride and all egotism have the greatest help from God.

Hinduism will be purified of the evil of untouchability only by the willing sacrifice of thousands of such true servants.

## 108. TRUTH THE ONLY WAY

I have already summed up in an article in the last issue of *Harijan* the qualities regarded as indispensable in a servant of the Harijans. If this movement is essentially religious and has for its object the purification and protection of Hinduism, it can be carried on only by truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Truth is the very foundation of religion. If Truth is God, there can be no room for untruth in religion. Let every Harijan *sevak* inscribe this fundamental principle on the tablet of his heart.

I am being inundated with *sanatanist* literature. New weeklies and leaflets are coming in daily. *Sanatanists* have loosened their purse-strings. I like the awakening. How I wish it was on the right lines! The writings I see contain palpable falsehoods. Their sole object is to stop the anti-untouchability movement somehow or other. How can one answer such propaganda?

Most certainly not by untruth. Truth can be the only answer. I have indeed had complaints against reformers from *sanatanists* to the effect that the former are resorting to untruth and rowdyism. These complaints have been unsupported by evidence. I have requested the correspondents to supply me with it. Only in one case has an attempt been made to furnish evidence. And I have forwarded the complaint to the proper quarters for investigation. I do not wish to suggest that refusal to furnish me with evidence is proof positive that the reformers are all above

reproach. These lines are being written in order to warn them against any departure from truth and non-violence.

My attempt is to know no distinction between the *sanatanist* and the reformer. I ask for truthfulness from both. But as the *sanatanists* refuse to regard me as one of their own some even look upon me as their for afraid my appeal will have no weight with them. I should be satisfied if the reformers will listen to my appeal. For, their truth will overcome the opponents' untruth, even as light overcomes darkness. If, therefore, the Harijan *sevak* will pursue every one of his activities with truth as the guiding principle, he is sure in the end to convert the *sanatanists*.

But let the workers know that exaggeration is also a species of untruth. I receive reports about opening of temples and wells to Harijans. But sometimes it has been discovered that all the temples and wells referred to have not been opened and that the information supplied to me has been based on insufficient data. The Dhulia Anti-Untouchability Committee has published a small pamphlet containing a list of temples and wells opened all over India. It is an imposing list, but I am not inclined to accept it at its face value, not because the Committee has been careless in its compilation, but because it had no opportunity of testing the accuracy of the information supplied from all-India sources. Very often workers gain their information from newspapers, instead of being themselves suppliers of information to newspapers. Statements received from Anti-Untouchability Committees cannot be accepted as conclusive evidence, if they are based upon untested reports published in the daily press. And then there is the great temptation to swell the list of temples and wells opened, for fear of my fast being precipitated. It is a

disheartening thought for me and it betrays a poor opinion of the great movement.... Truth is made of sterner stuff, and it must be held superior to any life or lives, be they ever so precious. It must live even if a million lives had to be sacrificed. In a big, religious movement like the drive against untouchability, which many believe to be an integral part of Hindu religion, nothing but unadulterated truth and unconquerable faith in the cause will avail. The reformers hold untouchability to be itself the biggest blot on Hinduism, a great lie. If it is, it can be defeated only by truth and gentleness.

*Harijan*, 18-3-1933, p. 5

## 109. ALL THIS AND MUCH MORE

(From "All about the Fast")

The work of removal of untouchability is not merely a social or economic reform whose extent can be measured by so much social amenities or economic relief provided in so much time. Its goal is to touch the hearts of the millions of Hindus who honestly believe in the present day untouchability as a God-made institution, as old as the human race itself. This it will be admitted, is a task infinitely higher than mere social and economic reform. Its accomplishment undoubtedly includes all these and much more. For it means nothing short of a complete revolution in the Hindu thought and the disappearance of the horrible and terrible doctrine of inborn inequality and high-and-lowness, which has poisoned Hinduism and is slowly undermining its very existence. Such a change can only be brought about by an appeal to the highest in man.

*Harijan*, 8-7-1933, p. 4 at p. 5

## 110. QUANTITY V. QUALITY

There is no doubt that workers in a cause are as a rule tempted more by quantitative than by qualitative results of their labours. And though the volume of work done throughout India, as a result of anti-untouchability movement represented by the Servants of Untouchables Society is not by any means unsatisfactory as a whole, it looks insignificant when it is distributed over the respective provinces and when it is considered relatively to the goal which is complete removal of untouchability, that is, of the high-and-lowness mentality that pervades Hinduism. There was, therefore, despondence markedly reflected at the meetings of anti-untouchability workers that were called during my convalescence after the recent fast. I did not share the despondence myself. For, I had only quality in mind whereas I saw that the co-workers had consciously or unconsciously quantity in mind.

I would have one good teacher in preference to fifty indifferent ones. I would be satisfied with the constant attendance of five children instead of the sporadic attendance of fifty. I would have five workers concentrating their attention on compact small selected areas rather than having them to cover large areas to which they could never give concentrated attention.

If this preference for quality is good, as it is for any movement, it is especially so far an essentially religious movement like that of anti-untouchability. In religion, indifference to quality may even lead to disaster. If teachers are a stop-gap, if school children come when they

like and workers go about from place to place without establishing personal contact with Harijans, it may be found that both the Harijans and the caste men may have their hearts untouched at the end say of ten years' labours, and the result may be a reaction against the movement on the part both of Harijans and caste men.

In a religious movement faith plays an important part. Therefore many factors are necessarily unknown and unknowable. No one can fathom the movement from time to time as we can most secular movements in which most factors are known and under control. If I want to manufacture one million yards of khadi, given the hands and cotton, I would be able to say when I can deliver the goods. But if I have to touch the hearts of five Hindus and wean them from untouchability, I should not know when, if at all, I could accomplish the task. I have simply to work in the belief that my cause being just, if I am a pure enough person to handle it, I may touch the hearts of the five Hindus amongst whom I have been called upon to work. I may not, therefore, have any despondence over my mission, nor may I change the venue of my work, nor ambitiously extend its scope beyond my capacity. On the contrary, I must believe that not only shall I be able by gentleness and patience to affect the five fellow Hindus, but that when I have succeeded with them I shall not be long in succeeding with five millions. This, and no other, is the meaning of the saying "Faith can move mountains" or "To those who work assiduously and in My name I always grant success."

Therefore, what we need is boundless faith backed by perfect purity of character. An impure mind and a religious spirit go ill together. By purity of character is here meant truth, love and chastity in thought, word and

deed. If we have not these we shall neither move the' caste men nor the Harijans. If we have not this triple purity, not only shall we fail to steal the hearts of either, but by our failure we shall discredit not merely ourselves but the great cause we represent.

Hence, I have no hesitation in saying that in our campaign against untouchability, if we will take care of quality, quantity will take care of itself. It is hardly necessary to point out that what is said here about quality applies as well to Harijan workers as to caste workers. If the former are to carry out an internal moral reformation, I was going to say, revolution among Harijans, they will do so only by producing workers of unimpeachable purity and integrity, working with single-mindedness in limited areas where they can establish personal contacts.

*Harijan*, 19-8-1933, p. 4



## 111. REPORT WRITING

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the tide "A Suggestion from America".)

An American friend, who knows Indian conditions somewhat and is deeply interested in Harijan work, writes in reply to a letter from me:

You asked me last spring for suggestions in regard to Harijan work and reports. I am too ignorant to even think of anything more than what the workers are already accomplishing. I feel that where there is room the reports would be more effective, if, in addition to telling what has been done, they would also compare it with the previous conditions. For example, if a new well is installed, to tell what prior facilities the Harijans had for getting water. Also to tell the approximate number of Harijans in each such locality, so as to show how many people the new facilities will serve and how adequate or inadequate even the improvement is. Also to contrast it with corresponding facilities for upper-caste people in the same place. For example, in the agitation for Negro schools in the United States, it has proved very effective to contrast the number of white people with the number of Negroes in a given district, and then the number of white schools and the number of Negro schools there, and the amount of money appropriated by the county school board for Negro schools and the amount appropriated for white schools. The contrast is glaring in almost every instance.

The underlying note of the American friend's suggestion is a plea for more truth. The reports of our work can never be too accurate. They must be mirrors both of our strength and our weaknesses. We may not, therefore, embellish them. Too often reports are made attractive by rosy pictures of institutions to which they refer. But not being true to life, they share

the fate of ordinary newspaper paragraphs or advertisements. Readers simply do not read them or when they do, they distrust them. Comparative statements, such as the writer suggests, will better enable the reader to grasp the meaning of figures and facts. Reports should never contain declamations or writers' opinions, except when the latter are relevant. They should be brief and to the point. When there is no apparent progress, workers very often say they have nothing to report. Such men forget that what is wanted is a truthful record of their activities. If, therefore, systematic work has been done, a correct record of it cannot fail to be of great value to other workers. We may not always command success, but we can always show increasing effort and concentration, which are forerunners of success.

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

## 112. THE MOST EXPEDITIOUS WAY

(From "Some Amendments")

The most expeditious way of driving out untouchability is to be prepared for, and render, silent, selfless service to Harijans. Such work serves a three-fold purpose. Requiring, as it does, purity among the workers, it constitutes the best propaganda amongst the *sanatanists*. No amount of intellectual argument will ever convince those in whom a false religious belief is deeply seated. But the purity and gentleness of the reformer will undoubtedly do so. Secondly, selfless work amongst Harijans will not only enable the reformers to overcome some, if not all, of the bad customs and habits that are to be seen among them but will also strengthen their faith in Hinduism, which they have hitherto known only as a means of their degradation. Thirdly, the high standard of character required of those who render personal service to Harijans cannot but be a matter of inward joy to the workers.

*Harijan*, 13-4-1934, p. 69

### 113. WHAT WILL YOU DO TO REMOVE UNTOUCHABILITY?

(From a speech of Gandhiji at the South Indian Harijan Workers' Conference held at Kengeri near Bangaloe which appeared under the title "The Inwardness of Harijan Movement")

#### OUR GOAL

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

These general observations I shall make for the benefit of the *savarna* Hindus. Let them understand that this movement for the removal of untouchability is different from other current movements in India. So far as I am concerned, and so far as the Harijan Sevak Sangh is concerned, the anti-untouchability movement is not a political movement. Nor is it intended purely for the economic amelioration of the Harijans nor yet for their social regeneration. But this does not mean that we do not aim at the Harijans' social, economic or political advancement. We want all these improvements. If we are honest about our work, progress in these directions is bound to follow from our efforts.

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

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

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

#### NO PARALLEL IN THE WORLD

And why do I say that untouchability is a curse, a blot and a powerful poison that will destroy Hinduism? It is repugnant to our sense of humanity to consider a single human being as untouchable by birth. If you were to examine the scriptures of the world and the conduct of peoples other than Hindus, you do not find any parallel to the untouchability I have brought to your attention just now. I can well understand a person being untouchable whilst he is performing a task which he himself would feel makes him untouchable. For instance, a nurse, who is nursing a patient who is helpless and bleeding and soiling his clothes and suffering from a disease giving out from his body a foul smell, such a nurse whilst she is nursing such a patient is untouchable. But when she has washed herself, she becomes as touchable as ourselves. Not only that. She is not only just as fit to move in society as any of us, but she is also adorable for the profession which she follows. She is

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

Now look at the other side of the picture. Take, for instance, Dr. Ambedkar. He is pronounced as belonging to the Depressed Classes and as being untouchable. Intellectually he is superior to thousands of intelligent and educated caste Hindus. His personal cleanliness is as high as that of any of us. Today he is an eminent lecturer in law. Tomorrow you may find him a Judge of the High Court. In other words, there is no position in the government of this country to which he may not aspire and rise, and to which an orthodox Brahman can rise. But that orthodox Brahman will be defiled by the touch of Dr. Ambedkar and that because of his unpardonable sin that he was born a *Mahar* (untouchable)!

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

#### HOW TO REMOVE IT

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

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

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

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

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

You will begin by taking the Harijans along with you to the temple if you are in the habit of going to a temple. But if you discover that you will not be allowed into the temple along with your Harijan companions then if you have the living belief that I have that untouchability is wrong, you will shun the temple as you shun a scorpion or fire. You will then believe with me that such a temple is not inhabited by God. I will take by way of illustration the greatest temple known all over the world, viz., Kashi Vishwanath in Benares. The Lord who is supposed to reside there is known as the Lord of the Universe. And yet in the very name of that

Vishwanath the *savarna* Hindus have today the impudence to say to the Harijans: "You shall not come to this temple"!

#### No TEMPLES OF GOD

I claim to be as good a Hindu as any orthodox Hindu. I have endeavoured to enforce all precepts of Hinduism in my own life to the best of my ability. I admit that my ability is small. But that does not affect my attitude to and love for Hinduism. Yet, in spite of all that love for Hinduism, with a due sense of my own responsibility, I am here to tell you that so long as the doors of the Benares Temple are closed against a single Harijan, Kashi Vishwanath does not reside in that temple and I could not possibly approach that temple with a belief in its sanctity, or in the faith that by worshipping there I should be purified of my sins. I can have no sense of piety in respect of such a temple. And what is true of Kashi Vishwanath is true of every other temple in India which bars its doors to Harijans. It applies of course to all such temples in South India, including the Guruvayur Temple.

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

*Harijan*, 20-6-1936, p. 148



## 114. A TALK TO THE WORKERS

[At the conclusion of the proceedings of the Harijan Sevak Sangh Central Board meeting at Kashi Vidyapith held on 28-29th July, Gandhiji talked to the members at length. The following is a condensed summary of the talk.—M.D.]

### NOT A DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION BUT A TRUST

There are two questions on which I have to speak to you one in connection with the nature of the whole organization, and the other in connection with the idea of having a training institution for workers for a period or for life. To take up the first question. I know there is a general desire to introduce an element of democracy voting, election, etc., into our organization. I was torn between two opposites; but, after having gone through this nine months' tour, I have come to the conclusion that in an organization like ours there is no room for election, democracy or anything of that sort. Ours is a different kind of institution. It is not a people's organization in the ordinary sense. We handle money merely as self-appointed trustees, using it solely for the benefit of the Harijans, and in such a manner that it finds its way directly into their pockets. Ours is an organization formed with a view to doing our duty by those whom we have despised. We are an organization to give effect to the pledge given to Harijans at Bombay by the great meeting held (during Gandhiji's fast in 1932) under the chairmanship of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji. The people who pay to the Harijan Fund do so, we assume, in a penitent spirit, and all we have to do is to utilize it for the Harijans. To run an elective institution means expense and delay. Our aim is to distribute the funds among the Harijans with as little expenditure and delay as possible.

We do not want any intervening medium between Harijans and ourselves. We are mere trustees, and the trust descends to those whom we appoint. There are people who say the donors ought to have a voice in the administration. I should say they do not know. To me, he who pays a pie is as much a donor as, say, Ghanshyamdas Birla, who pays ten to fifty thousand. May be the value of that pie is greater than the ten thousand rupees that Ghanashyamdass may give. I have seen in Orissa poor people untying their knots and parting with their coppers. That has given me more hope and greater pleasure than the thousands, however willingly given. The thousands without the copper would be of little use in this cause of self-purification. But the thousands of the poor donors will never receive the vote. We do not even know their names. And still we are as much responsible to them as to the big donors, or even more. We are a charitable institution, depending for its existence upon honest and efficient management. And if we are to have the highest amount of efficiency, we have to select the best and the most honest workers.

Having said this, I leave it entirely to you to decide. I look at the movement as purely religious, moral or humanitarian. It is to me purely one of reparation and penitence. I do not know to what extent all the lakhs of donors share with me the belief in the penitential character of the work. But so far as I am concerned, I would declare that there is nothing in my mind save the desire to expiate for sins we have been guilty of all these years. Therefore I cannot think of the movement in the terms of any political end. Not that it will not have political results, but we need not give a moment's thought to them... This is no narrow movement; it is, I hope, the broadest of movements of our times.

## LIFE SERVANTS

The second question is easier. As a matter of fact, it follows from what I have said. I believe in the ideal of life-service. I want servants whose sole ambition is to devote themselves body, mind and soul to the Harijan cause. If we had ten thousand of such workers I make bold to say, even if we had a thousand we should have startling results. I would welcome a training institution for such workers. In Pinetown, near Durban in South Africa, there is a Trappist monastery. The rigour observed at the time, now more than thirty years ago, when I visited the place, was very great. They had nothing like privacy for themselves; they had one long hall in which they stretched themselves; they had to get up at 2-30 a.m.; they had purely vegetarian food; they strictly observed the vow of silence. Only two or three who had to go to the market or to speak to visitors could speak. All others had to work silently. They were giving instructions to the Zulus. Their proselytization consisted in working among the Zulus and giving them the best of their life. They were workers for life. They were all learned sannyasins. They added to their learning a calling. They were carpenters, smiths, potters, shoemakers. They made all sorts of experiments. Their monastery was a model of beauty, a veritable garden, with not a particle of dust anywhere, and there was a sweet silence pervading the whole atmosphere. Zulu students were taken as raw youths and discharged as accomplished artisans. My idea is to have a training institution of this type. If anything, I would do better. But we are today fallen from grace. We used to have this rigorous discipline in our country, but we have not progressed, while they have progressed. They have made researches and increased their heritage. If

we can make anything like an approach to them, I should be satisfied. If we can get even five persons who are prepared to forget father, mother and children and to devote themselves to Harijan service, I would have them. They would form the nucleus. But if we cannot aim so high, we may conduct an industrial home or a Harijan hotel or some other thing. . . .

#### ABOUT THE WEEKLY HARIJAN

We, Harijan workers, have not done justice to ourselves. Many of us are not workers even to a passable type. They have not given their whole time to their work; they do it in a leisurely fashion. I have often asked them, "Do you read *Harijan*?" They have said, "No." Out of the three editions of this weekly—English, Gujarati and Hindi—English and Gujarati are self-supporting; Hindi is not. Sufficient reception has not been given to these journals, though much labour is put forth in the preparation of these. Even in this preparation, sufficient help is not coming forth. Workers do not send information, facts. They do not go in for a discussion of problems as they occur from day to day. For, problems occur to workers and not to thinkers. If our workers were alive to their work, they would flood the editors with matter from which, the poor editors might find it difficult to make selections. Today they are starved. *Harijan* is a workers' journal, for their guidance and for the interchange of their thoughts. I do not want for it essays. I have been pained to be asked questions by workers who should find the answers in the journal, if they were reading it carefully. But many do not read it at all. If you do not read the budget of news collected in these pages, how are you going to hold the movement together? You must know what is being done by sister

organizations. We have not got itinerant messengers who will take the story of the vicissitudes of institutions from place to place. That would be a costly medium. But we have *Harijan*. It is full of information but it can still be filled with more accurate information and greater variety.

Please do not run away with the idea that I am not capable of recognizing what little has been done. Nice things are there, but they do not need to be recounted. Virtue is its own reward. But I am an inspector. I must show you the blemishes and not tickle your ears with praise for the good things that you have done.

*Harijan*, 24-8-1934, p. 217

## 115. WEAKNESS IN AN ANNUAL REPORT

(From "Harijan Work in Assam")

(After reproducing some interesting particulars from the annual report of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Assam, Gandhiji drew attention to the inordinately heavy expense in administration of the body in the following words:)

This encouraging record is marred by the knowledge that over one-fourth of the expenses were incurred for administrative and propaganda purposes. The total expenditure was Rs. 11,966. Of this, Rs. 3,664 represents administration and propaganda, and Rs. 8,302 welfare. Administrative staff absorbs Rs. 1,149 and propagandists Rs. 1,020. I have omitted annas and pies. Now this expense for welfare work of Rs. 8,302 is much too much in my estimation. As I have repeatedly said, constructive work is its own and the best propaganda. Administrative staff should also be reduced to a minimum. I know that Assam is a difficult province to work. Nevertheless, the fact that Harijan Sevak Sanghs are an organisation of penitents or debtors should ever be borne in mind.

*Harijan*, 14-12-1934, p. 346

## 116. A PLODDER'S WORK

(From "Expansion of *Harijan*")

No doubt it would be true criticism, if I were told that the columns of *Harijan* were not as interesting as they might be made. There are causes for this which are inherent in the movement itself. It must be confessed that removal of untouchability is not a popular cause in the sense in which great political movements have been and become popular all over the world. Removal of untouchability is a mighty social reform. But it cannot furnish sensations. It is a plodder's work. And a record of the work of plodders requires editorial gifts of a high order to make it interesting. Plodders can only attract plodding editors. Therefore, the only way before those who are intimately connected with the Harijan movement is to continue to work with an ever increasing faith in the cause and leave the result to take care of itself.

*Harijan*, 21-12-1934, p. 354

## 117. TASK BEFORE HARIJAN SEVAKS

Ever since the inauguration of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Central Organization has been feeding, very properly, the provincial branches. But the time has certainly arrived for the branches to stand on their own and be self-sustained, even though it may be at the sacrifice of part of their programme. The work in each province, and for that matter in each district or taluka, should be an unequivocal demonstration of active *savarna* support. For the chief mission of the Sangh is to touch the *savarna* heart and change it. Supposing the central organization had collected from two or three reformers a crore of rupees, and with it established branches all over India to cover it with schools and hostels for Harijan boys and girls, it would not have hastened the day of the doom of untouchability. For the *savarna* heart would remain as stony as ever. Supposing conversely that without the cost of a single pice, by some stroke of good fortune, the *savarna* heart was changed and untouchability become a thing of the past, the whole object of the Sangh would be fulfilled. For in that case every public school, place of worship and other institutions would be open to Harijans precisely on the same terms as caste Hindus. That day may be far off or much nearer than many people expect. Anyway that is the goal of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and never the opening of separate schools, wells, temples and the like for Harijans and consequent perpetuation of untouchability. At present these things are undoubtedly done, but they are done only as a means to the end. They have become necessary because the *savarna* heart is slow to change.



The growing number of reformers must not sit still and make protestations of removal of untouchability from themselves. They must demonstrate that change by their visible conduct. The spending of their purse for the Harijan cause is a tangible proof of the change and therefore an essential part of the programme. But immediately it becomes a corner confined to a few individuals who salve their conscience by liberal donations, it ceases to be a token in the manner indicated by me. Hence it becomes a matter of duty for the Central Board to invite the attention of the branches to this fundamental part of the programme and for the branches to appreciate it and prepare the way to becoming wholly self-reliant. Indeed the burden has been progressively thrown on provincial boards of financing their own institutions. But the time has come for definite and decisive action in the direction.

This change to full reliance will never come unless all the workers realize that this is essentially a religious movement. We are a nation spending lavishly for causes which the masses believe to be religious. One has only to go the places of pilgrimage to have an ocular demonstration of the fact. A study of the history of religious endowments will reveal the tragic story of fortunes being entrusted to them by credulous millions without evercaring to know how they were spent. It is enough for people to believe that they pay their mite to a cause which in their opinion is religious. Harijan workers have a cause that is wholly religious in the best sense of the term. If they have a living faith in it, if they do not move mountains, they will at least get from their surroundings enough for the institutions in their charge.

*Harijan*, 10-10-1936, p. 276

## 118. SILENT PLODDING

(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 work of removing untouchability seems to be insuperable. How exactly are we to tackle it?

A.: Silent plodding. I better tell you how I am doing it in Segaon. I do not preach to them, but work away never thinking of the result. The one condition is that you should not harbour untouchability in any shape or form. I have made it a point to have as many Harijans about me as possible. They come as servants but they soon know that they are brothers to us. We tolerate no distinction between Harijans. Though I cannot present you with tangible results of this silent service I may safely say that there is a marked change for the better among all—Harijans and the orthodox Hindus.

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

## 119. ONE THING NEEDFUL

The one thing needful for effective Harijan service, and for that matter all service of the poor, the forlorn, the helpless is purity of personal character in the servant. Without it possession of even the highest intellectual ability and administrative capacity is of no account. It may even prove a hindrance, whereas possession of a pure character combined with love of such service will assuredly develop or provide the requisite intellectual and administrative capacity. This reflection is prompted by the discovery of very painful instances of grave moral lapses on the part of two well-known workers in the Harijan cause. They were both regarded by all who knew them to be above suspicion and of unsullied character. They have both been betrayed into conduct unworthy of those occupying the positions they did. They were no doubt victims of lust that was hiding like a deadly snake in a dark corner of their hearts. But poor mortals that we are, we cannot read into others' hearts. We can but, and we must, judge other fellowmen by their acts which we can see and handle. In these two cases they are such as to make it impossible for them to remain as workers in the Harijan Sevak Sangh. This would be no punishment. Their withdrawal would be necessary for the protection of the Sangh and its cause if not also for themselves. I can safely say that it will be unnecessary for the Sangh to take any step against them. These workers will themselves retire from the Sangh and, I hope, from all public activity. The duty of service is denied to none. A person who has had a grievous moral fall but has come to his senses will serve no matter where he is placed. His very

reformation will be a service of society. But performance of such service that comes of itself and rendered almost secretly is wholly different from being in an organization and enjoying all its privileges. For such re-entry into public life a complete restoration of public confidence is absolutely necessary.

There is in modern life a tendency to ignore altogether the character of a public worker so long as he works efficiently as a unit in an administrative machinery. It is said that everybody's character is his own private concern. Though I have known this view to have been often taken I have never been able to appreciate, much less to adopt it. I have known the serious consequences overtaking organizations that have counted private character as a matter of no consequence. Nevertheless the reader will have observed that for my immediate purpose I have restricted the application of my proposition only to organizations like the Harijan Sevak Sangh which make themselves trustees for the welfare of dumb millions. I have no manner of doubt that possession of a spotless character is the indispensable requisite of such service. Workers in the Harijan cause or for khadi or for village industries must come in closest touch with utterly unsophisticated, innocent, ignorant men and women who might be likened to children in intelligence. If they have not character, they must fail in the end and for ever damn the cause they espouse in the surroundings in which they are known. I write from experience of such cases. Happily they are rare enough for the numbers engaged in such services, but frequent enough to call for public warning and caution on the part of organizations and workers who are engaged in such services. These last cannot be too watchful or too exacting of themselves.

## 120. THE BOGEY OF BOYCOTT

This is the substance of what a correspondent writes in the course of a long letter:

Some of us caste men tried and succeeded in having certain wells in some of the Bihar villages opened to the use of Harijans. But the Brahman Pujaris nearby retorted by stopping the service in the village temple, and the local Brahmans threatened to stop all religious services at *shraddha*, marriage and the like. This frightened the simple villagers. I feel tempted to offer satyagraha, but I desist lest I might do so in anger. What would you advise in such cases?

Not long ago there was a similar case near Trichinopoly. Dr. Rajan acted with a decision. Himself a Brahman by caste and Shudra by right of service, he defied the orthodox Brahmans who had refused even to perform the funeral rights in the case of death in a reformer's family.

My advice, therefore, is that there is no occasion in such cases for satyagraha. Those who regard untouchability as a sin must be prepared to suffer all the hardships of boycott and the like as a part of the process of purification and penance. In all humility they must learn to dispense with the outward form. Anything done in the name of God and for His sake needs no support from an officiating priest, whether it is a death or a marriage or a *shraddha*. Anybody can unite a couple in marriage by reciting the sacred *mantras*, whether it is Ramanam or any of the known formulae according to the tradition in which one has been brought up.

God is known not by His thousand names only but by millions of names. Any name which comes from the heart and by which we can recognize him is as good as any other or, rather the best of all for us. But these things can only be done by those who have the courage of their conviction, faith in themselves, faith in their cause and faith in a living God. This is not a movement in which faint-heartedness can be of any use. Only workers with stout hearts and irreproachable character will be able to infect the villagers with their own strong convictions and enable them to do the right thing in the face of boycott or worse persecution.

*Harijan*, 4-3-1933, p. 8

## 121. A STORY OF REFORM

(Originally appeared under the title "Aundh State and Untouchability".)

I had requested Pandit Satvalekar, the well-known *Vedic* scholar of Aundh, to acquaint me with facts about the anti-untouchability movement in the Aundh State, as I had seen reports about it in the press. His letter traces the progress of the movement during the last ten years and recounts the difficulties in the way of the reformer. I give below a condensed rendering of his Hindi letters:

There are 72 villages in the State. The Chief is a Brahman of advanced views and wants untouchability to go. Ten years ago, he invited the so-called untouchables in the State to fulfil the following three conditions, in order to enable him to declare them on a level with other Hindus and entitled to temple entry:

1. Giving up of carrion.
2. Giving up of eating leavings of food,
3. Daily bath.

These simple conditions were proclaimed in all the villages. The response was not encouraging. This was in effect the reply received from every one of the villages:

- (1) It is impossible for us to give up carrion as we get it free. We can think of giving up carrion if we are given clean meat in lieu of it.
- (2) We would fain give up leavings of food. Give us clean food instead.
- (3) There is not enough water for bathing and washing.
- (4) We are indifferent as regards temple entry.

The matter was allowed to rest there. Then came Sjt. V. R. Shinde, the great Abolitionist, who visited them in their homes and appealed to them to avail

themselves of the Chief's offer. He also asked them to abolish untouchability amongst themselves. This appeal, too, fell on deaf ears.

After this I started a village sanitation programme. We went out every morning singing *prabhat pheries* and offering to clean the court-yards and surroundings of houses of which the tenants were indifferent. The results were somewhat encouraging. We offered soap and other washing facilities to those who were doing scavenging. But they said it was too much to expect them to keep clean, when they had to earn their living from an unclean occupation.

This was followed up by propaganda in the shape of *bhajan*, *kathas* and special fairs. Glasses were held to familiarise the Harijans with religious books. Schools with two teachers—an untouchable and a touchable—were started to induce them to learn the three R's. No grown-ups came forward, but youngsters did come and are still coming to these schools.

Here is an account of the present state of things:-

The State schools are open to all, and they are being availed of by Harijans children. Harijans may visit temples after a bath, and they are doing so.

In October last a Health Day was held, volunteers were posted in every Harijan quarter and the Chief was good enough to announce prizes to those whose houses and surroundings were found to pass the test of cleanliness. One month's intensive work before the Day was enough to do the trick. Every street and every Harijan quarter was a model of cleanliness. In fact, some Harijan houses in Aundh looked cleaner than Brahman houses. His Highness, with the Ranisaheba, made a point of visiting every quarter and in Aundh alone, 105 prizes were awarded half of them being won by the Harijans. The Ranisaheba went into every Harijan house, made enquiries about their appointments and needs, and the Harijan women honoured her with marking with their own hands her forehead with the auspicious *kumkum* mark.

This led to a general awakening throughout the State. On October 26th a meeting was held in the Bhawani temple for distribution of prizes. It was attended by numerous untouchables.



Harijans have free access to the palace, and the Rani-saheba and her daughters often attend Harijan weddings. The Chief has allowed a Harijan *Chambhar* to open his shop in a high caste quarter. On the auspicious *Makarsakranti* day—14th of January—the Ranisaheba invited Harijan women to the palace and distributed *Sankranti* gifts to them. A Harijan *Kathakar* gave a discourse in a famous temple and a number of caste Hindus attended it.

I may, therefore, say that, so far as the State is concerned, there is in Aundh State no recognition of untouchability. But neither the caste Hindus nor the Harijans have reaped the full benefit of this. I shall illustrate what I say. The opponents of reform are more non-Brahmans than Brahmans. Temples visited by the Harijans are boycotted for the most part by non-Brahmans. In my own press there are six Harijan workers. The *Mahar* among these regards himself as superior to the five *Mangs*. When they sit down to feed in my house, they decline to sit in the same row.

In towns untouchability is going, but villages do still seem to be a difficult proposition. In this connection, I must advert to carrion-eating once again. It has led to most unfortunate results. It seems to stand like a dead wall between Harijans and caste Hindus and has often led to quarrels, and it may lead to bloody feuds. The reason is that the Harijans do not scruple to poison cows and buffaloes and bullocks to the consternation of the poor agriculturist, who feels that association with these cow-killers is unthinkable. There were no fewer than 124 cases of cattle poisoning in the course of four months during the last year and special provision had to be made in the Law to prevent such crime.

I would request you to guide us with suggestions for future work.

This is an instructive and truthful account of the campaign against untouchability in the Aundh State. Pandit Satvalekar is an old silent reformer of unremitting zeal. He is a great Sanskrit scholar and has dedicated himself to the spread of the mission of the Vedas. Aundh has a liberal-minded Chief who, with the Ranisaheba, deserves congratulations for abolishing untouchability from his State. Notwithstanding the

existence of favourable circumstances in Aundh, the progress of reform has been slow. For progress is lame and taxes the reformer's patience. Pandit Satvalekar has asked for suggestions. The work has been so thorough that I can only say "continue without losing faith and success is a certainty".

I must confess that I have no anger against the Harijans who poison cattle. We are reaping as we have sown. We dare not neglect a single limb of society without the whole of it suffering. We have wholly misinterpreted the great law of *Karma* and virtuously consigned the Harijans to their own fate. We have forced them to labour for us on utterly inadequate remuneration and never cared to know how they have lived and fared. The wonder is that they are not much worse than they have been described.

I have suggested the only infallible method of weaning them from carrion-eating. All dead cattle should be declared State property and the cattle should be treated under the supervision of reliable officers, and proper remuneration should be given to the Harijans who may be willing to skin the carcasses and dispose of the several parts thereof as they may be directed. Here, there can be no quarrel, no cattle-poisoning and no carrion-eating. All the proceeds from the disposal of the skin and other parts of carcasses should be ear-marked for the benefit of Harijans, thus freeing the State from suspicion of exploitation.

*Harijan*, 25-3-1933, p. 7

## 122. LEARNING TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULTIES

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Hard Facts, Not Words")

For the guidance of anti-untouchability workers I quote the following from a long and instructive letter from an English friend from whom I had invited suggestions for improving the *Harijan*.

The statement of *things done*, of progress, from week to week, seems to be very valuable. I wish it could sometimes be expanded and not give only the skeleton. ... I have wondered if the new Society will undertake any local surveys and publish the results. I should like to read paragraphs like this: "In x . . . taluka according to a survey made by a member of the society during the last fortnight, 25 village wells are being used by all castes without discrimination. 12 of these have been opened to the untouchables since last September. But there are still 18 village wells from which the untouchables are excluded. The figures for temples are ... & so on."

Of course I do not know if you have enough volunteers at present for much work of this kind. Naturally, they will combine propaganda with their survey. You know that we, Britishers, prefer hard facts to many words—or at least we think we do!

I venture to think that it is not only the Britisher who wants hard facts rather than words that is practice more than precept. Everyone wants deeds. Words may follow to explain the deeds sometimes. The more reports one can have of the work done and the difficulties experienced both with the *sanatanists* and the Harijans, the more useful will the *Harijan* become. There should be no difficulty in producing surveys such as has been suggested by the correspondent. We have nothing to conceal. If we find that in a particular area there are one hundred wells and only one has been opened to the Harijans, we should not be ashamed to own the fact. The shame will lie not in the confession of the fact but in its

existence. The confession will be the beginning of its end. We shall learn to deal with difficulties only when we know them in their full measure.

*Harijan*, 1-4-1933, p. 2

### 123. THE PRICE FOR SUCCESS OF REFORM

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Bhor State and Untouchability".)

One read in the papers that the Chief of Bhor had abolished untouchability in his State, so far as the law was concerned.

I have now got the text of the proclamation dated 1st November 1932. It is as comprehensive as it can be and advises the subjects of the State for the sake of their own religious advancement to do away with untouchability as it is observed today.

Those who have supplied me with a copy of the proclamation have also given me a bulky report of the reformers' activity in the Sudharad Taluka of the Bhor State and they mention their hopes and difficulties about their work. The workers are few, and the tremendous activity that has covered the whole of India in connection with untouchability woke up the orthodox party also in Bhor State, and so the reformers experienced unexpected opposition, so much so that the Harijans were themselves frightened to take advantage of the services that the few reformers were prepared and able to offer.

I need not take up the space of *Harijan* and the time of the reader by recounting the difficulties and describing the successes that the reformers had. The reading of their report has left the impression on my mind that reformers need not expect thorough success, unless they are

themselves willing to suffer boycott, complete ostracism, and may be, even loss of their social position and their belongings. Easy chair and a substantial religious reform go ill together. The orthodox party, sincerely believing that the religion is in peril, may be expected to fight every inch of the ground and to give no quarter to the reformers. They have been taught to believe that to relegate a large portion of mankind to perpetual untouchability and all it means is a just retribution. They will not hesitate to believe that those who seek to free untouchables from their shackles would deserve the same retribution and, from their own point of view, they may not be blamed. The reformer, therefore, who has a religious conviction about the necessity of reform is expected to brave all the consequences of his activity, and if a sufficient number is found all over India, the result is a certainty in spite of the opposition of orthodoxy. For, I believe that truth and time are on the side of reformers, and where these are ensured, it matters little whether reformers are few or many.

As Thoreau has said so well, "All reform all the world over always began with one person taking it up."

*Harijan, 8-4-1933, p. 2*

## 124. THE STRUGGLE MUST GO ON

(Originally appeared under the title "A Friend's Warning".)

When you embarked on the great struggle for the liberation of the suppressed classes, I was exhilarated for the time being, but my difficulty began soon after. All these days I was debating whether to write to you or not, but now the thing haunts me during my sleep and disturbs my meals. Hence this letter.

Years ago my friends and I began work for the untouchables in the hope that they and we and all would forget the very name "untouchable". We dreamt that we would do away with separate schools, separate wells, separate sports and the like. When, therefore, you began your crusade, I was elated with hope that untouchability would be banished from India and that the untouchables would be absorbed in the Hindu mass.

But I am stunned by what you and others are doing now. It is bound to widen the gulf—separate schools, separate scholarships, every thing separate for Harijans—and you seem to delight in these things. They pain me. The 5 crores of Harijans will now become ten crores. Some so-called sadhns or sannyasins will become their high-priests and there will come into being a new sect a century or two hence. You will be regarded as the founder of that sect. Statues will be erected in your memory and it will be said of you that you had separated the Harijans from the Hindus. From the way things are going, it would look as if you were making them feel that they were a class apart. For they fancy that they gain by being separated from the rest of the Hindus. You have made the path of Dr. Ambedkar and Rao Bahadur Srinivasan easy and you have strengthened their hands. They will not be absorbed in Hinduism, but there will be cries of "Long Live Untouchables", "Long live Harijans".

I have not said all these things thoughtlessly, but what I see happening around me pains me. You have been trapped and if you do not courageously come out of it, you will harm the very cause for which you were prepared to lay down your life. You had intended one thing, quite the contrary has happened, let alone getting them

considered as part and parcel of Hinduism. You have, instead of saving them, differentiated them by giving them a tempting name. They are not going to be Hindus by such temptation. Selfish and self-seeking preceptors will establish a new religion, a new sect, and you will be their instrument. Today Hindus, Mussalmans and Sikhs are fighting against one another. You will have added one more unit to the fighting forces. They have separate temples and more will be built, and even now different sects are fighting with one another to take possession of these. But the burden of my sorrow is this: All that in your name, with "Mahatma Gandhiki-Jai" on their lips! Oh, the pity of it!!

Thus writes in effect an esteemed friend and fellow worker. The original is in Gujarati. He is one among the very best of India's servants. He is spending himself in her service. There is no mistaking the laceration of his heart, but I believe that his affection for me has led him astray and coloured his judgment. If untouchables are not absorbed in the Hindu mass and do not become one with the rest of the Hindus, the responsibility will not lie on my shoulders. It will lie on those of the so-called high-class Hindus who are resisting the absorption. According to them, the so-called untouchable classes have been untouchable from the beginning of time, and will, if they can help it, remain so to the end of time. Some of them, have gone so far as to say that they will sacrifice themselves in the attempt to perpetuate this untouchability. What I have is not merely to unfurl the banner of revolt against the perpetuation of what I hold to be a monstrous wrong, but I am constantly praying that I may be considered a fit sacrifice for the cause of liberation. I am inviting others to join in the prayer that they might also be deemed worthy to offer themselves as a sacrifice in this sacred cause. If, therefore, untouchability remains, it will do so, not because of what I have done,

but in spite of what I have done and am doing. But that will be no new experience. Do we not know that God often upsets the plans of human beings? And it may be that His purpose demands that the so-called high-caste Hindus should harden their hearts that they should refuse to listen to dictates of reason and justice and that Hinduism should become an extinct religion. For, refusal on the part of high-caste Hindus to regard the Harijans in every sense as equal members with the other Hindus will not now mean perpetuation of untouchability. I am quite clear in my mind that untouchability is gone. The untouchables will not remain slaves for ever. Thank God, they are being surely, if slowly, awakened. The pace is daily increasing. There are limits even to the patience of God almighty. He gives a long rope to untruth and irreligion. But in the end, only Truth remains and nothing else. Hence Hinduism can only live minus untouchability, which is an untruth.

Whilst, therefore, I am thankful to this true friend for his warning voice and whilst I promise that I shall be more and more on the alert, I feel quite sure that the struggle was not begun a moment too soon and that it must go on against all odds.

*Harijan, 22-4-1933, p. 8*



## 125. WHAT ONE MAN CAN DO

A would-be Harijan Sevak writes to the following effect:

Though a city dweller, I know that real service of Harijans is to be done in the villages. I appreciate your message. I often go to my village. When I do, I feel an intense desire to serve Harijans in some way. But I find myself alone. What can one insignificant man like me do? Only recently, I saw an incident that made my flesh creep. A Harijan woman was absorbed in sweeping the village street. Inadvertently, as I think, she touched a caste girl. I was amazed to see the girl quiver with rage. At the top of her voice she began to pour filthy abuse on the poor sweeper woman. Hearing the shouts, the little girl's mother and other relatives rushed out. And there was a perfect chorus of abuses. The mother exhausted all the vocabulary of the vulgar. It is not possible to repeat the indecent expressions. I was a helpless witness of this barbarity. Tell me what I should have done. I have no doubt that such things happen often enough. Tell me also how I can be generally useful in a village where superstition reigns supreme, and Harijans are counted as less than beasts.

I have little doubt that my correspondent missed a golden opportunity of serving both the poor sweeper and the "orthodox" family. He should have gently remonstrated with the mother of the "polluted" girl and he would have drawn her wrath towards himself, even if he had not shamed her into repentance. The sweeper would have felt the warmth of a friend in her need. The mother and the other relatives of the girl would at least have been set thinking. He would probably have been drawn into an argument. Perhaps the whole village might have interested itself in the matter and if he had risen to the occasion, he would have laid a solid foundation for substantial service in the future. It is clear to me that on such occasions, every lover of humanity should consider it his sacred duty

to protect the helpless by tactful and gentle, yet courageous, intervention.

Now for the general question. Had we not lost self-confidence, the question, what an insignificant man can do, would' never have arisen. No man is too insignificant for rendering personal service to those who may be in distress. The art does not need previous training. The ability to give effective help resides in every human being who has the will and the necessary courage. Thus my correspondent could certainly go to the Harijan quarters of his village and befriend them in a variety of ways. He could teach their children during his stay in the village. He need not fear the interruption due to his absence. For teaching does not mean only a knowledge of the three R's. It means many other things for Harijan humanity. Lessons in manners and sanitation are the indispensable preliminaries to the initiation into the three R's. The correspondent could take Harijan children for sight seeing, teach them innocent and even instructive games, could sweep and otherwise keep Harijan quarters clean, could find out cases of illness among the Harijans and procure medical aid. He could take careful notes of their economic, social and other wants and transmit them to the Harijan Seva Sangh of his district or province, as the case might be, and thus become an effective link between the Harijans and the Seva Sangh. I have by no means exhausted the list of possibilities of individual effort. Mine is a mere illustrative list. A resourceful Sevak can multiply the possibilities endlessly. "Where there's the will, there's the way."

*Harijan*, 14-10-1933, p. 5

## 126. TIME IS ON THE SIDE OF REFORM

(Originally appeared under the title "An M.A. in a Hurry".)

An M.A. of Kerala writes a long letter from which I take the following paragraphs of public importance:

1. There can be no peace for you or for us, if untouchability continues in our country. Your word of honour that you would see untouchability removed root and branch within the minimum time, stands unfulfilled. Though we have advanced considerably during these 365 days, we are for practical purposes not an inch nearer the Guruvayur gates. The political fight can receive fresh strength only when temple-entry is solved. How long can we wait for legislation through the Bill? Sjt. Kelappan's fast and your promise that you would take it up after three months had brought the problem of temple-entry almost to fruition, but now we feel that it is so distant to achieve. Now that Sjt. Rajagopalachari is in jail, Sjt. Madhavan Nair is on a sick bed, and Sjt. Kelappan has gone to Colombo, the whole burden has fallen on you. Our prayer is you would immediately take it up and solve it.

\* \* \*

2. We experience in the villages here a sort of opposition from the ignorant masses. Harijans are obstructed on public paths and their school-going children often beaten. We are sometimes forced to take cases of assault to the police and it is not always that we get their assistance. Can we go to court ourselves; even then we want evidence; what are we to do under the circumstances? Harijans are denied tea in coffee-clubs, and Local Body resolutions that all public shops should give entry to Harijans are ruled out by the Government. What is to be done?
3. My experience tells me that age-long slavery to ideas spread by selfish *savarnas* has reduced the Harijans into lifeless beings. What they want is courage, self-

confidence, devotion to and faith in God. We must build up 'Sakti Mandirs' for them and teach them Gita, Gayatri and Pranayama. Hari in Sanskrit means Lion and Harijans should be made as bold and daring as the Lion, you should suggest this in your writings.

I can heartily endorse my correspondent's statement that "there can be no peace for me or him and his friends, if untouchability continues in our country". My word also stands. But untouchability will not be removed by force or which is perhaps the same thing, by law, nor will temples be opened by such means. Legislation is badly required to remove legal obstruction which has been created by certain judicial decisions. But if and when the two bills are passed, untouchability lurking in the Hindu heart will not necessarily be removed nor will public temples be automatically opened. Untouchability will go when the Hindu heart has melted, and the public temples will be opened when the worshippers have discovered that God is no respecter of persons and that He does not reside in temples which man's insolence or ignorance has closed against any body of persons who are desirous of offering worship on the same terms as they.

The correspondent would throw the sole responsibility for opening the Guruvayur temple on me. He should know that it is no one man's work. It will be done in God's good time. Workers can but work to the best of their ability. Let him also know that Kelappan's pledge is not exhausted. His visit to Colombo is temporary. Rajagopalachari works by prayer even though he is in prison. Madhavan Nair, that great and true Kerala servant, is no more. But I have no doubt that his spirit watches over our conduct and misconduct. It will not rest till Hinduism is purified of the evil of

untouchability. And the correspondent may rest assured that, when the proper time comes and if God wills it, both Kelappan and I would again stake our lives for the opening, not only of Guruvayur temple, but many others.

\* \* \*

The correspondent is on surer ground in his complaints about villagers' attitude in many parts of India. The ignorance of the villagers is colossal. They are wedded to the idea of high and low. Village workers are far too few for the numerous villages. But there is no cause whatever for despair. Villagers are waking up. They have begun to realize that to deny to fellow beings the same status that they have for themselves is to deny God's equal justice. The correspondent has no notion of the silent but solid work that many workers are doing in and round villages. This Harijan work being purely religious does not lend itself much to the spectacular. It will prosper in exact proportion to the purity and penance of the workers. It will be surely retarded by the impurity, selfishness or mixed motives of workers.

As to putting life into Harijans, it will be there immediately the crushing dead weight of untouchability is lifted from off the heads of Harijans. They should, of course, have, as they are having religious and other instruction in the many schools that have been and are being opened. Time is on our side and so is the time spirit. No religion can possibly stand the blazing light of the world's opinion that it being directed towards all religions, and still retain in it proved evils and superstitions.

*Harijan*, 21-10-1933, p. 4

## 127. CAN ALL CUSTOM BE GOOD?

(Originally appeared under the title "Among the Nattars".)

Two events in Chettinad deserve special notice. One was a visit to a Harijan village, Chittannoor near Devakottah. It has a caste Hindu as a teacher living in it with his family. Both are devoted workers attached to Harijans. They are conducting a little school and are giving the Harijans medical and such other aid as is within their power to give. The school is being conducted on behalf of the local sangh. I had a long chat with the Harijans. Their spokesman read to me a statement of the hardships inflicted on them by Nattars. The readers of *Harijan* are familiar with them. On my way back, I saw a deputation of Nattars who waylaid me with garlands and cocoanut. I told the leader about the Harijan complaints. He gave clever and evasive answers. This was a foretaste of what was in store for me at Devakottah, where I was to meet a party of Nattars by appointment. They were over one hundred. I gave them an hour and had an exhaustive, interesting and illuminating conversation. "Custom" was the only justification for the inhuman treatment that is being meted out to the Harijans, though in a less cruel form than before. "Now-a-days we don't interfere with their manner of dressing, except for certain festival days", replied the old leader and the party quite courteously but equally firmly.

"But what right have you to dictate their dress for any day at all?"

"It is the custom handed down by our forefathers", the old man replied.

"Supposing some one regulated your dress?" I interposed.

"Why not? We have to submit to many things that the higher castes prescribe for us, and the Harijans have to submit to us."

"You need not submit to anybody's dictation. There is no higher and no lower", I replied.

"How can that be? The Harijans cannot be allowed to cross the limits prescribed by custom", the old man persisted.

"But, surely, you won't adhere to a custom which is manifestly bad", I gently remonstrated.

Prompt came the reply, "Who is to judge what is bad for me? All custom must be good, because it comes from our forefathers."

I had no argument against this. I accepted my defeat. But I warned the old man and my other hearers that many customs had gone and what they refused to do now voluntarily and gracefully they would be obliged reluctantly to do later by pressure of circumstances. In spite of the persistence of the old leader, the conversation was carried on with good humour and ended with a collection for the sufferers of Bihar.

There is much and glorious work for the young worker to do. The old man knew that he had no case. But he evidently thought that he must defend the indefensible.

*Harijan, 9-2-1934, p. 6*

## 128. ANOTHER HIMALAYAN BLUNDER?

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

There was a meeting of Harijan workers at Belgaum, when Gandhiji had his silence and *Harijan*-editing days there. One of the workers had brought typed questions...

The next question was: "You have said times without number that you have committed Himalayan blunders. Are you quite sure that you are not committing another such blunder again?"

The answer was: "I am not sure at all, for I do not profess to be omniscient. But if I discover that I have made a mistake, I should have no hesitation in retracing my step. And I know that God will forgive all errors committed unconsciously, as He has done so in the past."

*Harijan*, 23-3-1934, p. 44 at p. 46



## 129. THE COMMON LOT OF REFORMERS

(From "Some Conundrums")

Q.: When workers like me work against untouchability, *sanatani* opponents say all sorts of things against you. We combat most things. But your having taken the life of the dying calf in the Ashram we have not been able to explain. Are you able to throw light on this explanation?

A. Workers must not seek to defend me against aspersions nor resent them. They are the common lot of reformers. Aspersions have never hurt any person in the world. What hurts is the wicked thing a man does. Workers have enough on their hands in having to defend the cause they have taken up. I have no sense of shame or repentance over the taking of the life of the dying calf, whose agony I could see but could not alleviate in any other manner. I must not dwell here on the ethics of the act. If the correspondent or any reader is curious about it, he must procure the writings in *Young India* and *Navajivan* of the time when the act was performed.

*Harijan*, 28-9-1934, p. 257

### 130. ANNIVERSARY OF A GREAT REFORMER

(Originally appeared under the title "Lalaji Anniversary".)

When politics so-called are forgotten, when many other transitory things which absorb public attention are also forgotten, Lalaji's great love for Harijans and his equally great services born of that love will be remembered, not only by the millions of Harijans, but by the many more millions of caste Hindus—indeed by the whole of India. Lalaji was a great humanitarian, and his humanitarianism covered the whole of humanity. Each succeeding anniversary should make Lalaji live more truly in our lives than the previous. Death for reformers like Lala Lajpatrai is mere dissolution of the body. Their work and their ideas do not die with the body. Their power grows with time. We feel it more, as with the march of time it is seen outside of its setting in the weak flesh. The impermanent in man dies with him. The permanent part of him triumphs over the ashes and appears clearer to us for their removal. Let us cherish Lalaji's memory in that light and let Harijan-Hindus and caste-Hindus make a fresh resolve in Lalaji's memory to cleanse society of the curse of untouchability—the former by ridding themselves of the defects arising out of their suppression and the latter by shedding the sin of the feeling of superiority, which belief in natal untouchability implies.

*Harijan*, 16-11-1934, p. 315

## 131. THE DUTY OF A REFORMER

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Abysmal Ignorance".)

A Harijan Sevak writes:

On the occasion of the Jaipur Rajya Sammelan, which was held on 25-12-1934, a khadi exhibition stall was set up in the first floor of a building overlooking the *chowk*, where the Sammelan was held. A Harijan boy was first in charge of the sales, and could be seen sitting in the gallery above by the *savarna* Hindus who were assembled in the *chowk*. The fact that a Harijan boy was allowed to sit at a higher level than themselves was very much resented by the *savarna* Hindus, who resolved at a Panchayat meeting that:

- 1) No one from the village should attend the khadi exhibition on pain of excommunication.
- 2) No one should send his girls to the local Kanya Pathashala, as it was connected with the Rajya Sammelan people.
- 3) No one should permit teachers of the Harijan Pathashala to enter his home.

In spite of this ukase of the Panchayat, as many as 28 young men took part in the Sammelan. They were fined Re. 1 each, which they refused to pay. From three to four hundred persons used to dine together in the Sammelan kitchen without any distinction of caste. This fact has been seized upon by the reactionaries, who have raised the usual cry of "Religion in danger".

The conduct of the orthodox section in this instance is only a proof of our abysmal ignorance. A religion that cannot get rid of such invidious and inequitable distinctions between man and man is doomed to perish. The fact that the *savarna* reformers have remained undaunted by the threat of the boycott must be regarded as a happy augury. Let not those who may be affected by the boycott harbour any ill feeling towards the

orthodox party. At the same time, let no one be turned away from his duty by the threat of coercion. The reformers must proceed with their work with patient, silent determination, unaffected by anger or fear.

*Harijan*, 8-2-1935, p. 413

## 132. IGNORANCE REFORMERS HAVE TO DEALWITH

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "A Reward of Service".)

A worker of Darbhanga writes:

During the *Holi* holidays I went to my village. Finding the streets very dirty, I thought I would clean them, and accordingly I invited the young men to turn the holiday to good account by helping me to clean up the dirt. About thirty of them responded. Shovels in hand we worked for four hours, gathered the dirt and buried it in a pit. We thought we had done a good day's work. Not so thought the village elders. They thought that we had degraded ourselves by becoming scavengers—untouchables of the worst type. So they met and pronounced an order of excommunication against all who had done the work. I am glad to say that the young men are not frightened.

This worker and his young helpers deserve warm congratulations for their very meritorious service. The order of excommunication shows with what ignorance reformers have to deal. The only way to bear down the opposition is on the one hand not to resent persecution and on the other to persevere in the service regardless of personal consequences. Workers may be sure that if they preserve their equanimity and continue the service, those who are cursing them today will be blessing them tomorrow when they realize what a precious and noble service scavenging is. It will presently come to be regarded as a service of the highest order.

*Harijan*, 13-4-1935, p. 71

### 133. GROSS ILL-TREATMENT

I was working in *acheri* under the auspices of the Harijan Sevak Sangh for a period of about four months. A Harijan was expelled from the *cheri*, before I began Harijan work in the village, on account of his moral delinquencies. The said Harijan once returned to visit his son studying in our school. I allowed him to stop with me for the purpose. He was resting in the school shed on the particular night. In my absence, a party consisting of five persons belonging to the Harijan class who were the near relatives of the woman seduced, along with a few others of the so-called caste men, took him out and beat him severely for the old offence of "seducing a married woman", and drove him out of the shed. Immediately I learnt of the incident I approached the persons who had taken the law into their own hands and protested against the maltreatment and demanded the re-admission of the Harijan into the *cheri*. This was refused. Therefore I have withdrawn myself from the village.

The foregoing is a much condensed summary of a long letter. I do not vouch for the accuracy of the statement. But if the facts are as stated, surely it was wrong altogether to beat the Harijan as he appears to have been beaten. If he had committed any crime, he should have been prosecuted. But no one had any right to take the law into his own hands. The correspondent was right in red- ring from the *cheri* which was not prepared to do simple justice. I hope that the matter was brought to the notice of the local Sangh and that the latter had tried to secure fair treatment for the Harijan concerned. The whole affair is one for careful investigation. I fear that such cases are frequent enough. It is up to Harijan Sevaks on the one hand to afford protection to the injured and on the other to awaken their sense of morality where it is lacking. The offenders do not belong to any particular class. All sections are tarred

with the same brush. Only those workers who have proved their worth and are above reproach will be able to create any impression at all on the delinquents.

*Harijan*, 11-5-1935, p. 97

### 134. FORCED LABOUR FROM HARIJANS

(From an article which originally appeared under the title "Harijans on Begar")

The system of forced labour exacted by petty landowners from Harijans and other classes called backward is almost universal in India. The petty landlords are mostly Hindus. Harijans and others can legally resist forced labour. They are slowly but surely being awakened to a sense of their rights. They are numerous enough to enforce them. But all grace will be gone when *savarna* Hindus impotently resign themselves to their merited fate. Better surely by far if they will recognize their duty of regarding Harijans as blood-brothers, entitled to the respect that belongs to man and to receive due payment for services voluntarily performed.

It is the privilege of Harijan Sevaks, no matter to what organization they belong, to befriend Harijans, to study their condition in detail, to approach *savarna* Hindus and show them as gently as possible what their duty is towards those whom they have treated as outcasts of society and deprived even of legal rights.

From the papers before me I further find that in Ode and some other villages in Gujarat the *savarna* Hindus take from Harijans who dispose of their dead cattle half the hide. This is unlike the usual practice of allowing the Harijans to own the dead cattle they remove. In some cases Harijans not only retain the dead cattle they remove, but receive a payment for the labour of removing carcasses. The matter demands more investigation and fair adjustment. If Harijans were better treated and if *savarna* Hindus had no horror of dead cattle and had no superstitious



laws of pollution, they would learn the art of flaying the dead cattle and turning every part of the carcasses into wealth, both to the benefit of themselves and the Harijans whom they may invite to help them in the process of disposing of their dead cattle.

*Harijan*, 1-5-1937, p. 92

### 135. HARIJAN SERVICE IN SIMLA

(From "Notes")

There has been in Simla for the past five years the Valmiki (Harijan) Young Men's Association. Its Honorary Director is Pt. C. V. Vishwanathan. Its Honorary Secretary is Lala B. Lachman Sigh Sabhotra, himself a Valmiki Harijan. It runs during summer a free night school open to all communities. Of its twenty-one students, eight are caste Hindus. The school has three Harijan teachers teaching all castes. It has also two caste Hindu and Sikh teachers. The Headmaster is a Harijan. The Association gives free medical relief through honorary physicians. There is also a mutual aid fund. Loans are granted at one pice per rupee interest. This means 18 per cent. I regard this as exorbitant. It should be no more than six per cent or at the most 8 per cent. That would no doubt mean stricter scrutiny in the giving of loans. This would be all to the good. The course of every rupee given should be traced. The Association also supports a reading room and sometimes poor stranded Harijans are permitted a shakedown of nights on its premises. I wish the Association every success.

*Harijan*, 2-10-1937, p. 277 at p. 278

### 136. BAPAJAYANTI

Thakkar Bapa, the father of Harijans and all those who are almost like them and classified as semi-civilized races, animists and what not, completes his seventy years on 29th November next. The inmates of Harijan Nivas in Delhi have planned to celebrate the event in a manner that must delight Thakkar Bapa's heart. They want to collect the modest sum of Rs. 7,000 to be presented to Thakkar Bapa on his birthday for the Harijan cause. They want me to bless and advertise the effort. I have written to them accusing them of little faith. Thakkar Bapa is a rare worker. He is unassuming. He wants no praise. His work is his sole satisfaction and recreation. Old age has not slackened his zeal. He is himself an institution. I once suggested that he might take a little rest. Immediately came the answer, "How can I rest when there is so much to do? My work must be my rest." He puts to shame every young man around him in the energy that he expends upon his life mission. A purse of Rs. 7,000 is an insult to the cause and to him who carries on his broad shoulders its heavy burden. The workers must aim at collecting nothing less than Rs. 70,000 from all India. Even that amount is nothing for the cause and its father. But it is a respectable enough sum to be collected inside a month. How I wish it was possible to collect coppers from Harijans and Bhils. They know him. But the moneyed and middle-class men too know Bapa and love him. I have no doubt that they will subscribe liberally to the fund both for the cause and for the great Sevak who represents it. Subscriptions may be sent to: (1) Harijan Nivas,

Kingsway, Delhi, (2) Harijan Ashram, Sabarmati, or (3) to Segaoon via Wardha.

Segaoon, 16-10-1939

*Harijan*, 21-10-1939, p. 315

## 137. THAKKAR BAPA AND SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

(From "Notes")

A friend who loves the Servants of India Society as himself, in sending his donation of Rs. 10 for the Thakkar Bapa Fund, writes:

I endorse every word of your praise of Thakkar Bapa. The only suggestion I would venture to make is that his membership of the Servants of India Society might have been mentioned. The Society may not take credit for his meritorious work; but it has kept him there without a demur and indeed taken pride in his great services to humanity.

The rebuke is well merited. Truth to tell I did not even know that I had omitted to mention among Bapa's many merits that he had given up his office of Road Engineer for the Bombay Municipal Corporation to become a Servant of India. He is a loan to the Harijan Sevak Sangh by the Society. The Society needs no advertisement from me. And since I call myself an unofficial self- appointed member of the Society, to mention the latter is, in a way, advertising myself. But I am quite capable of performing that somewhat delicate task. The reason for omitting the mention was, however, accidental. I, work under tremendous pressure. And though it was my intention to connect Bapa with the Society, I evidently failed to carry it out. I hope that this belated reference will bring more funds to the Bapa Purse, which is Harijan Purse. Let the Servants of India too, official and unofficial, set apart some time daily for the collection of the purse. I do not mind their collecting coppers. The real tribute to Bapa will consist in collecting coppers from Harijans and the numerous poor lovers of Harijans. Let no one plead shortness of notice. Let novices know

from me, an experienced collector, that funds big or small do not need months to collect. They are collected in a few days if the collection is well organized and the cause worthy. Let them know that the crore for the Tilak Swaraj Fund was collected in one month.

Segaon, 28-10-1939

*Harijan*, 4-11-1939, p. 330

### 138. AS THE HARIJANS SEE US

(Originally appeared under the title "As They See Us".)

Hardly has the great central organization of the Servants of Untouchables Society made the commencement, when complaints against it and the provincial organizations have cropped up. They come chiefly and naturally from Harijans. One of these correspondents sent to me sometime ago an able letter, undertaking to give details if I desired. I took him at his word and asked him to give me details; and the letter he has sent me in reply is abler than the first. It will compete with any well-written report of an inspector. It contains a summary of reports of every organization claiming to work in the writer's province for the uplift of Harijans and after giving me sufficient details, his one conclusion about all the organizations practically without exception is:

They are run principally by caste men who have their own axes to grind or who are in need of some occupation that would maintain them decently. The utmost that some of these have done is to fling a few scholarships at Harijan boys. Some others have been great at delivering lectures. All have come to us as patrons. Hardly has any one come as a friend and equal, let alone as a servant. Your provincial organization is no exception. It is difficult for a Harijan to approach its chief man without fear and trembling. He is always in danger of being met with a frown.

My correspondent is also not without suggestions, which may be summarized thus:

If you are to take advantage of the great awakening that has taken place, you must concentrate upon primary education on a mass scale. You will not drive out the ignorance of ages without spreading that education. We shall certainly help, but seeing that caste Hindus want to remove untouchability and make us one with them,

there is no better way of employing their money and their labour than in imparting this education.

It is necessary to know the Harijan mind in any programme of work that may be taken up. Caste Hindus, for whom removal of untouchability is a matter of penance and purification, have undoubtedly to do much more than open schools everywhere. I have discussed elsewhere where such schools may be opened. The conduct of caste Hindus would be generally tested by its reaction upon the mass mind of the Harijans. If we have really changed towards them, they will feel the change in a thousand ways. Our activity, I mean that of caste Hindus, will affect every department of their lives. Even in the remotest village we are interdependent, so much so that this inter-dependence cannot be dissolved all at once, even if we desired it, without resulting in the greatest harm to the nation in general; and this inter-dependence, which is today that of slave and master, will never be corrected unless there is absolute religious equality. It is a tremendous task, but as we progress towards the goal, the truth must dawn upon every caste Hindu that there is no halfway house between abject slavery and perfect religious equality. Hence my humble insistence upon temple-entry without losing sight of the other things we must do.

My correspondent is bitter in discussing what he considers to be the extravagant management of the different organizations that have come under his lash. As an expert organizer that I may claim to be, I have been generally guided by the rule that the cost of administration, that is, overhead charges, should never exceed 10% of the receipts— 5% being the ideal—the balance going to the cause' which brought the organization into

being. I suggest this test to the central board and the provincial boards and all other independent Harijan organizations run by caste Hindus. Let it not be said of us that we spend more on running the organizations than upon Harijans themselves. Let us see to it that out of every Rs. 100/- received as donation for the Harijan cause, Rs. 90/- go straight into the pockets of Harijans. Therefore, our officials should be largely volunteers, never highly paid wherever paid service is required. Wherever it is possible, we should get Harijans. We should select candidates and train them. The correspondent says that peons in the organizations inspected by him are not drawn from the Harijans ranks.

Let every organization for the service of Harijans introspect itself in the light of criticism I have condensed and the suggestions I have made. I know that the correspondent has painted the picture as black as he could. He has refused to see the bright side. I know something of Harijan service done by caste men in the different provinces. I know that there is a bright side to the work of the organizations referred to by my correspondent, but it was unnecessary for me to give the bright side. It will take care of itself, if the organizations will take care of the dark side of the picture. Most organizations have a capacity for self-deception. There is a tendency towards self-glorification. The *Harijan* exists for the sake of giving due prominence, therefore, to every bit of criticism that can be levelled against us by Harijan critics.

*Harijan*, 4-3-1933, p. 7



### 139. REMOVAL OF TOUCH POLLUTION ONLY THE BEGINNING

(From "Not Patchwork")

The mistake the correspondent makes is in thinking that the struggle against untouchability ends with the removal of touch pollution. The campaign had to begin with the removal of the impassable religious bar. Those who come under the religious ban are a class apart. To them the taint attaches by birth. Who does not know that these men though they may be economically well off are still treated as social lepers? Thousands of Ezhwas in Travancore and Namasudras in Begnal are very well off and yet to their great sorrow and to the equally great disgrace of the so-called *savarna* Hindus, the former's possession of the good things of the earth makes no difference in their social status.

There is no difficulty in admitting that much will remain to be done after the bar sinister is removed. Indeed it is the recognition of this obvious fact that has impelled the Harijan Sevak Sangh to handle educational and economic work among Harijans which the correspondent seems to belittle. That work serves the Harijans tangibly and tests the sincerity of the reformers and brings them in close touch with those whom they are out to serve.

When touchability is altogether gone, Harijans will share the benefit with the others of the economic uplift that is silently but surely going on. Harijans constitute say 16 p.c. of the total population of India. But those who suffer from economic exploitation form at least 90 per cent of the population. It is for this reason that I have said in these columns that the

missions of the A.I.S.A., A.I.V.I.A. and Harijan Sevak Sangh are interrelated, and that is why the scope of *Harijan* has been extended.

*Harijan*, 19-10-1935, p. 284, at p. 285

## 140. WHEN CAN UNTOUCHABILITY BE SAID TO BE ABOLISHED

(From "Weekly Letter"—No. 9" by C.S.)

At Cuddapah, where Gandhiji spent his rest days, he met a group of Harijan workers who were impatient with the present caste system, with its grades of superiority and inferiority, and wanted to know whether Gandhiji wished that system to remain or to go. Gandhiji said to them, "The Harijan movement goes to the root of the evil. If untouchability goes, the castes as we know them today go."

"Surely not."

"I talk of the extreme form of untouchability. But the evil is so widespread that in some form or other it runs through the whole Hindu social system and corrupts it. The distinction of high and low is at the bottom of untouchability. If the extreme form goes, the rest is bound to go. If it does not, our movement will be a mere camouflage. So long as the idea of high and low is not abolished, untouchability cannot be said to have been abolished."

*Harijan*, 12-1-1934, p. 5

## 141. WHEN UNTOUCHABILITY IS ROOTED OUT

(From "Its Implications")

The vast meeting at Palni under the shadow of the Temple was perfectly silent; there were no noises. I seized the occasion to give the audience the implications of removal of untouchability. It began with touch but it would be a wooden thing, if it merely ended there. A Brahman may be a depraved man in spite of his learning. It would be preposterous to call him one. A Brahman is he who knows *Brahma*. It is character, not occupation that determines the man. The *bhangi* is or should be on a par with the Brahman in all social relations. There is no reason why he should not, other things being equal, occupy the chair which Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad occupies with distinction. I would be happy to see the day when a *bhangi*, working as such, is in the Presidential chair.

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

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

*Harijan*, 10-2-1946, p. 4

## 142. THE WIDER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOVEMENT

(From "Weekly Letter—No. 9" by C.S.)

And at almost every meeting this week, Gandhiji has clearly explained this wider significance of the movement. "You should know that our duty to Harijans does not end with giving them good houses or giving them separate wells, schools and so on. If we gave them all these and still kept them untouchables, it would only mean replacing iron chains by golden ones; but the slave would still be a slave. Harijans must have all the amenities that we enjoy. But I go further and say, you must absorb them, you must bridge the gulf that lies today between them and you. The purification we are striving for is not complete till we have purged our hearts of this distinction. You and I may not be satisfied with anything less."

*Harijan*, 12-1-1934, p. 5 at p. 6

## 7. HARIJANS AND TEMPLE-ENTRY

### 143. WHY I WANT TEMPLE-ENTRY FOR HARIJANS

(From "Its Implications")

**Q.** Why do you want temple-entry for Harijans? Are not temples the lowest thing in Hinduism?

**A.:** I do not think so for one moment. Temples are to Hindus what Churches are to Christians. In my opinion, we are all idolaters; that in Hinduism we have images of stone or metal inside temples makes to me no difference. Thousands of Hindus who visit temples in simple faith derive precisely the same spiritual benefit that Christians visiting churches in simple faith do. Deprive a Hindu of his temple, and you deprive him of the thing he generally prizes most in life. That superstition and even evil have grown round many Hindu temples is but too true. That, however, is an argument for temple reform, not for lowering their value for Harijans or any Hindu. It is my certain conviction that temples are an integral part of Hinduism.

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

## 144. WHEN WILL I BE SATISFIED?

(From "Weekly Letter—No. 6" by C.S.)

A group of Harijans met Gandhiji one night at his residence in New Delhi and had a frank talk with him, which I reproduce below:

Q.: Do you consider temple-entry as the only way to solve our troubles?

A.: It is my firm belief that caste Hindus will not have fulfilled their obligations till they have opened all their temples to Harijans. It is immaterial to me whether Harijans come to worship in those temples or not. It is a matter of sheer justice and penance for caste Hindus. It is repugnant to my sense of justice that Harijans should be excluded from places of worship which are open to other Hindus. I would not consider untouchability as having been eradicated unless and until the bar against Harijans' entry into temples is removed altogether.

Q.: Will you not help us in our economic distress? To us economic uplift is the chief thing.

A.: The economic uplift has not been overlooked. But I should not be satisfied if you were given crores of rupees and yet were still considered untouchables, or if palaces were built for you and you were still kept out of the pale of Hindu society. I should be satisfied only when you are put on a par with caste Hindus in every respect. Thus economic uplift is only one of the items in our programme.

*Harijan, 22-12-1933, p. 1 at p. 2*

## 145. WHY THE TEMPLE-ENTRY AGITATION?

(From "Some Misconceptions" by M.D.)

"How is the temple-entry agitation of yours going to benefit the Harijans materially? Are you sure that they want it?" he asked.

"It is not for the material benefit of Harijans," said Gandhiji in reply. "It is for the spiritual benefit of the *savarna* Hindus, who have to purify themselves and who owe a debt to the Harijans. If untouchability is a sin and if Harijans are as good Hindus as the rest of us, they have as much right to enter the temples as the others. Whether they can get any material benefit from it, or whether they themselves want it or not, is beside the point. The point is whoever cares to go to a temple, provided he observes the rules observed by all other Hindus, ought to have the right to do so. He may be a sinner, but it is precisely because we are all sinners that we would like to go to temples to wash out our sins there. A saint need not go there. The *sanatanists* may expect him to observe all the rules of outward cleanliness that they themselves observe, but nothing more."

"But the shastras are against temple-entry. Why not frankly say that you want to found a new shastra?"

"No. I believe in the same shastras as you do, only my interpretation is different. I am not a shastri myself, but if there is a section which contends that the shastras enjoin untouchability, there is another equally strong section of pandits and shastris who no doubt say that there is no sanction in the shastras for untouchability as it is practised today."

*Harijan*, 24-8-1934, p. 220

## 146. THE FIRST PLACE IN ANTI- UNTOUCHABILITY PROGRAMME

(From "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary")

Q.: Why should there be an insistence on temple- entry? Of course, we understand that in case of objection, there is scope in it for Satyagraha. No-caste dinners have a limited value; for those who join do not shed untouchability in their homes or during social ceremonies. They look upon these dinners, organized by Congressmen or other progressives, as special occasions when caste rules are held in suspense; something comparable to what one does when one goes to Jagannath Puri and partakes of cooked rice offered to Jagannath without reference to one's caste. Anti-untouchability has not yet gone deep enough to affect the normal social life of individuals. What can be done to break down barriers in private homes? Even with regard to temple-entry there is one question. Do you think that priests in public service in free India will be drafted from among competent men and women without any reference to their former castes?

A.: Gandhiji said it was an apt question in this part of Bengal where there were the largest number of Namasudras. He welcomed the question doubly because he had occupied the lowest rung of the Hindu ladder and because he did not believe in the ladder of castes. He invited all to occupy that lowest rung. Then there would be no occasions for such questions as were addressed to him. Meanwhile, he was bound to deal with them. He entirely endorsed the proposition that untouchability would be doomed and totally abolished when there was no prohibition



applied against anyone by reason of his caste. The only universal prohibition would be against insanitation, degradation etc. But he clung to the belief that temple-entry took the first place in the programme of removal of untouchability and he made bold to say that social public dinners would precede as they were preceding the final conquest over the demon of untouchability. He prophesied that Hinduism would be destroyed if untouchability was not destroyed even as the British race would lose its name if its British rule was not destroyed in to to as it was certainly being dissolved before their very eyes.

*Harijan*, 16-3-1947, p. 61 at p. 67

## 147. AN INSULT TO HUMANITY

### I

(Originally appeared under the title "Grime of Caste".)

In South Africa it is the crime of colour and race for which we are being punished. In India we Hindus punish our co-religionists for the crime of caste. The fifth caste man the Panchama is the greatest offender deserving the punishment of untouchability, unapproachability, invisibility and what not. An extraordinary case that was tried in a Madras Presidency court brings vividly to light the sad plight of our suppressed countrymen. A simple cleanly-dressed Panchama entered a temple in a perfectly devotional spirit without, the slightest intention of hurting anybody's feeling or insulting any religion. He had been in the habit of paying his respects at this temple every year though he did not enter it. But last year in his ecstatic mood he forgot himself and entered the temple. The priest in charge could not distinguish him from the others and therefore accepted his offering. But when he regained self-possession, he was terrified to find himself in prohibited place and ran away from the temple. But some who knew him caught him and handed him to the police. The temple authorities when they discovered the crime, had the temple duly purified. Then followed a trial. A Hindu Magistrate convicted him and imposed a fine of Rs. 75 or one month's rigorous imprisonment for insulting his own religion! An appeal was filed. There was an elaborate argument over it. Judgment had to be reserved. And when conviction was set aside, it was not because the court held that the poor Panchama had a right to enter the temple but because the

prosecution in the lower court had forgotten to prove the insult. This is no triumph of justice or truth or religion or morality.

The only consolation to be derived from the successful appeal is that the Panchama will not have to suffer imprisonment for having in his zeal for worship forgotten that he was a prohibited entrant. If however he or his fellow-Panchama again dare to enter the temple, it is highly probable that they would be severely punished if they are not lynched by those who look down upon them with contempt.

It is a curious situation. We resent, and properly, the treatment meted out to our countrymen in South Africa. We are impatient to establish Swaraj. But we Hindus refuse to see the incongruity in treating a fifth of our own co-religionists as worse than dogs. For dogs are not untouchables. Some of us nowadays even eep them as drawing-room pets.

What place shall the "untouchables" occupy in our scheme of Swaraj? If they are to be free from all special restraints and disabilities under Swaraj, why can we not declare their freedom now? And if we are powerless today, shall we be less powerless under Swaraj?

We may shut our eyes and stuff our ears to these questions. But they are of the highest importance to the Panchamas. Surely, judgment will be pronounced against Hinduism, if we as a body do not rise as one man against this social and religious atrocity.

Much has no doubt been done to remove the evil. But it is all too little so long as criminal prosecutions for temple-entry are possible and so long as the suppressed classes continue to be denied the right of entering temples, using public wells, and sending their children freely to national

schools. We must yield to them the same rights as we would have the Europeans concede to our countrymen in South Africa.

But this, case is not without its relieving features. The quashing of the conviction is no doubt some consolation. But the best consolation lies in the fact of so many *savarna* Hindus actively interesting themselves in the poor Panchama's behalf. The appeal would not have been noted, if some one had not gone to the accused's assistance. Not the least interesting feature of the case was the fact of C. Rajagopalachari arguing the appeal a fit application in my opinion of the principle of non- co-operation. Being in the court, when he got the opportunity, he would have been like a Pharisee if he had sat there gloating over the sanctimonious satisfaction of non-co-operating whilst the accused could have been discharged by his intervention. The Panchama knew nothing of non-co-operation. He had appealed to avoid payment of fine or imprisonment. It is to be wished that every educated Hindu will constitute himself the untouchable's friend and regard it his duty to free him from the tyranny of custom masquerading under the name of religion. Not the entry of a Panchama into a temple but the brand of prohibition against him is an insult to religion and humanity.

*Young India*, 14-1-1926, p. 16

## II

(Originally appeared under the title "Still Shirking the Issue".)

Another case like the one discussed in these pages recently has been decided in the South with reference to the vexed question of temple-entry by the so-called untouchables. One Murugesan, a *mala* by caste, was tried before the stationary Sub-Magistrate of Tirupathi for having

ventured to enter a temple at Tiruchanur for the purpose of offering worship. The Lower Court regarded this entry as "defilement with interest to insult the religion of a class" under Section 295 of I.P.C. and fined the accused Rs. 75/- or in default rigorous imprisonment for one month. Fortunately for the poor outcaste there were reformers who were interested in him. The case went in appeal. I quote the following from the judgment.

In the lower court 7 witnesses were examined for the prosecution. It is shown by their evidence that the appellant is a *mala* by caste, that *malas* are not allowed to enter the temple and that the entry of *malas* into the temple is considered a defilement of it. It is shown also that appellant went into the temple to the *Garbagudi* where caste Hindus alone may enter. He was then dressed properly and wearing marks of piety, the Archaka taking him for a caste Hindu, received his offering of cocoanuts and performed camphor *harathi* for him, for which service appellant paid the prescribed fee of 4 annas. After appellant departed the temple authorities found that he was a *mala* and as the place of worship was considered defiled by his presence it became necessary to perform a purificatory ceremony.

The first thing to consider is whether the prosecution evidence has made out the elements of the offence so as to warrant the framing of a charge. The fact of defilement of the place of worship by the entry therein of accused who is a *mala* is sufficiently made out in the sense that a ritual impurity was caused thereby. But in addition it was necessary to show that the effect was an insult to the religion of any class of persons and that the accused intended such effect or knew of its possibility. The case for the prosecution does not seem to have been conducted with this point kept in view and it has not been elicited from any of the witnesses that accused's act was an insult to the religion of the witnesses or any class of persons leaving alone the question whether accused intended such insult or knew it to be likely. On account of this defect in the state of the prosecution evidence I think the conviction cannot stand. I do not think the case should be ordered to be retried.

Again the prosecutors, the judges and the deliverers of the poor despised men were his co-religionists Hindus. Again the accused was happily saved from rigorous imprisonment (he could not pay the exorbitant fine I presume) but again the cause remains undecided. It was open to the Hindu judge to say' that the entry into a Hindu temple by a Panchama Hindu with the object of offering worship could not by any stretch of the meaning of the word "insult" constitute an insult to the Hindu religion to which the accused claimed and was admitted to belong. It may have been improper in the estimation of some Hindus for the accused to enter the temple, it may have been contrary to custom, it may have been a hundred other things, but it was not an insult to the religion of any class such as to amount to a crime under the Indian Penal Code. It is worthy of note that the accused bore no visible marks of his despised birth. He was "dressed properly and wearing marks of piety". Indeed if these persecuted men choose to practise deception, it would be impossible to distinguish them from the rest. It is simple fanatical obstinacy to persist in persecuting men in the sacred name of religion. It is the persecutors who are unknowingly defiling their own religion by keeping out of public temples men who are at least as honourable as they claim to be themselves and are willing to abide by all the ceremonial rules observable by Hindus in general on such occasions. More than that no man has any right to impose or expect. The heart of man only God knows. An ill-dressed Panchama may have a much cleaner heart than a meticulously dressed high-caste Hindu.

*Young India*, 11-3-1926, p. 95

## 148. BREACH OF PROMISE?

(From "Notes")

When I was in Berhampur, Ganjam District, last year, I was taken to a temple which I was told was open to all including the so-called 'untouchables'. I was accompanied by some 'untouchable' friends. A few weeks after I received a letter that the trustees had declared prohibition against the entry of 'untouchables'. I was loath to believe the statement. I, therefore, enquired and here is the reply to my inquiry:

With reference to your letter dated 22-3-1928, I beg to state that the so-called 'untouchables' are still excluded from the Raghunath temple at Berhampur, Dt. Court, Ganjam; the trustee of the temple who invited you, is putting more restrictions than before you visited the temple as for the so-called untouchables who approach to offer their *pooja* to Raghunath. The leaders of the town are quite indifferent to this question even though appeal was made by the Patitapa- van Mission through the press and the platform. The so-called untouchables are slowly losing faith in the movement of untouchability carried on by the Congress. A note from your pen may now awaken them to their responsibilities.

If the information is correct, it is a clear breach of promise by the trustees a promise that was publicly made not merely to me but to the public of Berhampur through me. I wonder whether the trustees have any defence or explanation to offer. The 'untouchables' have undoubtedly a clear case for offering satyagraha in this case. I do hope however that the public of Berhampur will redeem their self-respect by insisting on removal of the bar, if the bar does as a matter of fact exist.

*Young India*, 12-4-1928, p. 119

## 149. A TRIUMPH OF JUSTICE

(From "Notes")

There is in Wardha a well-known and very well-decorated shrine dedicated to Shri Lakshminarayan. It was built by Sheth Jamnalalji's grandfather. It is a private temple made accessible to the public. Jamnalalji has been endeavouring to have this temple available to the so-called untouchables also, as he has been trying with great success to have wells in Wardha made accessible to them and generally to procure for them all the facilities available to the other classes. He had difficulty with the trustees in bringing them round to his view that this select temple should be thrown open to those whom blind orthodoxy has suppressed. Success has at last attended his effort. On the 17th instant the trustees unanimously passed the following resolution:

Whereas the question of admitting the so-called untouchables inside the temple of Shri Lakshminarayan has been before the committee on several occasions and they have been unable to come to a firm decision till now; and whereas, the most representative body in India, namely, the Congress has insisted upon the removal of untouchability; and whereas the Hindu Mahasabha has considered it necessary and just that all public temples should be made accessible to the so-called untouchables; and whereas the well-known leaders of public opinion in India have expressed the same opinion, the trustees hereby resolve, regard being had to the foregoing facts and after full consideration of the religious and the social condition of the country, that the above named temple dedicated to Shri Lakshminarayan in Wardha be declared open to the untouchables and that the managing trustee, Sheth Jamnalal Bajaj, be authorized to enforce this resolution in such manner as may appear to him to be best.



Accordingly a printed notice was widely circulated in Wardha that from the 19th inst., that is two days after the resolution, the temple, would be declared open for the untouchables. It is stated that although there was no organized effort made beyond circulating the foregoing notice, nearly 1,200 men and women and children including untouchables visited the temple without the slightest untoward incident having occurred. It is most significant that in an important centre like Wardha a celebrated temple could be flung open for the untouchables without orthodoxy raising its voice of protest or some people in the name of *sanatoria dharma* creating a disturbance at the time of untouchables trying to cross the sacred and hitherto forbidden threshold of a Hindu shrine. It is a striking demonstration of the tremendous headway that the movement against untouchability has made. It shows too what quiet determination and persistence can do to create healthy public opinion in favour of a genuine movement for reform. I congratulate Sheth Jamnalalji and his fellow trustees on the bold step that they have taken and hope that this example will be followed all over India.

*Young India*, 26-7-1928, p. 254

## 150. LIFTING THE BAN

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the caption "Anti- untouchability Campaign".)

Sjt. Jamnalalji, the Secretary of the Congress Anti untouchability Committee, has succeeded in having the famous Dattatreya temple of Ellichpur, the former capital of Berar, thrown open to the so-called untouchables. He performed the opening ceremony before a distinguished gathering on 31st July last. The temple is one of the biggest in Ellichpur which has a population of 38,000. It was built 15 years ago at a cost of Rs. 83,000 by the efforts of Swami Vimalanand. The Committee of Management consists of 24 of whom 18 voted for the opening. There is a board of 5 trustees who were unanimous in their decision in favour of the opening. The new sign board put up at the entrance reads:

This temple is thrown open from today for free access to *Mangs, Mahars, Chamars* and all Hindus alike for purposes of *darshan, bhajan*, for offering worship and prayers and for attending religious discourses, etc.

The opening ceremony was preceded by a public meeting presided over by Dr. Patwardhan of Amraoti.

The organizers of the ceremony deserve congratulations for the service they have rendered to Hinduism and the nation. Let us hope that Jamnalalji will be able to induce the trustees of other temples to follow the example of Wardha and now of Ellichpur. This beginning is but a drop in the ocean. For there are lakhs of temples that await this initial purification of lifting the ban on untouchables. Hindus must hang their heads in shame so long as the curse of untouchability persists.

*Young India*, 29-8-1929, p. 284 at p. 285

## 151. APPEAL TO TEMPLE TRUSTEES

Sjt. Jamnalalji in his capacity as Hon. Secretary, Anti-untouchability Committee of the Indian National Congress, has addressed the following forcible appeal to the trustees of public Hindu temples:

You are probably aware that the Indian National Congress has appointed a separate Committee this year for making special efforts for the removal of untouchability. The work has obviously to be done through the Hindus, and the Congress resolution is explicit on the point. In these days of terrific advance in material sciences, while the world is shrinking fast, India has constantly to be weighed in the scale of nations as a single indivisible unit, and when an evil within the fold of a community apart from its inherent injustice becomes a nuisance to its neighbours and a reproach to the entire nation, it is only appropriate, you will agree, that the premier national institution such as the Congress should interest itself in it, and help the community concerned to achieve its speedy elimination.

Untouchability among the Hindus is no ordinary evil. That a community known throughout the world's history for its religious toleration and its most catholic culture should have established and maintained for centuries, and should still countenance in the name of religion, a social code which brands for life human beings as unworthy of ordinary intercourse and capable of polluting others by mere touch or sight, is a tragedy and riddle that baffles every right-minded Indian today.

You have only to visualise the spirit of Hindu scriptures and the whole of its culture through centuries to perceive, that such treatment of those lower in the social scale, who are in fact termed the "young brothers" by *dharmashastras* is most reprehensible. It must be unnecessary for me to tax you with a host of Sanskrit texts in support of my contention. Suffice it to say that it is now a matter beyond dispute that the system of untouchability, whatever may be its origin or former justification, is now

only a social usage fossilised and hardened into rank inhumanity that is usurping the place of intelligent religious conviction and conduct.

If we turn to tradition, we find even less justification for anything like untouchability. The Hindu tradition, founded on *Vedic* and scriptural lore, and nurtured by the most dynamic teachings of Kabir, Gaurang, Jnaneshvar, Ekanath, Tukaram, Narsinha Mehta and a whole galaxy of Dravidian saints, not only broke the barriers in social intercourse between man and man, but emphatically repudiated and positively set their face against any such cruel distinctions.

It is an irony of fate, that such glorious inheritance notwithstanding, we should have come to treat today one-third of our own kith and kin as pariahs worthy of treatment which we may not mete out even to dogs or domesticated animals. Our weavers, our artisans, our sweepers and scavengers, who are the real toilers of the land and producers of national wealth, who help to keep us clean and healthy and fit for life's vocations to these our benefactors, meek and lowly little brothers, we deny social and civil rights, protection, knowledge, intercourse, everything that makes life worth living. No wonder if under the inexorable law of *karma* we are in turn ourselves treated the world over as pariahs and untouchables.

But the evil consequences of this sin do not terminate here. The manifest injustice underlying such treatment, and the humiliation it involves for the victim, expose him to unrighteous influences outside, and make of him a disintegrating factor. This not only does enormous harm to the community itself, but it corrodes the social foundations of the entire nation. You have no doubt read how movements and counter- movements are launched and conducted with these unfortunate "young brothers" of the Hindus as pawns and targets, and how it has sown in recent years seeds of unending bitterness and discord among our prominent communities; how some of the most responsible and respected leaders of the communities have suggested and discussed elaborate schemes of converting these untouchables to their respective faiths for non-religious, and sometimes even unworthy considerations.

With the modern growth of ideas, with the efforts of the reforming sections from amongst the Hindus themselves, and as a consequence of general self-consciousness

bom of the great awakening that has come upon the land during the last decade, the untouchables themselves are slowly beginning to feel their plight, and demand better treatment as a matter of birthright. You even find them sometimes overshooting the mark. You have perhaps read in the newspapers that certain untouchables of a locality in Berar issued some time ago what was described as a general ultimatum to the local Hindu community, that unless the class Hindus accorded them equal treatment in the shape of free access to schools, wells and temples, they would discard Hindu religion and embrace another faith in a body. A few individuals did indeed carry out the threat before the Hindus relented and more than carried out their demands. Such excesses, I venture to submit, where they are spontaneous, should be viewed as indications of their attempt of self-assertion so natural to a sudden self-consciousness, and need not exasperate us. Little acts of excesses are bound to happen for a time when centuries old shackles are being broken, and a gospel of freedom is broadcasted all around.

All this must be painful and humiliating to you, as it should be to every good Hindu. The remedy, however, lies in our own hands; we must admit, with *open arms* these "little brothers" of ours in the social fold without reservation. The barest justice requires us to let them draw from the village well drinking water, to let their children have the same benefit of learning the three R's at the village schools as our own, and to fling open for them the temples of God that we open to the rest of Hindus. We have got to take these unfortunate brethren of ours to our bosom, and befriend them in all humility as a matter of penance for all our sins of omission and commission.

To you, a custodian of Hindu religion and a trustee not of its monuments in brick and mortar only but of its true import and dignity, I have ventured to address this appeal. It is the *mandir* which has been to the Hindu throughout centuries the repository of all his religions and social idealism. It is blasphemy for him to look upon or think of any living being as inferior or unworthy of Narayan's grace. It is one of the proudest legacies left to us by our great saints, most of whom by the way came from lower classes, not excluding untouchables, that we shall consider no human being as

inferior to us. It would therefore be a tardy performance of duty for you to throw open the temple under your charge to the so-called untouchables.

I shall be thankful if you will let me know what action you propose taking in response to my appeal to you."

Let us hope that the appeal will not fall on deaf ears. Wardha has led the way. In this connection it is pleasurable to note what a correspondent writes. He says:

Of late there has set in a healthy tide of thoughtful and sympathetic consideration of this question among class Hindus throughout Maharashtra. The recent opening of the temple at Ellichpur has added further stimulation. Two or three more temples have, been thrown open to untouchables quietly. Sjt. Bhopatkar, as President of the local "Asprishyata Nivarak Mandal" has issued through the *Kesari* a reasoned appeal to all the trustees of Hindu temples in Maharashtra, inviting them to throw open the temples under their charge to the untouchables. He has also issued a special appeal to the trustees of the famous "Parvati" temple of Poona built by the Peshwas. It is managed by trustees who are known to be public spirited. This appeal has been ably reinforced by Rao Bahadur Prof. Sahasrabuddhe of Poona. The Rao Bahadur makes a passionate appeal to the local Mahasabha, Youth League, Brahman Sabha, Students' Brotherhood, the Pandits and all the general public to strengthen the hands of the trustees by publicly supporting the latter emphatically and unequivocally.

It is to be hoped that the Hindu public will support these appeals by calling meetings and otherwise. Perhaps the most effective way is to organize local meetings in places where there are important temples and take deputations to the trustees. After all they are not owners, but agents of the public, and if the public demand freedom of entry for the "untouchables" into a particular temple, the trustees concerned have to carry out their desire irrespective of their own opinions.

*Young India*, 5-9-1929, p. 289

## 152. TIMELY ACTION

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Anti-untouchability Campaign".)

The trustees and the others concerned in the opening to the so-called untouchables of eight temples in Jabalpur and one in Bombay deserve congratulations for their timely action. By it they have rendered a service to Hinduism and India and brought fresh hope to the untouchables who had begun to show signs of impatience. It is impossible to avoid an exhibition of impatience and worse, if after having awakened them to a sense of their awful position, we do not succeed in easing it for them before it becomes too late. They must drink the ozone of freedom just as much as the so-called higher classes expect to do as a result of the mass awakening that has come into being. We Hindus may not expect freedom so long as we hold a fifth of ourselves as bondmen unfit even to be touched and sometimes even to approach us within a certain distance or to be seen by us.

*Young India*, 12-12-1929, p. 401

### 153. MORE TEMPLES OPENED

(From "Notes")

The Anti-untouchability Committee appointed by the Working Committee is making steady progress. It reports that eight more temples opened by the Telugu Munurvar community residing in cosmopolitan Bombay were declared open on 2nd instant to the so-called untouchables. This opening was no hurried matter. The proposal was discussed in various meetings of the community, and the temples were thrown open to the untouchables only when there was almost complete unanimity. At the last meeting presided over by Advocate Sayaji LakshmanSilam, member of the Corporation, there was only one dissentient when the final vote was taken. The resolution also appealed to the suppressed brethren to carry out internal reforms.

The Committee further reports, that Dr. Patwar- dhan of Amraoti, President of the Hanuman Vyayam Prasarak Mandal, which has 4 branches in the town besides the Central Gymnasium which alone has a daily attendance of about 1,000 boys, and which has about 50 branches throughout Berar, has addressed a letter to the Secretary, Anti-untouchability Committee, in the course of which he says:

Boys of the so-called untouchable classes are admitted to our gymnasiums along with the boys of the so-called caste Hindus on terms of absolute equality, and no distinction whatever is made as to their instruction or treatment. Untouchability is a blot on Hindu Society and requires to be stamped out without further loss of time in the interests of the nation. So we consider it our prime consideration and our duty to instruct all without distinction.



These are encouraging events. All the parties concerned deserve congratulations. But for the ready atmosphere Advocate Silam could never have carried the whole Of the Munurvar community with him. Dr. Patwardhan's letter does not surprise me. He is an old worker in the field, and it would have been surprising indeed if he had been found behind the times. Let us hope, that before long temples and institutions shutting their doors against the suppressed classes will be among the exceptions and not the rule as they still unfortunately are today. The appeal made by the Munurvars to the suppressed class for internal reform by the latter and repentance by the so-called touchables, should go hand in hand.

*Young India*, 13-2-1930, p. 55

## 154. REDEEMING THE PLEDGE

(Originally appeared under the title "Untouchability".)

Untouchability as at present practised is the greatest blot on Hinduism. It is (with apologies to *sanatanists*) against the shastras. It is against the fundamental principles of humanity, it is against the dictates of reason that a man should, by mere reason of birth, be for ever regarded as an untouchable, even unapproachable and unseeable. These adjectives do not convey the full meaning of the thing itself. It is a crime for certain men, women and their children to touch, or to approach within stated distances, or to be seen by those who are called caste-Hindus. The tragedy is that millions of Hindus believe in this institution as if it was enjoined by the Hindu religion.

Happily, Hindu reformers have recoiled with horror from this practice. They have come to the conclusion that it has no support in the Hindu shastras taken as a whole. Isolated texts torn from their context and considered by themselves can no doubt be produced in support of this practice, as of any evil known to mankind. But there is abundant authority in the shastras to warrant the summary rejection, as being un-Hindu of anything or any practice that is manifestly against the fundamental principles of humanity or morality, of Ahimsa or *Satya*.

This movement against untouchability has been daily gathering strength. It was in last September that leading Hindus, claiming to represent the whole of Hindu India, met together and unanimously passed a resolution, condemning untouchability and pledging themselves to abolish it by law,

if possible even during the existing regime, and, failing that, when India had a parliament of her own.

Among the marks of untouchability to be removed was the prohibition against temple-entry by Harijans.

In the course of the struggle, it was discovered that the British courts in India had recognized this evil custom, so much so that certain acts done by untouchables as such came to be offences under the British Indian Penal Code. Thus, the entry by an untouchable into a Hindu temple would be punishable as a crime under the I.P.C.

Before, therefore, the movement of temple-entry can make headway, it has become imperative to have this anomaly removed. It is for this purpose that Sjt. Ranga Iyer has given notice of two bills to be introduced in the Central Legislature. After ascertaining the opinion of the Provincial Governments, H.E. the Viceroy has sanctioned the introduction of these Bills. But, being private Bills, they have a poor chance of becoming the law of the land, unless the Government and the members of the Assembly refrain from obstructing its consideration. It may be argued that, being pledged to neutrality in matters of religion, the Government are bound to facilitate the passage of the first Bill at any rate, inasmuch as it merely seeks to undo the effect produced by the decisions of British Indian courts, and this it does by withdrawing legal recognition from untouchability.

There are practices in various religions professed by the inhabitants of this land whose breach is not regarded as criminal, though it would be regarded as very serious by the respective religious codes. Thus, beef-

eating by a Hindu is an offence in the eye of the Hindu religious code, but rightly not punishable as a crime under the Indian Penal Code. Is there, then, any reason why the common law of India should punish a breach of the custom of untouchability? If there are many Hindus learned in the Hindu scriptures who find support in them for the present practice of untouchability, there are quite a number of equally learned Hindus holding the opposite view. Though this opinion of the pandits has already appeared in the press, it is reproduced elsewhere for ready reference. Let it be noted that the signatories are all orthodox learned men of the opposite school. On the 25th of January, 1933, was held the session of the All-India Sanatan Dharma Sabha, presided over by Pandit Malaviyaji and attended by over one hundred learned men. It passed a resolution to the effect that Harijans were as much entitled to temple-entry as the rest of Hindus.

If the bills are not passed, it is obvious that the central part of the reform will be hung up almost indefinitely. Neutrality in matters of religion ought not to mean religious stagnation and hindrance to reform.

With due regard to the *sanatanists*, it is difficult to understand the cry of "religion in danger". Under neither bill will a single temple be opened against the will of the majority of temple goers in question. The second bill expressly says so. The first bill takes up a neutral attitude. It does not help a Harijan to force his way into a temple. The reformers do not seek to compel the opponents to their will. They desire, by the fairest means possible, to convert the majority or the minority, as the case may be, to their view of untouchability.

It is said that the Harijans themselves do not want temple entry and that they want only betterment of their economic and political condition. The reformer, too, wants the latter, but he believes that this betterment will be much quicker brought about, if religious equality is attained. The reformer denies that the Harijans do not want temple-entry. But it may be that they are so disgusted with caste Hindus and Hindu religion itself as to want nothing from them. They may in sullen discontent choose to remain outside the religious pale. Any penance on the part of caste Hindus may be too late.

Nevertheless, the caste Hindus who recognize that untouchability is a blot on Hinduism have to atone for the sin of untouchability. Whether, therefore, Harijans desire temple-entry or not, caste Hindus have to open their temples to Harijans, precisely on the same terms as the other Hindus. For a caste Hindu with any sense of honour, temple prohibition is a continuous breach of the pledge taken at the Bombay meeting of September last. Those, who gave their word to the world and to God that they would have the temples opened for Harijans, have to sacrifice their all, if need be, for redeeming the pledge.

It may be that they did not represent the Hindu mind. They have, then, to own defeat and do the proper penance. Temple-entry is the one spiritual act that would constitute the message of freedom to the untouchables and assure them that they are not outcastes before God.

*Harijan*, 11-2-1933, p. 4

## 155. AGREEING TO DIFFER

There are some whose friendship and co-operation I prize beyond measure. One of such men is Pandit Mala viyaji, whom from the time that we first met I have recognized as an elder brother. Nevertheless, it has been often my misfortune to disagree with him. Our disagreement, however, has never in the slightest degree diminished our mutual affection.

The correspondence published below<sup>1</sup> will show the reader how we have again found it necessary to differ. Conscience is a hard taskmaster.

I do not propose to deal with all the points covered in the correspondence. I would confine myself to the vital matter referred to in it, viz., the interpretation of the Bombay Resolutions. In my opinion, with all the deference that I owe to Malaviyaji, I feel that the Bombay Resolution which I give below has only one meaning. Under it, responsible Hindus are bound to give to the Harijans through law that which only law can give. This they are bound to do now, if at all possible, and wait for that Swaraj Parliament, only if the legal relief becomes an impossibility now. It cannot be considered an impossibility till all effort humanly possible has been made.

My duty and that of the Hindus who accept my interpretation is quite clear. We must ask all the members of the Assembly, and especially the Hindu members, to help us to fulfil the pledge given, not merely to Dr. Ambedkar and cultured Harijans like him, but to the dumb and suffering forty millions whom they seek to represent, and whom it should be the

duty and privilege of every caste Hindu to represent equally with the leaders of the Harijans. Let me repeat for the hundredth time that there is a legal bar against temple-entry which cannot be removed by any agreement on the part of all the Hindus combined. A legal bar can only be removed by a legislative act. What an agreement amongst Hindus can do is to move the Government to give effect to it as was done in connection with the political part of the Yeravda Pact. Those caste Hindus who strained themselves to ensure recognition of the political part of the Yeravda Pact are now doubly bound to give effect to the other resolutions which were the direct and natural consequence of the Yeravda Pact; and since in the course of complying with those resolutions it has been discovered that there is a legal difficulty which was not foreseen then, that difficulty has got to be removed at the earliest possible moment. Hence the two Bills.

But, says Malaviyaji, temple entry, the opening of wells etc., had to be done by persuasion, not by compulsion. I quite agree, but to remove a legal bar is not to do the desired thing by compulsion. There is the Madura temple. If I am correctly informed, the trustees of that temple are elected by the Hindu voters. They are pledged to open the temple. By an overwhelming majority the Hindu voters have desired the opening of the temple. But, because of the legal bar, the trustees cannot open the temple to the Harijans. Will it be compulsion to have that legal bar removed by law? I can cite several other instances where willing trustees of public temples are powerless to give effect to the public demand and their own wishes. I venture, therefore, to think that there is no escape from permissive and corrective legislation. If the Bills are defective, the

defect can be remedied. I have submitted the Bills to two eminent lawyers for their opinion. Sjt. Jayakar's the public will learn from another column of this issue of Harijan. I have also approached Dr. Sapru, and I betray no confidence when I inform the public that he has already expressed his opinion in emphatic terms in favour of the second Bill, i.e., the Temple-Entry Bill to which Malaviyaji has taken strong exception. Dr. Sapru sees no compulsion in it. I have invited him to examine the first Bill also. Every legitimate difficulty can be easily met if the principle of securing immediate relief from the legal obstacle is admitted. Therefore, in my opinion, the way before the reformer is quite clear. He must invite the Government to facilitate consideration of the Bills during the current session, and appeal to the members also to give that facility. Success or failure is not his concern. But earnest and ceaseless effort is his concern and is under his control, and he must not flinch, whether he is one or many.

Malaviyaji suggests that the Bills be circulated. I have not been able to follow his reasoning. If the Bills were of a compulsory character, I should not only support circulation, but perhaps I should oppose their introduction altogether. But the Bills are purely of a permissive character. They pave the way for ascertaining Hindu opinion in accordance with rules laid down in the law itself. I should be prepared to accept any amendment that would make it impossible to force the opening of a single public temple against the will of those who have been hitherto entitled to offer worship in the particular temple. After all, what is wanted is not removal of untouchability by law. If the Hindu heart harbours untouchability, it will be there, whether the law



recognizes it or not. But the aid of law cannot be invoked to regulate religious belief, as it was invoked by *sanatanists* when the court decisions referred to by Sjt. Jayakar were obtained. Legal interference, therefore, was invoked by the very people who are today stoutly opposing the introduction of the Bills, which seek, not to impose any compulsion, but to remove the existing compulsion, that makes impossible a due fulfilment of the pledge embodied in the Bombay Resolutions.

*Harijan*, 18-2-1933, p. 7

1 Of the correspondence only Gandhiji's letter to Pandit Malaviyaji is reproduced here at the end of the article,

2 Reproduced at the end of the article.

3 Omitted from this collection.

(1)

(Gandhiji's letter dated 20-1-1933 from Yeravda Central Prison, to Malaviya:)

I have seen your statement convening a Conference of *sanatanists*. I had purposely refrained from worrying you over the question of temple-entry. Much as I stood in need of your valuable assistance, I knew that you were preoccupied with matters of the highest moment, and I felt that the least I could do, as also the most that was possible, was deliberately to forego that assistance. Friends in Kerala pressed me to ask you to go to their rescue. I refused to do so, and I warned them against troubling you. But now I see that you have yourself taken the initiative and a tremendous responsibility. I hope and pray that great good will come out of the Conference.

I wish that it had been possible for us to meet before the Conference, or that we had exchanged ideas before you propounded your suggestions about temple- entry. I feel, however, that I should submit to you my own position.

If the Bombay Meeting, during and immediately after the fast week, that passed the resolution was representative of Hindu India, it is up to every Hindu to make good that resolution in its fullness. That resolution, as you know, has definite reference to temple-entry. It prescribes no conditions. The whole trend of the resolution is that temple-entry and the use of public institutions by Harijans on the same terms as the other Hindus is a debt long overdue by caste Hindus. I feel that it would be wrong, if not a manifest breach of faith, to import any conditions specially applicable to Harijans. Naturally, Harijans would be expected to conform to the conditions that are implied in Hinduism and have to be observed by everyone who enters temples. But that is a different thing from laying down special conditions to be observed by Harijans by way of penance. Most of the things that are included in your suggestions can be enunciated in a different and perfectly harmless manner, that is to say, by saying that it is the right of Harijans to enter all public temples under the same conditions that are applicable to all Hindus, irrespective of their caste or status, that is to say, (here may be described these general conditions, such as, daily bath, recitation of *Dwadash* or other *man- tras*, abstention from carrion or beef, intoxicating drinks, if the latter abstention is enjoined in any of the current *Smritis* and *Pur anas*.)

From all the discussions that I had with the shastris who favour the present movement and who are hostile to it, I have gathered that there is

no warrant whatsoever for untouchability as we know it. There is perfect confusion as to whom, of all the people classified as untouchables in the census books, the verses oft-quoted apply. Untouchability by birth seems to be utterly non-existent. There is no proof whatsoever to show that any single one of the untouchables so classed is the progeny of a Brahman woman through a Shudra man or that he is a descendant of such a union. I would, therefore, beg of you not to surrender on the matter of principle. I would far rather that the reformers were left to plough the lonely furrow than that they should be called upon to lend themselves to an unworthy surrender. The surrender, in my opinion, of the highest type I have suggested in my compromise proposal, where the most delicate susceptibilities of a minority, however small it may be, have been taken into consideration. Even that has cost me much criticism, but I am unaffected by it, because, in my opinion, it is perfectly honourable and satisfies all sincere and religious-minded reformers and dissenters.

If I am obscure, you will, I know and hope, use the wire freely.

I am most anxious that God may make you the instrument of purifying Hinduism and keeping faith with the Harijans.

## (2)

The following resolution was passed by the Bombay Conference on 25th September last, presided over by Pandit M. M. Malaviyaji.

This Conference resolves that henceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as untouchable by reason of his birth and that those who have been so regarded hitherto shall have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and all other public institutions. This right shall have

statutory recognition at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest Acts of the Swaraj Parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before that time.

It is further agreed that it shall be the duty of all Hindu leaders to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples.

Then a public meeting of Hindus was held on the 30th September in Bombay under the presidentship of Pandit Malaviyaji and the following among other resolutions was passed:

This public meeting of Hindus resolves that an All-India Anti-untouchability League, with its headquarters at Delhi and branches in different provincial centres, be established for the purpose of carrying on propaganda against untouchability and that for this purpose the following steps should be immediately taken:

- (a) All public wells, *dharmashalas*, roads, schools, crematoriums, burning ghats etc. be declared open to depressed classes;
- (b) all public temples be opened to members of depressed classes provided that no compulsion or force shall be used with regard to (a) and (b) but peaceful persuasion will be adopted as the only means;
- (c) this meeting appoints Seth G. D. Birla as President and Sjt. Amritlal V. Thakkar as General Secretary to take all necessary steps immediately to organize the League and to bring about the fulfilment of its objects.

## 156. SGT. KELKAR'S COMPROMISE

Sgt. N. C. Kelkar was good enough to pay me a visit at my request to discuss the question of temple entry. I was anxious to know what he thought of the proposed legislation. He said that he had for years held that there was no way out of legislation in matters even affecting religion, where law alone could set them right, as in the case of temple-entry. Judge made law had ordained that trustees of public Hindu temples were bound to prevent Harijans from entering them. No amount of public opinion could undo that law. It could demand the passage of a law but could not make the law permitting temple-entry.

Whilst therefore, Sgt. Kelkar agreed that measures like Sgt. Ranga Iyer's were necessary, he said that actual temple-entry would only be effected by amicable settlement. He had no doubt that Harijans should enter temples on precisely the same terms as caste Hindus. But public opinion might not be ripe for the former's admission to the sanctuaries. If so, the caste Hindus should forego the rights which Harijans could not have. He, therefore, suggested that in all the public temples there should be a common barrier set up, beyond which nobody but the priest actually in charge of the ceremonial could go. This would mean that, in some temples where now caste Hindus are able to enter the sanctuary and touch the idol, they would have to deny themselves that right, if they were not prepared to let Harijans enjoy it equally with them. I said I should have no objection whatsoever to such a compromise, provided, of course, that it was honestly carried out in practice. Nothing would please

me better than to see this unseemly domestic wrangle close at the earliest moment.

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

## 157. WHY WILL TEMPLES BE DESERTED?

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Will Not Temples be Deserted?")

An M.A., LL.B. enquires:—

If temple-entry is allowed to Harijans, it is highly likely that the caste Hindus and the priests will desert them. In that event, of what avail would the right of temple-entry be?

My only answer to this question should be that the correspondent evidently does not follow the movement but has simply condemned it, as his question implies and as I know from his long letter from which I have taken the question. But such an answer will not be sufficient for the cause.

Let the correspondent and those who think like him understand that the contingency that they contemplate can never happen, because the movement is not designed to force entry into any single temple, whether by law or otherwise. The assistance of the Legislature is being sought in order to make it possible to throw open temples where public opinion is ripe. It is impossible today even where public opinion unanimously desires it., When, therefore, cast Hindus, as also the priests, desire the entry of Harijans into particular temples side by side with them, there can be no question whatsoever of the temples being deserted. When the temple-entry of Harijans is permitted under these voluntary conditions, the temples would be all the purer for their admission, as is the case with numerous private temples which have been opened and which have not been deserted either by the priests or the caste Hindus.

*Harijan, 25-3-1933, p. 2*

## 158. MAJORITY V. MINORITY

(From "Notes")

A graduate from Madras sends the following quotation from *Indian Home Rule*:

It is a superstition and an ungodly thing to believe that an act of a majority binds a minority. Many examples can be given in which acts of majorities will be found to have been wrong, and those of minorities to have been right. All reforms owe their origin to the initiation of minorities in opposition to the majorities. If among a band of robbers, a knowledge of robbery is obligatory, is a pious man to accept the obligation? So long as the superstition that man should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist. And a passive resister alone can remove such a superstition.

and writes:

Kindly permit me to invite your attention to the above extract from your *Indian Home Rule*. From this we see that you once held the opinion contained therein. However, the above opinion of your own has been trampled under foot in connection with the 'temple-entry' question. Are we to take that the present position differs from the position held by you then? Apparently, the position taken up by you is inconsistent. We hope to be enlightened on the subject.

It is unjust to a writer to quote against him passages from his writings without reference to the context. Now should I care to defend what may appear to be my inconsistencies? I should leave the readers to judge for themselves. In this instance the quotation appears to me to propound a great truth often overlooked. Anyway I believe in every word of it. The Temple-entry Bills do not violate the rule. They do not bind the minority to anything, they compel it to do nothing. But if a majority may not



compel a minority to its will, nor may the latter compel the former. But the natural rule is that, where there is a dispute between a majority and a minority, the latter will, without admitting the tightness of the action of the former, let it have its way and, if it believes the majority in the wrong, refuse its co-operation. One of the Temple-entry Bills does that and nothing more. But I am myself so jealous of the rights and wishes of minorities if only because I have been always\* in the beginning at least, in a minority. I have, therefore, proposed, as the reader should know, a solution whereby the minority will have its wishes also respected. The other Bill takes away no rights of anybody. It simply takes the question of untouchability from the purview of the civil law. It does not interfere with the conscience or the religious observances of anybody. In fact, the Bills are designed to protect all views and one merely provides what to do in the event of a difference of opinion. Here I see no infringement of the rule enunciated in the quotation from *Indian Home Rule*. It shows how a minority can protect itself.

*Harijan*, 1-4-1933, p. 2

## 159. SUFFER FOR THE TIME BEING

(From "Some Questions")

Q.: Do you know that some temples which had been opened to Harijans were subsequently closed against them? What is your solution?

A.: For the time being, we have to assume that such temples were opened under some sort of coercion or that the trustees have been since coerced into closing them against Harijans. I know one or two instances of the latter kind. My solution in either case is that for the time being we should suffer this deprivation.

## 160. SOME DANGEROUS BELIEFS

A Professor of English writes as follows:

My reading of the situation in Cochin and Travancore is that there will be a most unhappy split if temple-entry for Harijans is your next step, unless people are convinced that the *tapasya* you have performed has endowed you with the power to understand our temple!. Even non-caste Hindus are not convinced that you are completing the work of Sri Narayana Guru, because he built them separate temples. I humbly beg you to visit personally a temple or two in Kerala with Malaviyaji, if possible.

My own orthodoxy borders on superstition. Your fast perplexed me, I fasted and prayed for guidance, and then I felt I must go to Ghottanikary temple to pray for your life. There I met the Brahman devotee about whom I have written once, and after days of discussion we found we could not agree. On the seventh day I had a feeling that you would successfully terminate the fast.

At the temple I witnessed two cures of what new psychology would call hysteria or multiple personality. The cure of mental and nervous diseases is common in many temples. I may give the case of one of my fellow-worshippers, Mr. Pillay of Idapalli who was a capable police officer. He went mad and, it seems, he was actually chained to a log. He was brought to the temple in a bullock-cart bound hand and foot. After doing *bhajans* for 12 days he is said to have become fairly normal. His relations believe he will be cured by daily worship for two more months.

The orthodox people fear that any departure from usage may lessen the sanctity of temples. The Catholic Church at Ettumanur was once noted for such cures. The slackening of caste rules among Catholics is believed to be the cause of the partial disappearance of the power. It is almost impossible to

convince people that such explanations are absurd. They live in a narrow static universe. The significant fact, however, is that their reasoning is not unbased on some experience. I am indebted to Kottarthil Sangunny for the following incident. When Mr. Munroe was British Resident and Travail core Dewan, he cut down the expenses in connection with what is said to be the menses of Goddess at Chengunnore temple saying, "An. image of solid metal does not menstruate." His wife suffered from menstrual disorders so serious that doctors could not cure her. When Mr. Munroe restored the ceremonies and set apart a large amount from his own purse for the temple, his wife recovered. Munroe's gift is, it seems, recorded in the temple. I also understand from the same authority that a Tahsildar suffered similarly because he ordered the festival to proceed after the Brahman said the Goddess had her monthly course.

On the other hand, the masses gladly accept any innovation by those who claim the authority. There is a temple at Tottippal where also the deity was supposed to have monthly pollution. Once when the annual festival was about to begin, the Brahmans ordered it to stop saying that the Goddess was polluted. Chillayi Modikaran, a devotee about whose posthumous doings I once wrote to you, ordered the festival to proceed saying, "The Goddess is old. Women do not menstruate after 60." Thenceforth the Goddess is supposed to have had no monthly pollution, and Modikaran subsequently achieved 'wealth and glory.

I am not so much concerned over the feared unhappy split on the temple-entry question as over the dangerous beliefs to which the professor refers. Suffice it to say that I shall leave no stone unturned to avoid a split. But my goal is quite clear. It is not to have Harijans regarded as a separate body in Hindusim or outside 'it. I shall be satisfied with nothing less than complete removal of untouchability as it is known to us today. The beliefs, however, to which the professor refers seem to me to be most dangerous. No doubt imagination goes a long way in making us do certain other things. People have been known to die of fright because

they have mistaken a rope for a snake. But it would be highly improper to cultivate the habit of entertaining such imaginary beliefs.

Therefore, in spite of the professor's testimony about the cures, I am unable to endorse the deduction the professor draws from these cures that the extraordinary beliefs, entertained by people in Malabar about the curative powers of certain idols in certain temples in Malabar, are justified. I feel that it is necessary to educate the people out of such beliefs. They cannot promote healthy thinking. And in any case I do not see how the entry of untouchables can pollute temples or deities therein. And it is clear from the very nature of things that the powers curative or any other, come not from deities, but from the imaginary imputing of those powers to the temples or their deities. Surely many untouchables must have entered these temples without being detected and without the efficacy of the deities being in anyway affected. In my humble opinion, therefore, it is up to every educated man and woman in Malabar to make a serious effort to rid Hinduism of the beliefs described by the correspondent. Surely it is no matter for joy or congratulation that even the Catholic Church has been affected by the virus of untouchability.

*Harijan*, 29-7-1933, p. 4

## 161. ON TEMPLE-ENTRY

[Last week Gandhiji had occasion to speak at several places on temple-entry. Two utterances have been collected, condensed and reproduced below. Ed.]

### I

(From the speech at the public meeting in Srirangam on the 10th inst.)

When I was here last time, I had a very friendly discussion with some of the shastris in connection with untouchability. I have no doubt in my mind that the views I expressed at that time were absolutely correct. Since then I have had many discussions with many other learned shastris. I had occasion also to study, as far as a layman like myself can do, the shastras which have any bearing on untouchability, and I came to the definite conclusion that there was no warrant whatsoever in the shastras for untouchability as we practise it today and that there is no warrant whatsoever for the prohibition of the entry of any single Hindu, be he called untouchable or otherwise, into public temples.

I do not propose to go into the discussion of the whole subject, but I want to give this absolute assurance on my behalf to those who are opposed to entry by Harijans that there will be no force nor compulsion used against those who are opposed to this temple-entry. You have been kind enough to refer to me as a true and sincere *sanatanist*. I think in all humility and truthfulness I can accept that description. I have always claimed to be a *sanatanist*, for the simple reason that from youth up I have endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to live up to the shastras as I have understood them; and as such I feel it the duty of a *sanatanist* to

do repentance in connection with untouchability, to purify himself and to get rid of this taint. It is his bounden duty to admit Harijans to the same rights and privileges as he himself possesses. He may not be satisfied till he has endeavoured his best for temple-entry for Harijans on the same terms on which he enjoys it. What is more, at Bombay, in the month of September 1932, when that fast was going on, representative Hindus met in assembly and came to the solemn resolution that Harijans had the same right to temple-entry as other Hindus and that, if there was any legal obstacle in the way, means would be adopted to remove that legal obstacle also. Therefore, for a man like me, it becomes a double duty to prosecute the claim of Harijans to temple-entry on the same terms as to caste Hindus.

But that ought not to frighten a single person, for the simple reason that it merely amounts to education of Hindu public opinion along proper lines. And howsoever much I may deplore that this great temple of Srirangam is not open to Harijans precisely in the same manner as to caste Hindus, I have absolutely no desire that the temple should be opened to Harijans, until caste Hindu opinion is ripe for that opening. It is not a question of Harijans asserting their right of temple-entry or claiming it. They may or may not want to enter that temple even when it is declared open to them. But it is the bounden duty of every caste Hindu to secure that opening for Harijans. But it cannot be opened because a humble individual like me thinks that it should be opened. It can only be opened when there is a general consensus of opinion on the part of caste Hindus. Difficulty comes in only when a single Hindu says, "so long as I am opposed the temple should not be opened". If such an impossible doctrine

is to be accepted, we can never think of any progress in Hinduism. We should never be able to deal with any question on those terms. I do not know of a single Hindu temple or Musalman or Christian place of worship which has remained closed to anybody because of the opposition of a single worshipper as against the consent of the rest. I want to give my evidence before you that during this tour I have had the privilege of seeing tens of thousand of caste Hindus in C. P., Andhra, Malabar and Tamilnad, and I have not the shadow of a doubt that unsophisticated caste Hindu mind today accepts the right of Harijans to enter temples and to enjoy all other rights and privileges that caste Hindus enjoy. Therefore I suggest to those who are opposed to this movement that they should not confuse the issues. If they do not like temple-entry, let them leave it alone. Let them give their help and co-operation in many other things. I am supposed to meet a deputation of *sanatanists* this afternoon. I invite the hottest *sanatanist* to that discussion. It is meant to be a purely friendly discussion. I have no doubt that there are many points of agreement between them and the reformers.

## II

At Kumbakonam, on the 16th instant, the town Municipality presented an address to Gandhiji, in the course of which it was said:

While the Municipal Council is anxious to endeavour its best to ameliorate the social and economic conditions of the poor and ready to tackle all problems for the amelioration and betterment of their conditions, and particularly of the Harijans, we venture to express our feeling that the country should not be further divided and dissensions caused by measures interfering with worship in temples and with socio-religious matters, or measures tending in that direction, which, in our humble opinion, should be left to evolve slowly by betterment of social and economic



conditions and by intense public opinion being created. We wish that, in your present endeavour, you will be in a position to devise ways and means to take the country as a whole behind your back, without creating further divisions and dissensions and without giving room for further quarrels among the various sections of the people in the country.

In his reply to the address, Gandhiji said:

I deeply appreciate the honour you have done me by inviting me and presenting this address to me. I appreciate it more because you have expressed your opinion in a frank and courageous manner. I must say that one expression that you have used is enough warrant for me to continue my mission. You have said I should concentrate on cultivation of intensive public opinion. I am doing absolutely nothing more than cultivating public opinion in favour of justice being done to Harijans. I know the difference on the question of temple-entry. That is my only point of difference with *sanatanist* opinion. Nothing is going to be done, so far as I can prevent it or so far as the Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh can prevent it, to force temple-entry. Temple-entry is a question purely for the caste Hindus to solve. If caste Hindus say as a body that Harijans shall not enter the temples, I shall say it will be unfortunate, it will be marching against the spirit of the times; but so long as that opinion persists, no Harijans will enter any temple. My duty is merely to confine myself to the cultivation of public opinion in that direction. I come to the parting of the ways when I am told that I should not whisper a word about the subject. I cannot do that. For I feel, as a lover of my faith, to say that caste Hindus will not be doing their elementary duty so long as they prohibit temple-entry to Harijans. I hold it to be impossible for a man who has studied Hindu shastras with an unbiassed mind to feel otherwise.

When an overwhelming majority favours the entry of Harijans into a particular temple, it should be opened. Wherever I have gone and opened temples to Harijans, I have done so in the presence of thousands of caste Hindus and with their consent; the thousands of caste Hindus who were most concerned about the temples said, "We want the temples to be opened".

But if you say that no temples should be opened so long as there is one caste Hindu who says, "No, the temple should not be opened," then, I would say that that is coercion with a vengeance. I would call it exercise of force when one man says, "My ideas ought to prevail against the idea of 9,999. The majority should no doubt consist of Hindus who believe in temples—not scoffers."

*Harijan*, 23-2-1934, p. 10

## 162. THE REFORMERS' TASK

(Originally appeared under the title "An Appeal for Peace".)

A correspondent from Bengal writes:

The present quarrel between the reformers and the *sana tanists* is causing much bitterness on both sides. It is desirable that the quarrel should be stopped at an early date. I would, therefore, appeal to both the parties to show mutual tolerance. India is a country of many races and creeds, and it is essential, for the peace and progress of the country, that there should be tolerance between different creeds and races. Tolerance has been one of the most beautiful features in the history of India. There is no reason why there should be quarrel and bitterness when Gandhiji carries on a reform movement against untouchability. But it is necessary for Gandhiji and his followers to show some tolerance while carrying on their movement. The reformers might think that untouchability is bad. But they should not try to deprive orthodox people of the right to worship as they like in their own temples.

If the Anti-untouchability Bill and the Temple-entry Bill are passed, will not orthodox Hindus be deprived of this right? Suppose an orthodox Hindu builds and endows a temple and allows all *savarna* Hindus to enter the temple and worship the deity, but excludes Harijans whom he considers untouchable. According to the Anti-untouchability Bill, his desire to exclude the Harijans will not be respected, because the law will not recognize any person as untouchable. According to the Temple-entry Bill, if the majority of the caste Hindus desire to admit the Harijans, they will be able to override the desire of the donor. That would be obviously unfair.

I believe that among the reformers there would be many who would not like to deprive orthodox Hindus of reasonable facilities in the matter of conducting, religious ceremonies. Such liberal reformers should not support these Bills which would deprive the orthodox people of their legitimate rights as explained above.

Difference of opinion should not cause; bitterness, if there is no attempt on the part of either party to deprive the other of its reasonable privileges.

As regards existing temples, it is necessary to consider the interests of three parties: (1) reformers, (2) *sanatanists* and (3) Harijans. At present Harijans do not enjoy the right to worship in the temples. It is proposed that they should be allowed to worship in the temples. The *sanatanists* believe that they cannot worship properly if Harijans are admitted. The *sanatanists* may be wrong in thinking so, but there is no doubt that they do think so. Is it not natural that they should feel sorely aggrieved, if a privilege which they have enjoyed long is taken away? Will it not be the most peaceful way of introducing the reforms to build new temples where reformers and Harijans may worship together? The reformers may, of course, boycott orthodox temples. If (as the reformers claim) a great majority of the countrymen are against untouchability, the orthodox temples may be deserted and the reformers will be able to demonstrate that untouchability has left the country. Gandhiji is collecting lakhs of rupees in his tour and should have no difficulty in building temples for reformers and Harijans if he likes. The new money is worth spending, if it can save a split among the Hindus.

At Trichy, the other day, a pleader describing himself as a liberal *sanatanist*, brought a written statement from which I extract the following:

We believe that the item relating to temple-entry may be dropped for the present and the resources of all Hindus including the *sanatanists* may be pooled together for promoting the material, moral, educational and spiritual welfare of Harijans in consonance with the traditions of Hindu religion, so that the Harijans may become the equals of *savarnas* in every respect and there will not be any curse of untouchability, if they are treated as our kith and kin. No impartial observer will fail to recognize that the removal of the customary social disabilities affecting the Harijans is absolutely necessary. The reform must proceed gradually step by step. Our Harijans should be admitted to our homes just as Europeans and Muslims are admitted. Our Harijans should be admitted to the several callings or professions open

to *savarnas* and ought not to be segregated, and they should be taught to assert their rights of elementary citizenship. It is likely that, in the course of fifty years, our Harijans will be admitted into the temples.

These are two typical statements. Both want the temple-entry question to be dropped. The first letter makes "an appeal to both parties to show mutual tolerance", but in effect insists on even one *sanatanist* excluding Harijans from temples, even though all the rest may be prepared to admit them. In naked terms, this is coercion of the worst type a minority of one bending the will of the majority to its will. None but tyrants are reported by history to have succeeded in enforcing their will against all others, and that they did to their own utter destruction. So far as I can speak for the reformers, their position is plain. They do not wish to see a single temple opened to Harijans until there is an overwhelming majority of existing temple goers in favour of such entry. There is, therefore, no question of compulsion or coercion, unless the enforcement of the will of an overwhelming majority may be so-called. The majority may be, ought to be, expected to be forbearing and accommodating towards a minority. How that can be done I have already shown in these columns. But the minority wants no accommodation, it insists on the present position remaining intact. This would mean stagnation and ultimate death. Hence it is that I have been saying, "either we kill untouchability or it will kill us surely as the rising of the sun on the morrow."

There is no question of mutual bitterness or quarrel. Reformers have no bitterness on account of the *sanatanists'* opposition, for they give to them the same credit for honesty of purpose as they claim for themselves. The reformers are showing exemplary toleration in that they refrain from opening temples where there is a fair division of opinion, even though a

clear majority may be in favour of reform. The reformers' task is, therefore, confined to the conversion of popular opinion to their side. And if the *sanatanists* will but recognize this undoubted right, there need be no friction whatsoever.

Whilst the first writer asks nothing from the *sanatanists* and wants everything from the reformers, the second recognizes that the temples will have to be opened some day to Harijans. But he pleads for time and recommends common work in all other matters. The only amendment I would suggest is that, whilst the temple-entry question may not be given up altogether, the agitation should be carried on with the greatest consideration for the orthodox sentiment. If the *sanatanists* would respect this very moderate position, instead of staging opposition, sometimes not quite wisely, and would make common cause in all other matters, the whole movement could be carried on with the greatest decorum and without wounding anybody's susceptibilities.

As for the proposed legislation, it is necessary for the sake of removing the obstacle that is said to exist at present in the way of reform. There is no compulsion init, unless the prevalence of the will of one person against any number, be it ever so large, is insisted on. And in no case have I any desire to see the bills passed in the teeth of the opposition of a majority of Hindu members. I should wait till the majority of Hindus of the existing or any future legislature or legislatures are ready for the long overdue reform.

*Harijan*, 23-2-1934, p. 12

## 163. COMPULSION NOT WELCOME

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Shameful, If True".)

The same Pandit who complained to me about the taking of opinion by Magistrates in Benares on the anti-untouchability bills also complained that some temples had been forcibly opened at the instance of reformers. If that is so, it is certainly shameful and contrary to the wishes of those who, like me, view the movement from the purely religious standpoint and regard it as one of self- purification. Even if all the temples could be compulsorily opened to Harijans, I should not regard it as a welcome event in Hinduism. It would contribute nothing to the promotion of the spirit of brotherhood of man at which the movement aims. Indeed, the compulsory opening of even a single temple to Harijans can only retard the movement in that it must accentuate opposition, instead of weakening it. A change of heart is possible only in a free atmosphere.

The Pandit produced no proof in support of his allegation that certain two temples in the North were forcibly opened. I have asked for proof and referred the allegation to friends for verification. I thought, however, that I should not wait for verification before referring to the subject. If it is true, the sooner the mischief is mended, the better it is for the cause itself. Such temples should be closed to Harijans till a better day dawns. If the allegation proves to be false or exaggerated, nothing will have been lost by the superfluous warning given by me.

*Harijan, 27-4-1934, p. 83*

## 164. RIGHT OF MINORITY

*A sanatanist asks:*

As a *sanatanist* I have a difficulty about temple-entry by Harijans. Supposing among temple-goers of a particular temple there is a majority of 99 to 1 in favour of Harijans entering the temple and the temple is opened. What about the minority of one who has objection to worshipping in a temple visited by Harijans? If reformers have their way, will it not be an undue interference with the right of worship which belongs to the *sanatanists* from time immemorial?

There may be a public Church of the Roman Catholic as well as a public Church of Protestants in an English town. Even if the Protestants be in a majority, they would not interfere with the conduct of affairs in the Roman Catholic Church. Why, then, should the reformers (even though in majority) interfere with the conduct of affairs in a public temple belonging to the *sanatanists*?

I shall answer the questions by putting another. If the one solitary *sanatanist* has the right, as he undoubtedly has, what about the majority? The parallel quoted does not apply. The questioner has imagined the existence side by side of two churches belonging to different denominations. It would be a monstrous impertinence on the part of Protestants to interfere with the rights of Roman Catholics or *vice versa*. But suppose all the Protestants but one decided to admit to their temple persons whom they had excommunicated for ages. Surely, they would have every right to lift the ban. Here there would be no question of changing one's religion, as there is in the case imagined by the questioner. In the temple-entry movement, reformers do not seek to alter their faith. If they did, in theory at least, not even a unanimous decision of temple-goers of a temple should entitle them to use a temple for purposes never intended by the founders. Here the reformers claim



that the faith that they profess in common with the *sanatanists* permits the use of their temples by fellow Hindus, the Harijans. It is, therefore, a question of interpretation, and in such matters, the opinion of a majority must prevail. If it did not, it would amount to the coercion of a majority by a minority, and there would be an end to all progress. Indeed, the doctrine the questioner propounds would mean decay and death to a society that subscribes to it. It should be remembered that the minority is free to build a temple for itself. And so far as I am concerned, I have given my opinion that even a minority of one should have its prejudices so far respected that a special hour may be set apart so as to enable it to offer worship free from the intrusion, whether of reformers or of Harijans.

*Harijan*, 9-11-1934, p. 310

## 165. A TIMELY REMINDER

(Originally appeared under the title "Temple-Entry".)

Readers of *Harijan* know that Thakkar Bapa has been touring in the South for the Harijan cause. Taking advantage of his presence in Travancore, the workers had arranged a conference at Aranmula, with Thakkar Bapa as President. The conference met on the 10th instant and was very largely attended. There were present as many Harijans as other caste Hindus. An address was presented to Thakkar Bapa on behalf of Harijans. It contained this important reference to temple-entry:

It is our deepest conviction that untouchability can and will never die as far as the temple doors are closed against us. Temple-entry is to us the acid test of success of the Harijan movement. All other efforts at our uplift are bound to appear to us insincere so long as temple-entry is denied to us. We implore you to employ all the strength of the Harijan SevakSangh to secure for us temple entry.

Of course, there is no abolition of untouchability till every public temple is open to every Hindu precisely on the same terms as to the other Hindus. A common place of worship is the surest test of a common faith. No wonder all other efforts appear as insincere to Harijans. But they are not necessarily insincere because they *appear* so. There are hundreds of workers whose efforts to remove the blot of untouchability are not any the less sincere because they are unable today to have every temple flung open to Harijans. The seed has been sown, never to die. It is bound to bear fruit in its own time. Seeds of hardy trees take long to sprout. None the less they are growing every minute. So is the seed of temple-entry growing. The reformers will not rest till every public temple is open to Harijans. All ameliorative measures are steps in the direction of

temple-entry. The Harijan address is a timely reminder to everyone of us desiring to serve the cause that we are not to think that the temple-entry question is shelved because there is now a days no mention of it in the press. While they may not carry on a public agitation in the matter, workers should do personal canvassing in their neighbourhood and persuade trustees and temple-goers to open the temples within their beat.

*Harijan, 22-3-1935, p. 44*

## 166. HARIJAN ENTRY TO TEMPLES WITH ANIMAL SACRIFICE

(From "Priesthood and Untouchability")

It is a serious question whether, where priests exploit the superstition of the people and where innocent birds and animals are offered as sacrifice, it is right to agitate for the entry of Harijans to such a temple.

No doubt temple reform is a simple question. Entry of Harijans into temples cannot await reform. But I would draw the line at temples where animal sacrifices are offered. I would not touch these temples till animal sacrifices are stopped. Inward corruption in temples cannot affect the devotee who knows nothing about it. But with animal sacrifice every worshipper is intimately connected. For, he or she has to offer such sacrifice. And a Harijan admitted for the first time in such a temple would naturally be expected to bring some poor bird or animal as sacrifice. He may or may not be a meat-eater, but who will make himself responsible for the sin of teaching an unsophisticated Harijan that God expects His worshippers to propitiate Him with the blood of innocent dumb animals who have never sinned, who have no sense of sin? I wish that the leaders of Assam will purge the Deragaon temple of the stain of bloody sacrifice. Let no one retort that the beginning should be made, not with an unknown temple like that of Deragaon, but it should begin with the temple of Kali. Most reformers have had their origin in small beginnings. The citadel of Kali will fall by its own weight, if the minor temples wash themselves clean of innocent blood.

*Harijan*, 5-4-1935, p. 60

## 167. NEED FOR SUSTAINED EFFORT

(Originally appeared under the title "Temple-Entry".)

The reader will recall the important resolution on temple-entry passed recently by the Harijan Sevak Sangh. No one need run away with the idea that because not much is nowadays heard of the question, it has been forgotten or given up by the Sangh. Pandit Malaviyaji's visit to Nasik and the vast audiences that gathered round him show that the people as a whole are not averse to the removal of untouchability, though it showed also that orthodoxy was not yet prepared to give up its untouchability. But it is not possible to await developments. The local Sanghs should make a sustained effort to have the existing temples thrown open and even to build new ones, not for Harijans only but for all. If they are situated in healthy localities and have a school, a meeting place and a *dharmashala* attached to them, they must prove useful and popular among all classes of Hindus. There may be public prayers held there every evening or at stated periods and religious discourses may be occasionally arranged. If these temples are properly conducted, they would go a long way towards removing the prejudice against the opening of existing temples to Harijans. Care must be taken, where temples are opened to Harijans that no discrimination is made against them. They must be opened on precisely the same terms as they are opened to the other Hindus.

It is hardly necessary to state that in different localities different methods may be adopted for securing the desired end. Perfect non-violence must of course be maintained in all cases. An all-India simultaneous movement of the same type is not contemplated. It will

vary in intensity and method according to the circumstances in each locality. Nowhere should temples be opened where there is an active minority opposed to the opening. Practical unanimity should be secured before any temple is opened. Thus what is required is sustained effort to convert local public opinion in favour of temple-entry.

The position in the Hindu States is somewhat different. Where the prince or his officials are favourably inclined, there should be no difficulty about opening them. The question has assumed great importance in Travancore. In most other places Harijans are indifferent about temple-entry. The position is otherwise in Travancore. The vast majority of Harijans of that State are far more advanced than in other places. They have many men belonging to the learned professions. Many have passed through colleges. They naturally chafe under any restriction on their liberty but most of all on the entry into temples. One hears that the large body of *savarnas* there are wholly in favour of the removal of the bar. Travancore has an enlightened prince and an enlightened Maharanee. Surely the opposition of a few orthodox persons, however influential they may be in their own spheres, cannot be allowed to prevent a much needed reform which has become long overdue. But Harijan Sevaks should by an accurate referendum or some such means show beyond all doubt that a great majority of *savarna* Hindus are decidedly in favour of the opening of Travancore temples to Harijans precisely on the same terms as themselves. The Maharajah may not march in advance of the public opinion of the State, but I can hardly imagine his flouting clearly expressed public opinion.

*Harijan*, 28-3-1936, p. 52

## 168. THE MAIN REASON

(Originally appeared under the title "Temple-Entry".)

A co-worker writes:

A worker in the Harijan cause came in the other day and wanted money for a Harijan temple and school in Phagwara (Jul- 1 under District). I resolutely refused money for a "temple" because I am dead against the building of all such, especially exclusive ones for Harijans, for it is one form of perpetuating their "untouchability", and just as he was vehemently arguing with me the postman brought in *Harijan* with your article on this theme. It was quite a godsend. Some *sanatanists*—I understand—are trying to induce Harijans to build a temple for themselves, so that they need not then claim entry into existing temples. The Harijans really need protection in this respect and your article has not come a bit too soon.

I had a huge discussion the other day with a mutual acquaintance about your advocating "temple-entry" for Harijans. The friend maintained:

- a) The Mahatma never goes to worship in a temple himself; why, then does he encourage Harijans to do so? For advocating "temple-entry" is an indirect means of encouraging worship in temples.
- b) Our "temples" are in the vast majority of cases solely means of livelihood for priests who are incapable of<sup>1</sup> earning an honest living in any other way. Why encourage them?
- c) To every priest in charge of such temples the entrance of Harijans will mean more money because no one can go to a temple without putting in a pice (minimum).
- d) Why impoverish the Harijan community?
- e) Why can't the Mahatma teach Harijans to worship in the open air as he does himself?

I do not know if these questions have been specifically put to you by others and whether you have ever answered them and think it worthwhile doing so. I do feel, however, that Harijans must not be allowed to build separate temples for themselves and that the removal of the ban on temple-entry will purify the caste Hindu only. The Harijan has to raise himself in other ways with his own as well as our help.

This letter contains the answer too to the questions raised therein. Nevertheless it invites publicity and discussion. These questions have been often raised and equally often discussed in these columns in some shape or other.

The worker who wanted a donation for a separate temple for Harijans, and the one who put the various conundrums before the writer of the letter reproduced above, missed the main reason for temple-entry. The demand for opening all temples to the Harijans is made not because the Harijans desire entry, or that when the temples are thrown open to them they will become changed beings. The demand is made for the purification of caste Hindus. It is made because Harijans are deprived wrongfully of a right that belongs to every Hindu. Even though not a single Harijan enters Hindu temples\* it is the duty of caste Hindus to throw them open to their brethren the Harijans. It is the truest sign of removal of untouchability from the caste Hindu heart. The other disabilities have undoubtedly to go, but if this one remains untouchability does not die. The civil disabilities will go in course of time, whether caste Hindus wish it or not, but the temples cannot be opened without their free will. There is nothing to prevent a Harijan from drawing water from a public well or demanding at a public school equal treatment with the other pupils. He does not do so today in a vast majority of cases, only because he is yet too timid to assert his legal right. He has reason to be afraid of



physical hurt and worse from the caste Hindus. But as he grows from strength to strength, he will certainly assert himself and exercise the right which, owing to his helplessness, he has been hitherto unable to exercise. Not so, however, about temple-entry. If Harijans in a body marched to a temple, they would be prevented by law from entering that temple. Hence the necessity for agitation by caste Hindu reformers for opening their temples to Harijans.

As to temples designed specially for Harijans, I have always opposed such projects. But there have always been reservations. I would not oppose a movement among Harijans themselves for building a temple accessible to both themselves and the caste Hindus. Nor would I oppose the building of such temples by caste Hindus. In other words I do not always oppose the building of temples as such. I think that they play an important part and useful part in the lives of millions of people.

That I do not go to the orthodox temples is irrelevant to the issue before us. In order to prove my belief in temples, I need not be a visitor myself. Surely it is enough that I believe in God and offer daily worship not as a mere formality but as an integral part of my spiritual food. Of course I go out of my way to invite Harijans to attend the daily open air worship. I do so, however, not to wean them from the desire to visit orthodox temples.

Corruption in the temples there undoubtedly is. The illiteracy and cruel ignorance of the priests in charge of most temples is deplorable. But that is a reason for their reformation, not condemnation to destruction. Nor need Harijans pay anything to the priests. Thousands visit temples without paying even a pie. I verily believe that the movement for the

opening of temples to Harijans, when it succeeds, as it must some day not far distant, will sweep the temples clean of many of their glaring abuses.

*Harijan*, 14-11-1936, p. 317

## 169. A SPUR TO FURTHER PURIFICATION

If the Travancore proclamation of the religious freedom of Harijans is a matter for great rejoicing, it is also an event calling us to greater humiliation, greater effort and greater purification. It is not the end of untouchability. It is certainly, as C. Rajagopalachari says, "an indication of the potentiality that exists in us, if only we seek His aid." It inspires us with hope and faith in our mission. But on no account will it warrant relaxation of effort and vigilance over ourselves. If the Proclamation is a result of prayer and purification, if the mute prayer of the selfless workers of Travancore aided by kindred spirits all over India, rather than the advertised meetings and their resolutions, inspired H.H. the Maharajah and his advisers to issue the Proclamation (it does not matter whether consciously or unconsciously to them), it follows that greater selflessness and devotion of workers must do the rest.

Let us realize the contents of the rest. We do not yet know how the orthodoxy of Travancore and the Harijans will react to the Proclamation. If it is not followed up by suitable response on the part of the public, it can easily become a dead letter. The mere opening of temples will mean nothing, if it does not lead to their purification and that of the priesthood.

The opening of temples in Travancore must lead to their opening in the sister State Cochin and must also lead to the opening of the sister temple of Guruvayur. These are of a piece, guided by the same tradition and ceremonial. Then come the great temples of Tamil, Telugu and Canarese India. Kashi Vishwanath, Dwarka and Puri temples in the North, West and East still remain closed to the Harijans. Of the big black patches of India

Travancore, though a big patch in itself, considered relatively was a small speck. It has, by the grace of God showing itself through the proclamation of H.H.the Maharajah, become suddenly a bright spot radiating its light throughout India. Will the radiation prove strong enough to affect the big patches I have mentioned?

And the religious freedom, if it is real in the sense that it comes from the heart of orthodoxy, must be followed by the economic and social betterment of the Harijans all over India.

A mere mention of these most important things should be sufficient to chasten us. But it cannot frighten us if we have a living faith in God and our cause.

For this great and glorious task we want more workers—men and women, boys and girls. We want more money, paper, gold, silver, copper, even handfuls of grain, but these too will surely, as also only, come if the workers whom we already have, are, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion. Are we all pure in heart? Are we faithful to our trust? Have we faith in the purely spiritual nature of our mission? If the answers can be in the affirmative, all is well. But the cases I have somewhat discussed in these columns and which I am still following up, make me cautious. How will it fare if I have other black sheep among us? We are none without sin. But if we are not men enough publicly and without any attempt to underestimate it, to own up to our guilt, again I ask, how will it fare with us and the cause we have dared to represent? My rejoicing over the Proclamation is thus tempered by the necessary sadness induced by a vivid knowledge of what is happening in our midst. No cause for gloom, equally no warrant for over-exultation, but the greatest cause for vigilant

introspection and a vivid sense of our responsibility rendered greater by the Proclamation.

*Harijan*, 28-11-1936, p. 332

## 170. TEMPLE-ENTRY RULES

The reader will find in this issue the full text of the rules framed under the famous Travancore Proclamation opening the State temples to Harijans. It is not possible to criticize the rules in anticipation of their application. As with all rules naturally they lead themselves to an interpretation and application as liberal as the Proclamation itself, and to so narrow an interpretation and application as to make the Proclamation wholly ineffective and thus make things worse than before. There is no warrant whatsoever for fearing any calamitous result. The Proclamation, as I believe it, is in response to the Time Spirit by a prince imbued with the spirit of reform. It has behind it the sanction of popular approval, if what appears in the press and what I have learnt from persons who should know can be relied upon.

But as I have said in these columns the brunt of making the working of the reform successful will fall on the shoulders of the reformers of Travancore. It should be possible to create an atmosphere whereby the rules may never need enforcement by authority. Temples are generally visited by sincere devotees or hypocrites. The former are meticulous in their observance of rules prescribed by custom for fear of losing all merit of temple worship, and the latter have to observe rules equally meticulously for fear of their being found out. Framing of rules such as we have

now to deal with is a novelty of the modern age though absolutely necessary. When the temple doors are opened by a secular proclamation to thousands of people, it becomes necessary also to frame secular rules for its due enforcement. There is no doubt the whole of this great experiment of Travancore requires careful, sympathetic and prayerful handling by all concerned. If the spirit behind is purely religious all will be well. Who can lead in that direction better than the reformers and the Harijans whom they will bring to these temples?

*Harijan*, 5-12-1936, p. 340

1 Omitted from this collection.

## 171. CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RULER AND HIS SUBJECTS

(Originally appeared under the title "God Is Great".)

The following telegram was received at Poona from the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Trivandrum, on the 3rd instant:

Actual working (of the) Proclamation most successful. (It) has disproved all fears entertained (in) certain quarters. No part of (the) temple open to any devotee is barred against Ezhavas and Harijans now. Excepting (the) innermost chamber which has been always used only by (the) officiating priest, all other places including *mandaps*, enclosed platforms (and) corridors are as freely used by newly admitted devotees as by caste Hindus. What is of the greatest importance is that waters in sacred tanks attached to temples are also freely used now by Ezhavas and Harijans. (The) sense of horror at (the) approach of Harijans seems completely overcome. Harijan devotees do not seem to excite any special reaction in devotees of other castes who are engaged in worship at the same time. (It is) hardly necessary to say that no special hour (has been fixed) or any other distinction (has been) made against new entrants. A hopeful feature is (that) priests and other temple officials (are) genuinely (and) whole-heartedly co-operating. They do not seem to suffer any mental strain. (The) *Indian Social Reformers* inferential statement that Trivandrum Ananthapadmanabha temple (is) not covered by the Proclamation (is) incorrect. In fact this temple being near the palace (and) daily attended by (the) Maharajah, (the) Proclamation is given completest effect in it. Forty boys of (the) Harijan hostel, including: Pulayas, Parayas, Kuravas had privilege (of) *darshan* and worship in Ananthapadmanabha temple yesterday. They were permitted to go up to (the) chamber of (the) great image up to the point (that) any devotee of (the) highest caste can go to.

On second December one of our workers took a hundred and fifty Harijans from (a) village thirty-seven miles off to the same Ananthapadmanabha temple without any notice to us. He came yesterday to our office with his party and reported (that) he had been received very kindly and had been allowed *darshan* (and) worship without

any restriction. He said also in answer (to) particular inquiries that he had *darshan* from the single slab *mandap*, the maximum point of approach for all devotees even of (the) highest caste. He and his group were fortunate to have *darshan* of His Highness near the precincts of the temple. Again a batch of our Harijan students visited the local important Subramaniaswamy temple. They had (a) bath in the sacred tank and had *darshan* without (the) slightest objection (or) restriction (and) the priests were most sympathetic and kind. In fact it may be said they were enthusiastic and joined (sic) snapshots taken by (a) photographer at the time. President Parameswaran Pillai, M. Govindan, District Sangh President, and Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari were at Varkala on (the) second. They made personal enquiries of priests there and the reports were very satisfactory. It was learnt that numbers of Ezhavas (and) Harijans were voluntarily going to Janardan temple and enjoying benefit of the Proclamation without any difficulty.

The Proclamation covers 1,526 temples managed or controlled by (the) State. Of these 155 are major temples, including 12 wide-famed shrines of all-India importance, like those of Cape Comorin, Suchindram, Ananthapadmanabha, Janardan of Varkala, Haripad, Ambalapuzha, Vaikom, Aranmula Chen- ganoor, Ettumanoor, Neyyattinkara, (and) Kalady. The fact is there are few temples of any importance outside Government control in Travancore. Reports received from mofussil centres show satisfactory peaceful working of (the) Proclamation in the same faithful manner as at Trivandrum. Such reports (have been) already received from Cape Comorin, Suchindram, Neyyattinkara, Quilon, Haripad, Alleppey, Vaikom, Aranmula, Ettumanoor, Ambalapuzha (and) Parur. The reaction among Ezhavas is very satisfactory. Their jubilation is greater than (that of) all others, both among ordinary folk and educated sections. Reports indicate that even Ezhavas who were bitter and sceptical about Hinduism are displaying great enthusiasm and (a) spirit of genuine co-operation. Orthodox people including Nambudris have as groups or individuals displayed no hostility, most of them expressing themselves in terms of full approval of (the) Proclamation. We see no signs whatever of resentment. Their behaviour is such as if nothing extraordinary had happened, which from what we know of previous



orthodoxy is an astonishing achievement. The noble Proclamation has been followed up by thorough execution.

Changanchery K. Parameswaran Pillai, President, Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh; M. Govindan, President, Trivandrum District Harijan Sevak Sangh; G. Ramachandran, Secretary, Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh.

The telegram was received too late for publication in the last issue. That is the handicap of having different places of printing and editing.

When the Temple-Entry Proclamation was issued, I had misgivings which I could not and would not suppress. Was it a political document with loopholes and reservations? What would be its effect on the caste Hindus, if it was a superimposed thing? What would be its effect on Harijans? Would it not leave them cold?

Friends took me to task for not sharing their enthusiasm. I could not help it. Not that I had any doubt about the genuine desire of H.H. the Maharanee, or the Maharajah, or the Dewan Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar. Indeed I had the privilege of meeting the Maharanee and her young hope, the present Maharajah, when I was in Travancore years ago. The Maharanee had even then professed her belief in the reform. I had even jokingly asked the boy, as the Maharajah then was, whether he would remove untouchability and throw open temples when he mounted the *gadi* of Travancore. He had enthusiastically said "of course". Have I not known Sir G. P. Ramaswamy Ayyar since 1915 or 1916 as a reformer? My misgivings had a deeper meaning which I had tried to express. It may be that it was my want of faith in the people. There certainly was in the inadequacy of the effort and purity of reformers working under the aegis of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

But the latest happening described in the foregoing telegram with such wealth of detail has dispelled all doubt. The rules reproduced last week have lost all their formidableness. The actuality has surpassed all expectations. The enthusiasm of the Harijans, the absence of all opposition to their entrance to the farthest limit permissible to the highest caste, and the willing, nay the hearty cooperation of the officiating priests, show the utter genuineness of the great and sweeping reform. What seemed impossible for man has been made possible by God. Royal proclamations cannot convert tens of thousands of people. Here, therefore, is an instance of mass conversion of caste Hindus. It is real because it is spontaneous.

Only a few years ago in Vaikom the caste Hindus had threatened violence if Harijans crossed even certain roads leading to the Vaikom temple. Now that very temple has been opened to Harijans on absolutely the same terms as to any caste Hindu. And all this without the slightest pressure from anybody. What was quoted to me as the *Shankara Smriti* has given place to the Maharajah *Smriti* whose validity is proved by the unequivocal response of the caste Hindus as a whole and the equally unequivocal response in another sense by the Harijans. Truly, God is Great, if we would but open the eyes of our understanding. My congratulations to the Maharajah and his good mother and his great Dewan, as also the Hindus of Travancore. Let us hope that all caste distinctions, in so far as they connote high and low grades, are things of the past in Travancore. If we garner the enthusiasm of Travancore, it cannot be long before the whole of India catches the Travancore spirit.

*Harijan*, 12-12-1936, p. 350

## 172. TRAVANCORE PILGRIMAGE

I am writing this at the Cape in front of the sea where three waters meet and furnish a sight unequalled in the world. For this is no port of call for vessels. Like the goddess the waters around are virgin. The Cape has no population worth the name. The place is therefore eminently fitted for contemplation. This is the third day of the pilgrimage. Having mentally and voluntarily become an untouchable and therefore shunned the temples which were barred against fellow untouchables, I feel like them the joy of the removal of the bar. I approached the great temple in Trivandrum with awe and due veneration. Curiosity had given way to the incoming of something that was to fill the void of years. As I write these lines I am reminded of the peace I felt in the Cathedral in Madras to which Bishop Whitehead had taken me now over twenty years ago. In that Cathedral on the particular morning, so far as I remember, we were the only two persons present. In the Trivandrum Temple there were thousands awaiting the arrival of my party. But there was no noise, no bustle. Untouchables of yesterday were in the silent concourse in perhaps equal numbers. I could not distinguish between the two. All had almost the same marks on their bodies, all had the same kind of garments. Evidently the custom is to have only seamless wear which need not be more than a *lungi*, never more than a wrapper added to it. The majority including the priests were bare-bodied. In the midst of this vast assemblage, I seemed to enjoy the kind of peace I had felt in the Madras Cathedral. And yet the two were quite different. The Madras peace had no background. This in Padmanabha temple had. And I would not have

experienced it, if the crowd had been boisterous or at all in a non-spiritual mood. All those bare bodies in spotlessly white *lungis* standing row upon row in perfectly silent and reverent attitude produced an impression upon me which will endure till life lasts. The entry into the very spacious temple crowded with images which the guiding priest in his choice Hindi made almost to speak, was no less soul stirring. Then we reached the great central image. It was all like a day dream. The knowledge that I was visiting the temple designed specially for the Maharajahs of Travancore and that too in the company of the hitherto despised untouchables, heightened the effect which the images and the surroundings had produced upon me. The silence and the attitude of worship have continued at the three temples I visited between Trivandrum and the Cape. And this morning I visited the famous temple at the Cape, dedicated to the Virgin. Accompanied by a large party of Harijans who were singing *bhajans*, we passed through the street leading to the temple. The street like the temple was forbidden to the untouchables. But now, without any opposition from anywhere, we walked through it and then into the temple as if we had never been prohibited. It is a dream realized in a manner and in a place where the realization seemed almost unthinkable before it was realized elsewhere. "You may have temples opened in the North, but you will never succeed in having them opened in Cochin and Travancore—the citadels of orthodoxy," used to be told before. Now one citadel has yielded with rare generosity and grace. The genuineness of the generosity and grace seems to have disarmed all opposition. The legend attached to the acts of the Maharajahs of Travancore had perhaps its due share in the conversion of

the people. The Maharajahs are called "Padmanabhadas", meaning servants of Pad manabha, i.e. God. The Maharajahs are supposed to visit the temple every morning (and I understand they do whilst in Trivandrum) and receive instructions for the day's work from God. The Proclamation is therefore an act of God through His servant the present Maharajah. Whatever may be the cause, the fact of the Proclamation being given effect to by an overwhelming number of *savarnas* and being freely availed of by *avarnas* stands out as a miracle.

But the very miracle weighs me down with a sense of responsibility which chastens me and affects my elation. If what is going on today is to be consolidated, there must be continued effort by all true Harijan workers for the education of both *savarnas* and *avarnas* on the meaning of the Proclamation. But a few months ago it was the fashion on the part of *savarnas* to say that *avarnas* did not want temple-entry. It was equally the fashion on the part of some vocal members among the *avarnas* to say that they did not care for temple-entry and that they cared only for economic uplift. Both mistook the meaning of the anti-untouchability campaign. The Travancore experience has opened their eyes. The right of entering temples abolishes untouchability at a stroke—untouchability that prevented a large section of Hindus from sharing with the rest the privilege of worship in the same manner as the latter. Economic uplift was there. But the best among the *avarnas* felt the sting of the deprivation. It soured them and angered them against the haughty *savarnas*. Now all that has changed. The *avarnas* feel the glow of freedom which they had never felt before.

All this marvellous result may easily be nullified if it is not followed out to its logical conclusion. Before *avarnas* can forget the past, they must be made conscious of what they have come to. The message of freedom must be carried to the humblest hut. The minds of the Pulayas and the Pariahs should be opened to the implications of the suddenly acquired freedom. This does not need an elaborate programme of literacy. That must come. But what is needed is immediate human contact. For this an army of volunteer workers of the right type is needed. And just as the message of freedom has to be taken to the *avarna* huts, so has it to be taken to the *savarna* homes.

Then there is the question of reform of temples from within. Here I cannot do better than quote from a long letter from a Mussalman friend who believes in Hinduism as much as he believes in Islam:

You will soon be going to Travancore to celebrate the entry of Harijans into the temples thrown open to them. It is indeed a step forward. But what we need most is the restoration of the temples to their pristine purity and sanctity. The ideal lying behind temples is most holy. In the temples of ancient India resided great *Rishis* who imparted divine wisdom. Today the priest sits there barring the way to those who need instruction and help to solve the problem of life. Alas! the priests of all religions are more in need of instruction than the poor masses.

These words are true. Never was the need for temple reform more urgent than today. Fortunately in Travancore the vast majority of temples belong to the State and are under special management. They are kept clean and often undergo improvement and addition. They are never empty. They supply a felt want. If the priests had better education and would be custodians of the spirituality of the people, the temples

would be houses both of worship and spiritual instruction as they were before.

*Harijan*, 23-1-1937, p. 398

## 173. THE MESSAGE OF THE PROCLAMATION

(Originally appeared under the title "The Vaikom Speech".)

I suppose you can better imagine than I can describe my joy for being a second time in your midst and under such happy auspices as you all know. Only a few years ago one had to struggle hard to get the roads leading to the great temple thrown open to *avarna* Hindus. Good Madhavan assisted by Krishnaswami of revered memory and by Kalappan laid the foundation of that struggle. It is a matter of deep sorrow to me—as it must be to you—that neither Madhavan nor Krishnaswami is here to share your rejoicings.

### A CALL TO PURIFICATION

Now I am on a pilgrimage, as I have called the present tour of Travancore. Throughout the whole course of my life I do not remember having entered so many temples as I have during these few days of pilgrimage, and only an hour more and I shall have the privilege of entering the forbidding looking walls as they then were which surround the great temple of this place. And all these good things have come to pass because the Maharajah and the Maharanee resolved to carry out the sacred resolve under the inspiration of Padmanabhaswami. But the Proclamation can be rendered fully ineffective if the *savarnas* and *avarnas* of Travancore do not make an adequate response to this

Proclamation. It is not enough that the *savarnas* and the *avarnas* continue to go to the temples just as they are doing now. Hitherto people have gone to the temples more by way of formality than from conviction. They had not reasoned out for themselves why they needed to go to the temples. Largely throughout India the temples have been popular more with women than men, and they have gone there in order to ask some boon of the God residing in those temples. But now if you have rightly understood the Proclamation and all it means, I expect much more from you than a mere formal going to the temples. In my opinion the Proclamation is a call to purification addressed to every Hindu in Travancore, whether *savarna* or *avarna*. It was the *savarnas* who for a thousand years—may be several thousand years had deprived their own fellow-religionists of the right of worshipping the same God in the same manner that they worshipped. And in order to justify such an atrocious injustice—no matter for what causes—a whole class of human beings were held as untouchables. Now that the sinful distinction has been abolished by a stroke of the pen, in order that you may render some reparation to *avarna* Hindus, you have got to adopt some measure to let them know that you are no longer the superior beings that you have claimed to be all these years. Therefore I would expect all *savarnas* to take the glorious message of liberation to every *avarna* home. It can be done very easily and without much effort on your part. Only one condition is indispensable. You should believe from the bottom of your heart in the necessity Of the Proclamation, and every Hindu—*savarna* and *avarna*, man and woman—should make it his or her individual work to get hold of some *avarnas*, to take to them the message of the



Proclamation, and take them to the temples. And since the spiritual regeneration of an individual or a nation must include all the departments of life—economic, religious, social—uplift in those departments is bound to follow. You will be vasily mistaken if you labour under the delusion that all these things are going to be done by the Proclamation.

#### A HISTORICAL FACT

I think that the Maharajah's and the Maharanee's task is finished, so far as untouchability is concerned, by issuing this Proclamation. That there would be financial aid by the State for the education of these classes is a foregone conclusion. But that can never bring about the regeneration that I am picturing to myself. That requires a hearty and willing co-operation of the *savarna* Hindus as a class. You can therefore understand my sorrow when I heard—I do not know with what truth—that some women and even men were hesitating to enter the temple which they used to do regularly. In order to disabuse such doubters, if there are any here, of their doubts I want to quote one historical fact that took place when I was here in connection with Vaikom Satyagraha. Some of you may remember that I had more than one serious discussion with the shastris who were then residing within the temple precincts, and who were attached, if I remember rightly to the temple in some shape or other. I am trying to give you as correct a version of that discussion as I can recall at the present moment. In support of the proposition that even roads leading to the temples were barred against *avarna* Hindus although they were not barred against non-Hindus, they produced a book called *Shankara Smriti*. I had never heard of such a *Smriti* before I came to

Vaikom and heard it quoted. You will be astonished to find that when I had that *Smriti* translated for me, I could not find in it any authority for closing the roads. But I grant that it was enough for them that they believed that the *Shankara Smriti* supported their contention. Then, as I was negotiating through the then Commissioner of Police and with the Senior Maharanee, I just asked the question that supporting as a result of the negotiations the Maharanee issued orders to open the roads to the *avarana* Hindus, what would be their attitude to them? Then without the slightest hesitation they said: "Oh! that is a different thing altogether; a Hindu Prince or Princess has every right to issue an order which has the authority of a *Smriti*!" They laid that was implied in Hinduism as Hindu kings are repositories of Hindu faith and they have every right to issue orders which are not inconsistent with *Shruti*. I asked them whether the same thing applied to the opening of the temples. They said, "Most decidedly." Let me tell you that these shastris were not the only shastris that gave this reply. I asked the same question to shastris in Cochin and Tamilnad and they gave the same answer. As a matter of fact that is the historical evolution of *Smritis* and for that matter of the eighteen *Puranas*. They were all produced or inspired in response to the want of those times. They do not always express eternal verities. The eternal verity is summed up in one verse of the *Ishopanishad* as I have been saying. And without fear of contradiction I am here to say that every believer in this verse is wholly a Hindu, and if he acts up to what is taught by this *mantra* he will find his freedom here and hereafter. I know no other road or better road to happiness than is contained in this first *mantra of Ishopanishad*. And if a Hindu Prince in conformity with the

implications and teachings of this *mantra*, issued a proclamation such as has been issued by the Maharajah of Travancore, it would carry such authority. And I invite those who know anything of the *Ishopanishad* to tell me whether this Proclamation is in any way inconsistent with this *mantra*. If they will make a prayerful search within and examine it, they will find that the Proclamation is a tardy fulfilment of its requirements. Therefore with all the earnestness that I can command I want to ask every doubter man and woman to throw away those doubts and heartily respond to the Proclamation. I must not take this theme any further, as I want to introduce another subject. I shall conclude this part by hoping that the Proclamation will have your hearty, not lukewarm, support and that you will carry it out in letter and spirit.

#### AN APPEAL TO THE COCHIN MAHARAJAH

And now I want to take you all on the wings of your imagination to Cochin. I have come to the borders of Cochin, as far as it was possible, and I understand on the other side of the waters at a distance of less than ten miles lies Cochin. I suppose the last time I came to Vaikom I came through Cochin. But since I am not going to Cochin, I may permit myself to refer to Cochin which is so intimately connected with Travancore. Conditions in both the States are identical and the practices and the usages in the two States are the same. I understand that the Maharajah of Cochin has even some rights and privileges with regard to the Vaikom temple. I must confess to you that I am impatient to see that the Cochin Maharajah follows in the footsteps of the Maharajah of Travancore. I have no desire whatever to embarrass His Highness. I am myself an old man—awaiting any day the warrant of *Tamaraja*. The

Maharajah is older than I by six years. I assure you that whilst I am overjoyed over the Proclamation and the celebrations in Travancore,' I am oppressed by the responsibility which touches every *savarna* Hindu—not that it devolves any the less on the devoted heads of *avarna* Hindus. Only just now what I want to be done has got to be done, and can only be done, by the *savarna* Hindus. I want you to adopt a respectful and prayerful attitude towards the old Maharajah of Cochin. But with due regard to his age and rank, we should be false to the faith we hold in common with him, we should be false to truth, if we did not convey to him our deepest wishes. I claim to have understood the tenets of Hinduism and for an unbroken period of 50 years followed them as far as an imperfect being like me can. And when I have repeated from every platform that untouchability is a blot on Hinduism I have weighed every word of it and I have based my opposition to untouchability on the Hindu shastras and nothing else. Therefore I venture to convey to the Maharajah of Cochin that what the Maharajah of Travancore guided by his mother has done is no new-fangled venture of a youthful sovereign. I verily believe that when all else about Travancore is forgotten, this one act of the Maharajah will be remembered by future generations with gratitude. I hold that this Proclamation must not begin and end with the border of Travancore.

#### TOUCH HIS HEART

Then let me give you a little tip. I want you to be at Cochin in imagination. That means that your conduct should affect the decision of the Maharajah of Cochin. How can this be done? By prayerful and religious spirit, as expressed in your own individual conduct, you can

influence His Highness. I do not suggest sending petitions to the Maharajah of Cochin. Petitions may be submitted by the people of Cochin, but you the people of Travancore can do something better. Old men are never moved from their purpose by appeals to the intellect. I tell you there are many young men after me to convert me to their views, and they find that they cannot easily take me with them. But the hearts of old men become increasingly responsive with age and so whenever young men or young women want me to do anything they have to get round not my intellect or reason but my heart. So also must it happen to the old Maharajah of Cochin and you can touch his heart, not through any newspaper propaganda, but by becoming better Hindus under the liberties granted by the Proclamation, by showing that you *savarna* Hindus have not lost a tittle of your religious fervour, nor have the temples a tittle of the sanctity attached to them by the re-admission of *avarnas* to them.

I have so often said and certainly held the belief that our temples were losing their sanctity by reason of our criminal neglect of our untouchable brethren. If you realize your responsibility under the Proclamation, you will at once think with me that you cannot be indifferent to what temples mean to you and whether you go there or no. And when the best of you continue to go to the temples and see to it that temples undergo a process of regeneration and the life of *avarnas* becomes purified, no Maharajah can help being moved by such a spectacle. I tell you if you have really understood the spirit of the Proclamation, the silent revolution that the Hindu life will undergo in Travancore will be

irresistible and will overtake not only Cochin but every corner of Hindustan.

May God grant that even as the foundation of temple entry in Travancore was laid in this place by humble workers like Madhavan and the late Krishnaswami and Kelappan, may God grant that you people of Vaikom will lay the foundation of the purification of Hinduism, and thus induce the Maharajah of Cochin to open all the temples in his State and thus render an equally great service to Hinduism with the Maharajah of Travancore.

*Harijan*, 6-2-1937, p. 415

## 174. THE OBVIOUS DUTY OF PRINCES

(Originally appeared under the title "The Meaning of It".)

I have a wire from Gwalior saying that the notice board in Mahakaleshwar temple in Ujjain, prohibiting the entry into it of Harijans and those who may be associating with or working with them, has been withdrawn by the Maharajah. Before one can pronounce opinion on the notice it is necessary to know its full meaning. If the prohibition is not withdrawn but only the offending notice board is, the withdrawal brings no relief to the insulted Harijans and their caste associates. It may even bring punishment to the unwary who seeing the notice board withdrawn may venture to enter the temple. If it means withdrawal of the prohibition itself, one would expect a notification to that effect. And if the prohibition is withdrawn from one temple, why not from all State owned temples of which I am informed there are nearly fifty in Gwalior State. I hope, therefore, that the State authorities will clear the point and tell the public what the withdrawal of the notice board means.

Indeed there seems to be a timidity on the part of the princes and their advisers on this matter of doing elementary justice to the poorest and the neediest of their people, and that too in a matter which has first-class religious value but which costs them nothing materially. The most striking example of Travancore should have shown them that if they threw open their temples to Harijans there would be no resentment. But it may be that the princes are afraid of the middle-class Hindus with whom they come in daily contact and they are not concerned about the silent sufferers—the bulk of the poorest whether they be Harijans or

others. Save for a few princes who may be counted on the fingers of one's hands the vast majority have themselves no religious scruples about untouchability. Must the Hindu princes who are supposed to be custodians of the faith, as is shown by the titles they assume, continue to neglect this obvious duty of throwing open their temples to Harijans? I drew attention the other day to the title of the Maharajah of Travancore. Now I learn from D. B. Har Bilas Sarda that the Maharajahs of Oodeypore are entitled Dewans inasmuch as they are ministers of the deity of their clan, and that whenever they visit their temple in Oodeypore they officiate like priests for the deity. I would, therefore, respectfully urge the princes and their advisers boldly and unequivocally to throw open the temples in their respective States and prove themselves worthy trustees of their faith.

*Harijan, 27-3-1937, p. 56*



## 175. LATHI'S EXAMPLE

The reader will find a fair notice in M.D.'s weekly letter of the opening to Harijans of its important temple by the ruler of Lathi State. The event is of great value to Kathiawad. And Thakoresaheb Prahladsinghji deserves the congratulations of all lovers of Hinduism and humanity. Published reports show that there was not a murmur against the act and that the *savarna* Hindus partook in the proceedings without any reserve. I draw from this the same inference I drew from the Travancore Proclamation. For the people religious proclamations of a ruler have the sanction of *Smritis*. I am unable on any other basis to account for the unanimous welcome extended to the generous action of the Thakoresaheb of Lathi. I have bitter experiences of the obstinacy of the *savarnas* of Lathi. They would not come to the Harijans quarters. There was difficulty in getting medical attendance for a Harijan woman who was dying of pneumonia. There were distinctions observed at the State dispensary. It must be said in passing that these disabilities were not peculiar to Lathi, they were common to all parts of Kathiawad and outside it in Gujarat. Indeed in some vital matters untouchability is worse in Gujarat than elsewhere and worst in Kathiawad. Nor do I imagine that with the opening of the temple in Lathi all the disabilities have disappeared in practice. Nevertheless in the ready co-operation of the *savarna* Hindus in the worthy action of the Thakoresaheb of Lathi, as in Travancore, one finds a quick solution of the untouchability problem. For if my reasoning is sound, the other Indian chiefs have but to copy the examples of Travancore and Lathi and untouchability will lose its sharp edge, even though it may not die out

altogether in the States of India. And if it does on that large scale, British India cannot but be affected by the phenomenon. One fails to see why the princes move so slowly in this matter which is one of life and death to a large portion of Hindu humanity. Would that the princes recognized their obvious duty purging Hinduism of the virus of untouchability and took timely action.

The Thakoresaheb of Lathi is reported to have said in his address that as soon as he gets suitable priests and teachers he would like to open more temples and cover them with schools for all classes of children. I would suggest to him the same remedy I put before the authorities in Travancore. A small training school should be opened in Lathi for giving practical training in conducting services and schools in temples. There is no reason why both the offices should not be combined in one person. A school master has as much need to be pure in heart as a priest and vice versa. Nor need a priest be ignorant of the art of teaching. At the present moment the most deplorable thing is that the temple priests are as a rule ignorant men often devoid of character. The training course need not be long—not beyond six months. If the salary offered is attractive, the school should draw well-read youths of character beyond reproach. My suggestion no doubt implies that the reform of Lathi has its root in spirituality.

*Harijan*, 29-5-1937, p. 124

## 176. COCHIN TEMPLE-ENTRY BAN

(Originally appeared under the title "Cochin-Travancore".)

### I

My worst fears have come true and Cochin and Travancore are at war with each other. The pity of it is that the war is over a matter of vital interest to Hinduism and therefore to the whole of India. It is a war between light and darkness. I am loath to think that the population of Cochin is behind the Cochin Maharajah's action. He may regulate worship in the Cochin temples under his jurisdiction in any manner he likes. But even the most orthodox Hinduism would hardly permit him to regulate the private conduct of the visitors to the Cochin temples.

In no temple in India where Harijans are not permitted to worship are trustees authorized to scrutinize the actions of *savarna* Hindus who are entitled as a matter of right to visit the temples.

In Cochin the Maharajah has interfered in respect of a temple over which he has no exclusive control. The Maharajah of Travancore too possesses substantial rights over the temple in question. The Cochin order is clearly an interference with that right. If Travancore has sinned, it is no concern of Cochin. The Cochin order is an interference with the right of private judgment.

In this crisis the duty of the public seems to me to be clear. Meetings should be held all over the country condemning the Cochin orders and asking for their withdrawal. The most orthodox Hindus can surely join such protest meetings even though they may not be in favour of throwing

open all temples to Harijans. Seeing that the Cochin public is directly interested in the action of its Maharajah, they may lead the agitation. The Pandits of India should dispassionately examine the orders and express their unbiased opinion. I am inclined to think that the Travancore Durbar may well invite the opinion of Pandits on the single question of the religious propriety of the Cochin order and undertake to abide by their opinion. In other words Travancore may well offer to abide by the verdict of an arbitration tribunal consisting of unbiased Pandits who will be universally accepted as such. The opinion of an assembly of such Pandits would be the nearest approach to an arbitration tribunal. For whilst the Travancore Durbar had a perfect right to open to Harijans the temples within their sole jurisdiction and ownership and without reference to the opinion of Pandits, it would hardly be right to propound a new *Smriti* in respect of temples where there is joint jurisdiction. The Harijan cause must be always and everywhere above suspicion. Travancore's glorious action is capable of standing meticulous scrutiny on the ground of moral correctness.

## II

(From "Cochin Untouchability")

My note was based upon a summary of the order above quoted.\* There is no mention in it of *tantris*. And are not *tantris savarna* Hindus? My contention was and is that *savarna* Hindus because they visit or officiate in temples visited by Harijans do not become Harijans. But I did err in thinking that the order applied to all *savarna* Hindus who had visited Travancore temples, whereas it is restricted to those who officiated at Travancore temples. Whilst, therefore, I gladly admit the error as to

quantity, my argument remains unaffected. The Maharajah has surely extended the doctrine of untouchability by regarding *savarnas* as untouchables because they did not believe in untouchability.

But the authentic and exhaustive note since published in *Harijan* disposes of most of the contentions of my correspondent. For according to that note neither the Maharajah of Cochin nor of Travancore has any jurisdiction over the administration of the Koodalmanikkam Temple. When therefore, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer said that Travancore had no complaint, he merely stated the legal position. The only party who has the right and whose duty it is to complain is the Thachudaya Kaimal. And one may hope that he will not rest content till he has secured complete freedom from interference with his exclusive right to regulate the admission of worshippers and officiating *tantris*.

The correspondent has surely confused the issue by suggesting that my advice to the Hindus of Cochin to agitate for the throwing open of temples to Harijans is inconsistent with my proposal to refer to Pandits the question of the legality of declaring, as the Cochin Maharajah's order does, *savarna* Hindus as untouchables. And now that it is known that the Maharajah had no right to issue the order he did, the proposed reference becomes unnecessary except as an academic proposition.

*Harijan*, 5-6-1937, p. 132

\* Omitted from this collection

## 177. PRAISE FROM THE HIGHEST

(From "Notes")

Thus runs an A. P. message from Calicut:

In a statement issued today His Holiness Azvancheri Thampurakkal, who is considered as the highest of the Brahmans in Kerala says: "The Temple-entry Proclamation issued by His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore has resuscitated Hinduism, without in the least deviating from its essential ideals." His Holiness considers that the Proclamation will shine resplendent through the ages as the most perfect doctrine of *varnaskrama dharma*.

His Holiness also points out that the Proclamation has rooted out the evils of untouchability, disharmony and inequality among the Hindus and as such His Holiness welcomes all the principles laid down in the Proclamation. His Holiness is of opinion that it in no way contravenes the *Vedic* injunctions or shastric ordinances.

His Holiness Azvancheri Thampurakkal is the last resort of appeal in caste matters, according to the history of Kerala written by the historian Padmanabha Menon.

His Holiness is regarded in Kerala as higher than all the other Brahmans and as possessing unquestioned spiritual authority over all the Nambudris who themselves constitute the highest section of the Brahmans in Kerala. He is regarded with such great reverence that Malabar Rajas perform "Sashtanga Nainaskar" (prostration) before him. The history of the Azvancheri family dates back, traditionally to the days of *Rishi* Parashurama who brought the Nambudris to Malabar.

I tender my congratulations to His Holiness on his courageously ranging himself on the side of truth and progress. It is to be hoped that if he is "the last resort of appeal in caste matters" his opinion will be respected and adopted by orthodoxy at least in Kerala if not elsewhere.

*Harijan*, 2-10-1937

## 178. NO ROOM FOR UNTOUCHABILITY

(On 18th March, 1939 Gandhiji performed the opening ceremony of the Lakshmi Narayan Temple and the Buddha Vihar built by Birla Brothers in Delhi. The vast concourse of people that had gathered made it very difficult for Gandhiji to enter the temple precincts, and the microphone arrangements broke down. He, therefore, could not address the gathering, but later issued to the press what he would, under normal conditions, have spoken. An extract therefrom is reproduced below.)

It is my hope that both these temples will make a special contribution to promote the religious sense of the worshippers. The temple of Buddha admits of no untouchability. But even in the temple of Krishna untouchability and the idea of high and low are taboo. For me, untouchability and the idea of high and low have no room in Hinduism. . . .

Whoever has more of the earthly or spiritual goods has to perform more service to the community, has to be more humble.

*Harijan, 25-3-1939, p. 67*

## 179. MORE TEMPLES THROWN OPEN

Raja Shri Rajaram Raja Saheb is the senior Prince and hereditary trustee of Tanjore Palace Devasthanams. He has 90 temples under his charge including the famous temple called Shri Brihadishwara. He has thrown open all these temples to Harijans as a purely voluntary act of reparation to Harijans and thus hastened the process of purification that Hinduism is going through. It is a great and good thing that the Raja Saheb has done. He deserves the congratulations of all those who believe that untouchability is a blot on Hinduism. The accounts I have received from Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru of the enthusiasm she has witnessed in the South in favour of opening temples to Harijans, show that the reform is genuine and is going to be lasting. She is a careful observer. She says her meetings are attended by thousands of persons who follow every word of what she has to say. This is done through able interpretation. And she says that her listeners gladly endorse her sentiments. All this is a distinct improvement upon the past. Thus, though much has been done, much more remains to be done before Hindu reformers can rest on their oars. Temple reform has to go side by side with temple-entry. If the reform is not superficial but is an index of the desire for purification of Hinduism and Hindus, it must be accompanied by purification of the temples in every respect. Their sanctity and popularity should increase. The admission of Harijans to the temples should mean an automatic uplift in their lives. These things will not happen unless Harijan Sevaks increase their vigilance, redouble their zeal, and feel themselves uplifted by the reform they have helped to bring about. Reforms like the throwing open



of temples to Harijans should bring with them a general levelling up in the lives of those who are engaged in and affected by them.

Segaon, 29-7-1939

*Harijan*, 5-8-1939, p. 225

## 180. MALABAR'S TURN NEXT

It looks very much as if the whole of Malabar, the citadel of untouchability is going to lead the way, as Travancore has done already, in the matter of temple-entry. I drew attention to the two brief statements given below.\* One is by the Cochin Temple-entry Committee and the other by the Malabar Harijan Sevak Sangh, both promising an energetic propaganda organizing the so-called *savarana* and so-called *avarna* opinion in favour of opening all public temples to the *avarnas* precisely on the same terms as they are for the *savarnas*. If there is an unimpeachable pronouncement of such opinion, no State nor trustees can long resist such opinion. The Malabar Committee has rightly laid stress on the necessity of legislation removing all doubt as to the right of trustees to open to *avarnas* temples under their charge, especially if it can be proved that the large body of *savarana* opinion is in favour of such an opening. Let us hope that the Committees will receive the enthusiastic public support which the great cause merits and demands.

*Harijan*, 7-8-1937, p. 207

\* Omitted from this collection

## 181. MEENAKSHI TEMPLE OPEN

I

I have before me Rameshwari Devi's address to the Tamilnad Provincial Harijan Temple-entry Conference held at Madura on 13th June last. I had a letter from her describing how successful her tour seemed to have been from the numbers who attended her meetings and the enthusiasm they showed. She had also expressed the hope that the famous Meenakshi Temple was likely soon to be opened to Harijans. Little did I then know that the temple was to be opened so soon. But the wonderful event happened on the 8th instant.

It is a great event in the campaign against untouchability and the movement for the opening of temples to Harijans. The Proclamation opening the State temples of Travancore was no doubt a very big step. But it was the prerogative of the Maharaja. He had in his Dewan a a wise adviser. The Maharajah, the Maharanee and the Dewan brought about the transformation. But the opening of the celebrated temple of Madura is a greater event in that it is the popular will that has brought about the happy consummation. It reflects a decided conversion of the temple-goers of the Meenakshi temple. Shri Vaidyanath Aiyar and his co-workers deserve all the praise for the ceaseless effort that they have put forth in educating public opinion.

Let us hope that this opening will be followed up by the opening of the other great temples of the South. There should be no hurry, no hustling of the public. The opinion of the temple-goers is of the greatest value.

Theirs should be the deciding voice. The workers will consolidate every gain so as to prevent any set-back. Every opening of a temple to Harijans should mark greater purification inside and outside the temple opened. The sanctity of such temples should on no account be marred. No political capital should be made out of what is, and is intended to be, a purely religious act. Harijans too should be taught to understand the religious significance of the opening of temples for them.

There were fifteen useful resolutions taken at the conference. Of these the following three attract special attention:

1. The conference notes with deep regret the recent action of the Mysore Government in having withdrawn their order permitting Harijans into the *savarna* Belagola temple even up to the limits where non-Hindus are allowed.
2. The conference resolves that the Provincial Boards of the Harijan Sevak Sangh should take up the organization of a Provincial Sevak Service with the following objects.
  - i. There should be a whole-time worker in charge of every institution run by die Harijan Sevak Sangh, as schools, hostels, etc.
  - ii. The sevaks should undertake to serve for at least five years,
  - iii. They should be paid an allowance ranging from Rs. 15 to Rs. 30 according to the needs of the individual and the circumstances of the locality.
  - iv. The sevak should be attached to any one of the centres allotted to him by the Provincial Board.

- v. The qualifications of the sevak and the pledge to be given by him shall be the same as that of the Central Board sevaks, with this additional qualification that he should have passed at least the III form and must have been for at least three years in Harijan work, and should possess full faith and confidence in the ideals set forth by Mahatmaji and the Harijan Sevak Sangh.
  - vi. The Provincial Board, though solely responsible for the salary of the sevaks, the institution to which he is attached will also undertake to pay at least half his allowance.
  - vii. The Provincial Board in consultation with the district or local committees shall select the sevaks under the scheme who will abide by the conditions laid down by the Provincial Board from time to time.
  - viii. The sevaks attached to each Provincial Board shall meet at least once a year.
3. Resolved that a short workers' training camp extending about a month be organized by the respective Provincial Boards in any of the following centres, viz., the Ramakrishna Vidyalaya of Coimbatore, the Vinayashram in Guntur, and the Kengeri Gurukul in Mysore. Shri Avinasilingam, Rama- chandran, Bapineedu and Gopalaswamy be requested to draft a scheme for their training and circulate the same to all the Provincial Boards.

The first is surprising and demands an answer from the Mysore authorities. I hope that there is some misunderstanding somewhere. A concession once given is not withdrawn lightly.

The second resolution is very important. The conference has thereby taken a big step. The third is also a substantial resolution. Let us hope that whatever has been undertaken by the conference will be duly carried out. Our resolutions often begin and end with being printed and advertised in the press. They have value only if they are reduced to practice.

Abbottabad, 12-7-1939

*Harijan*, 22-7-1939, p. 209

## II

(Originally appeared under the title "Temple-Entry".)

I had complaint from a *sanatanist* in Madura regarding the manner in which the celebrated Meenakshi temple was opened. I had forwarded the complaint to Shri Vaidyanath Aiyar and sent it to another friend too. I got a categorical refutation from the latter. He added in his letter that Shri Vaidyanath Aiyar was so persecuted by the *sanatanists* that his nerves were shattered. Thereupon I sent him a long wire urging him not to take to heart what his persecutors may say or do, and that as a religious reformer he had to work with perfect detachment keeping himself unruffled in the midst of persecution and worse. To my wire he sent the following consoling reply: "With Shri Meenakshi's grace and your blessings acquired usual calmness. Continuing work. Expecting other big temples will follow shortly. Your love and blessings my strongest support." The reply is characteristic of this great reformer. He is one of the humblest and the most silent among the workers in the cause of removal of untouchability. He is a God-fearing man. This is what Shri Brijkrishna

Chandiwala of Delhi, who had gone on a pilgrimage to the South, writes of his experience in Madura:

I stopped seven days in Pondicherry, five in Raman Ashram and went as far as Rameshwar. I had a great desire to visit the temples of the South. But I would not enter those that were closed to Harijans. I did, however, see the temples in Madura and Taryore. The others I contemplated from without. I tarried a while in front of many of them and for the first time I realized what the bar sinister must mean to the tens of thousands of Harijans who, though eager for *darshan*, could never cross the precincts of the great temples. We who have the right to visit them never think of entering. But this time I was overwhelmed. I felt a longing to visit them and prayed from the depth of my heart that God might move the *sanatanists* to open the other temples to Harijans so that I too could visit them. I saw too, at Shri Vaidyanatha Aiyar's house, what temple-entry costs reformers like him. Had I not seen with my own eyes what has been happening to Shri Vaidyanatha Aiyar, I could never have believed that human nature could descend so low as I discovered in Madura. The conduct of *sanatanists* towards him has been most unseemly. One of the ways adopted by them is to spread lies about Shri Vaidyanatha Aiyar. But both he and his wife are bearing this persecution bravely.

Only four days ago I had a letter from some ladies of Kumbakonam complaining of the treatment meted out to them by reformers. They asked for an appointment. In the midst of my work I sent them an early appointment, warning them of my views on untouchability. They repented of their wire and said that since I had taken no notice of their complaint, they did not propose to come. I have since read the report in *The Hindu* of the happenings in Shrirangam. Dr. Rajan has given a graphic account of the disgraceful behaviour of the so-called *sanatanists* there. I have no reason to doubt Dr. Rajan's account. It is a shame that innocent women are being exploited for supporting a wrong. I have a vivid

recollection of what used to happen to me during my Harijan tour. No lie was too bad to be spread about me or my tour. So far as I could see the opposition was confined to a handful only. I never opened a temple until I was satisfied that there was no opposition worth the name from the temple-goers. But the organizers of the opposition resented the very propaganda I was conducting. No doubt their opposition proved fruitless. My point, however, is that it was unscrupulous and violent. If I survived the year's tour, it was no fault of theirs; it was God's grace. Sixty-four charges were recorded against me. Not one of them was true. I am therefore loath to believe the complaints now made about the campaign in the South. I have not found any of them substantiated. Untouchability is itself a lie. Lies are not known to have been supported by truth, even as truth cannot be supported by lies. If it is, it becomes itself a lie. There is no wonder, therefore, that from everywhere evidence continues to pour in that the *sanatanist* opposition is confined to a few and that the few do not hesitate to resort to any method, however unscrupulous it may be.

Nevertheless the case against untouchability is not to be sustained by the weakness of opponents. It has to be supported by purity of character, industry and strictest honesty of reformers and a limitless capacity for sacrifice. For I should not wonder if the wrath of the opponents takes a heavy toll of the lives of reformers. No sacrifice, however great, will deter the reformers from pursuing the God-given mission of ridding Hinduism of the curse of untouchability. For I must repeat for the thousandth time that Hinduism dies, as it will deserve to die, if untouchability lives. Only let the reformers know that impatience will be



fatal to success. They must not open a single temple where a clear majority of temple-goers to a particular temple are demonstrably opposed to its opening. Untouchability will not be removed by the force even of law. It can only be removed when the majority of Hindus realize that it is a crime against God and man and are ashamed of it. In other words, it is a process of conversion, i.e., purification, of the Hindu heart. The aid of law has to be invoked when it hinders or interferes with the progress of the reform as when, in spite of the willingness of the trustees and the temple- going public, the law prohibits the opening of a particular temple.

Segaon, 18-9-1939

*Harijan*, 23-9-1939, p. 280

## 182. FURTHER FALSEHOODS

(From "Notes")

I had the misfortune to remark the other day on the *sanatanist* propaganda being supported by falsehoods. I have the following wires from Madura and Kumbakonam respectively:

Srirangam temple being forcibly entered today. Armed Madura temple peons dispersing opposing orthodox worshippers. This is waging war during world war. Pray issue immediate instructions suspending such highhandedness. We have after all to live together.—K. R. VENKATRAMAYYA

Minister Rajan threatening Harijan entry Srirangam with police. Pray interference to avoid bloodshed. Inform Rajaji. —KUPUSAUI

Rajaji happened to be in Wardha when these wires were received. He gave the following reply. "There is no Harijan entry being tried in Srirangam. This is impossible without Government consent, and the Government has not yet given any such consent."

In the face of this flat denial I can only regard the wires as figments of imagination. It is noteworthy that there is no complaint from Srirangam itself. Madura and Kumbakonam are too far from Srirangam to know first hand what may happen there. Trichy is the only town near enough to Srirangam to know events there, if the people interested themselves in the happenings in that temple town. An opposition that requires palpable falsehoods to support it, must be on its last legs. I have seen correspondence which shows that Meenakshi temple has not been boycotted by anybody except a few orthodox Brahmans. It is as popular as ever with the vast mass of temple-going population.

On the train to Delhi, 1-10-1939

*Harijan*, 7-10-1939, p. 293

### **183. TEMPLES BARRED TO HARIJANS**

(From "Harijan Sevak Sangh")

Q.: Harijans are of opinion that caste Hindus who are sympathetic to their cause should not use those temples where they are not allowed entry.

A.: They are right. It is the bounden duty of Harijan workers not to go where Harijans are not allowed and likewise to dissuade caste Hindus.

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

## 184. RAMESHWAR TEMPLE OPENED TO HARIJANS

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

From the Frontier Province I would like to take you to Rameshwaram, from where Rama is said to have improvised a floating bridge of pebbles to enable his army to cross over to Lanka which he conquered but did not keep. Has it not been said that he made it over to Ravana's brother? That very famous temple has been thrown open to the Harijans today, thus completing the list of all the famous temples in the South except those in Cochin. Here is the list of the most known supplied to me by Rajaji: Madura, Tinnevely, Chidambaram, Srirangam, Palni, Triplicane, Tirupathi, Kanchi and Guruvayur. This does not exhaust the list. The Harijan speaker of the Madras Assembly has been going round most of these temples leading the Harijans and other worshippers. Highly educated Harijans and others may be little this belated reform. But its significance should not be lost upon us, because the reform has been brought about bloodlessly. Let us hope that Cochin will soon follow in the wake of Travancore, Tamilnad and British Kerala and throw open its temples to the Harijans. Temple entry reform will be incomplete until temples become really holy by the necessary internal reform.

New Delhi, 1-7-1947

*Harijan*, 13-7-1947, p. 232

## 185. PANDHARPUR TEMPLE OPENED

(From "Gandhiji"\* Post-prayer Speeches")

### I

Gandhiji said that...another matter of pleasure was that the ancient and celebrated temple of Pandharpur was thrown open to the Harijans precisely on the same terms as to the other Hindus. The chief credit belonged to Sane Guruji who had undertaken to fast unto death if it was not finally opened. He wished to congratulate the trustees and the general public of and around Pandharpur upon the right step they had taken. He hoped that the last trace of untouchability would soon be a thing of the past. Such a step would make no small contribution towards the dissolution of the communal poison that had taken possession of both the parts of India.

*Harijan*, 16-11-1947, p. 409 at p. 411

### II

A telegram to Gandhiji stated that although the trustees of the Vithoba temple of Pandharpur in Maharashtra had decided to throw it open to the Harijans, some members of the priestly class—whose number was by no means small—had taken exception and had even started a hunger strike in protest. He would tell these friends, remarked Gandhiji, that theirs was a very unbecoming attitude. It was un-Hindu. The Vithoba temple was one of the most sacred shrines in Maharashtra. The decision to throw it open had been taken by the trustees after due deliberation. Nobody had opposed it then. If his voice could reach the hunger strikers, he

would tell them in all humility but with firmness that by what they were doing they were ill-serving Hinduism. In the all embracing shrine of Vishnu there was room for all. Even the impure became pure in His sacred presence. How could the admission of the Harijans defile it? In his opinion it was a blasphemy to regard the Harijans as impure. There were black sheep and white in all communities and it was just the same with the Harijans. So long as a single Hindu, irrespective of his caste or creed, was excluded from the Vithoba temple, it was an inert, lifeless shrine. The real *pran pratishtha* was performed only when the temple was thrown open to all including the Harijans. The present hunger strike by the priesdy class, therefore, said Gandhiji, was not a pious act, but an impious one it was sin. Gandhiji hoped that they would realize their mistake and give up their hunger strike.

*Harijan*, 11-1-1948, p. 506, at p. 507

## 186. HARIJANS AND TEMPLE-ENTRY

The other day a deputation of Harijans led by Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah waited on H. E. The Viceroy with reference to the Temple-entry Bills. The following extracts from their representation will be read with interest:

The opening of temples to our people along with other Hindu castes is a matter of the greatest importance for our social emancipation. We quite realize that we cannot hope for a permanent emancipation and betterment unless our status in the Hindu religion is improved. We, therefore, hope your Excellency's Government will assist the passage into Law of the Temple-entry and Anti-untouchability Bills.

\* \* \*

The Courts in India are now assisting the enforcement of the superstition of untouchability. British Law has not left the superstition to its own resources, but has placed the machinery of the courts and the State at the disposal of the caste Hindus in the maintenance of those superstitious practices. Even if the Government cannot interfere in the religious practices of the Hindus, it should at least refrain from assisting in the enforcement of such practices, when they are opposed to humanity and public welfare as in the case of the treatment accorded to us. The Bill for the abolition of untouchability, sought to be introduced in the assembly, puts an aid to this anomaly and does not interfere with the religion of any person or community.

The Temple-entry Bill, for which we seek Your Excellency's support, is drafted so as to provide a legal machinery for peaceful and gradual evolution of reform with the consent of the people concerned. Each locality will be enabled to work out a suitable compromise for solving the question of our status. We beg Your Excellency to help in the achievement of a peaceful solution of this question that so fundamentally affects the dignity and the daily life of a community of forty-six million souls who cling to the

ancient Hindu religion, to which they belong and who wish to find an honourable place in it without causing turmoil or disturbance.

In the face of the above it is cruel suggestion to make that the Harijans do not want temple-entry. There is undoubtedly a difference of opinion as to the emphasis laid on temple-entry as compared to the economic and political uplift. But not even Dr. Ambedkar opposes temple-entry. He will be the first man to bring it up against the caste Hindus, and rightly, if there was no movement for temple-entry. The fact is temple-entry is not a substitute for any other uplift. It is an indispensable test that religious untouchability has been abolished and that the Haiijan is no longer the pariah of Hindu society. It is not impossible to convince that all untouchables may all become economically and politically superior to the caste Hindus and may yet be treated as untouchable by caste Hindus, no matter how poor and even degraded they themselves may be. There are many individual Harijans who are economically well off and are members of legislative and municipal bodies, but to the orthodox caste Hindu, they are just as untouchable as they ever were, so long as they have no right of temple-entry, as the caste Hindus have. Temple-entry prohibition and the consequent segregation that it carries with it constitute the distinguishing bar sinister of perpetual degradation. When that is lifted, and only then, will religious untouchability be said to have been abolished. The question, therefore, is not how many Harijans want temple-entry or, having got the privilege, will exercise it.

Caste Hindus have to recognize that right if they will purify Hinduism and render justice to over forty millions of fellow Hindus. The reformers may not, therefore, slacken their effort. The fact that the bills have been



hung up is no cause for despondency or going to sleep. The passage of the bills, since they are private, will mean a mere register of the Hindu will, if they are passed by a clear Hindu majority and if they have the backing of Hindu opinion outside. They would be of no importance to me if they were forced upon Hindus by superior power. I am interested in them because they are necessary to remove a legal hindrance in the way of reform. Whether orthodoxy represents the majority or the minority of one, it is able to stop the onward march of reform. The bills are required for the sake of religious toleration. They have no further or other use.

That points to the necessity for legislation and the education of public opinion in the matter of temple-entry bills, if the public temples are ever to be opened. The pace will be accelerated if private temples, of which there are many, are opened and if temples for general worship are built where public opinion demands it. As a result of the recent brief tour of Shrimati Vijayalaxmi Pandit in Kathiawar, she told me that there was a movement in Rajkot for the building of a general temple for the use of all Hindus Harijans, reformers and the orthodox, if the last will join. The temple is proposed to be built after the ancient pattern, so as to combine a school, *dharmashala*, a place of congregation and worship. I do hope that those who have the scheme in hand will persevere with it and bring it to fruition. There need not be much money required for it. It can be built in sections as the huge temples of the South could only have been. A beginning can be made at once by securing a good open site and the services of a devout honest *Pujari*. Mere brick and mortar is of no use, if the *Pujari* in charge of the temple is corrupt.

But I am digressing; my purpose for the moment is to drive home the truth that the temple-entry movement must be carried on by:

1. Educating public opinion as to the necessity of legal provision for removing the legal difficulty,
2. Inducing private owners to open their temples to the Harijans, and
3. Building new temples where necessary and where public benefaction would provide funds to build combination temples after the ancient manner on sites easily accessible to Harijans.

*Harijan*, 8-4-1933, p. 4

## 187. THE TEMPLE-ENTRY BILL

It is sad to think that the anti-untouchability measure has been hung up for one year by the Legislative Assembly and that the amendment to hang it up received the support of the Government. But the reformers may not rest till untouchability is blotted out of the Statute Book. Meanwhile, the process of having temples opened by consent of trustees and temple-goers and the general propaganda in favour of opening temples should continue.

But I observe that a Harijan Conference at Agra has passed the following resolution:

...This Jatav conference whole-heartedly sympathises with the-Harijan movement. It also admires the great sacrifice and penance of Mahatma Gandhi in the cause of the amelioration of the downtrodden millions. But this conference considers that the methods and system of work of the movement is not satisfactory. Harijan movement lays stress on the temple-entry problem more than on economical and educational problems. The former item of the programme is not desirable for the Harijans, since it will produce slave mentality, spirit of blind devotion and many other evils which will go to mar the efficiency of the Harijans. The "Pujari-Samaj" will dominate the Harijans and they will become slaves of Pujaris. Hence it is highly necessary that great emphasis must be laid on the educational and economical aspect of the progress. Inter-caste marriage and inter-dining must be the programme of the movement. In the view of this conference, without inter- dining untouchability cannot cease to exist.

The economic and educational uplift is no doubt an essential part of true repentance by caste Hindus. It is a test of the sincerity of their professions. But the uplift will not be complete without the throwing

open of temples. The throwing open of temples will be an admission of the religious equality of Harijans. It will be the surest sign of their ceasing to be the out-castes of Hinduism, which they are today.

It is beside the point that tens of thousands of Harijans do not want to enter temples. If it were properly probed, the fact would be found to be quite otherwise. Thousands of Harijans do want to enter temples. Only they have been so accustomed to the prohibition that the very hope of entering temples has dried up in them. They believe that admission to temples on a par with the other Hindus is an impossibility.

But whether Harijans desire the consolation of temple-entry or not, whether, if temples are thrown open to them they will make use of them or not, caste Hindus have to perform their simple duty. They have to open their temples for Harijans to offer worship in, precisely on the same terms as for themselves. A debtor is not absolved from the duty of payment because his creditor does not care for the payment, or has forgotten the debt altogether.

And when temples are thrown open to Harijans, schools, wells and many similar facilities will be automatically open to Harijans. It is surely easy enough to realize that untouchability may subsist side by side with economic uplift. Many Ezhavas in Travancore and Nama sudras in Bengal possess decent fortunes and are yet treated as pariahs of society. The bar sinister is all the more galling to them by reason of their flourishing condition. Dr. Ambedkar suffers from the curse in spite of his high educational attainments and his superior economic condition. He is naturally more sensitive to the insult of untouchability. But the reproach will be automatically removed, immediately caste Hindus proclaim the

banishment of untouchability by admitting Harijans to their temples on terms of absolute equality with themselves. It will not then become necessary for any Harijan individually to go to temples, if he does not desire to do so. The declaration of the opening of temples will cover him with the rest. It will be like the abolition of slavery. It will be a vast and glorious step in the much-needed and overdue purification of Hinduism.

Temple-entry permission, to be of use, has naturally to be a voluntary act on the part of Hindus. It has to be, therefore, a genuine change of heart in the caste Hindus. Legislation is nevertheless necessary because of the fact that in law the entry of Harijans into caste Hindu temples is said to be prohibited. Legislation will constitute the seal of approval of the vast mass of Hindus. I personally should not want that legislation in the teeth of universal caste-Hindu opposition. My own belief is that caste Hindus as a whole do not oppose temple-entry by Harijans. I should abide by the result of an honestly conducted referendum. Anyway, let the reformers realize that, whatever happens in the Legislature at Delhi, the movement for temple-entry and the necessary legislation must continue.

There are other things in the resolution quoted above which call for explanation or criticism. This must be postponed for future issue of the *Harijan*.

*Harijan*, 2-9-1933, p. 4

## 188. WHAT IS OF TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE?

(Originally appeared under the tide "What They Believe".)

Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah sent me sometime ago a copy of his speech, delivered at the Legislative Assembly on 24th August last, in connection with the Temple-entry Bill. The reader will find below copious extracts from that speech, with interruptions, his repartees and some other non-historical portions omitted.

The value of the speech consists, not so much in the accuracy of his historical statements, as in the fact that many people actually believe in them with as much tenacity as the so-called *sanatanists*, who credit Harijans with hardly any human rights, believe in statements supporting untouchability. The issue will ultimately be decided, not by historical evidence or by interpretation of Sanskrit texts of doubtful religious value, but by the prayerful and incessant labours of reformers of sinless purity. No religion has ever lived on its past achievements. It dies unless it is nourished and sustained by the continuing *tapas* of its votaries. Not by learning but by right conduct can religion flourish. Untouchability, as we practise it today, crept in when watchfulness of pure custodians waned. It will only go when an unbroken and unbreakable chain of continuing *tapas* is established. Not even a unanimous verdict of all the Pandits and shastris will remove the idea of high and low which has been dragged into the minds of the masses since generations past. The latter will want the evidence of the practice of those whom they believe to be pure-minded representatives of their religion.

Nevertheless, I commend Rao Bahadur Rajah's speech to the students of Hinduism from the historical standpoint. It is of some importance to have it indubitably proved that the Harijans of the South, at any rate, represented a civilization which was destroyed by a conquering race, calling itself Aryan (noble) in contempt of the original inhabitants, whom it used for its own selfish ends and reduced to slavery. I must confess that I have always entertained grave doubts as to the truth of the story. I should refuse to credit such claimants of superiority with being repositories of a noble religion. If the historical evidence is beyond question, one is forced to the conclusion that all that is noble in Hinduism came, not from the conquerors, but from the conquered and that untouchability is a corruption which the conquerors super imposed upon it, whilst they adopted the religion and culture of the conquered. Whichever way the truth lies between the two schools of thought, untouchability is a recognized evil that has to be removed if Hinduism is to live. It is further clear that, according to the two schools, Hinduism, whether it is indigenous or imported, did not, in its original state, have any taint of untouchability about it. And in any case, now that there is no distinction between the non-Aryaii and the Aryan, who is said to have come from outside India and has fused with the original inhabitants of the country, it is not of much, if any, practical importance to decide or even know who was truly Arya or noble. What is of tremendous importance is the fact that the monster of untouchability will tax the resources of all Hindus before it receives its death-blow.

*Harijan*, 7-10-1933, p. 4

## 189. THE MEANING OF TEMPLE-ENTRY BILL

(From "Gandhiji's Guruvayur Speech")

I will not be guilty of being party to the opening of a single temple under coercion. But I do want temples to be opened where public opinion is absolutely and clearly ripe for the opening of those temples. If there is any legal obstruction in the process, I want that legal obstruction to be removed. That is the meaning, and the only meaning, of the Temple-entry Bill, and no other. This Bill simply removes the powerlessness that many trustees today feel about opening the temples under their charge because of the legal obstruction. There is not the slightest trace of compulsion or coercion about this Temple-entry Bill or the kindred bill called the Anti- untouchability Bill.

But I heard a whisper this morning that behind this Temple-entry agitation there is a nefarious design, if not on my part, on the part of my co-workers, that we should take possession of these temples and own them. I have no hesitation whatsoever in categorically denying this statement. I have certainly no such design whatsoever, and I do not know of a single worker who has any such design. And if there is any such co-worker who has such a design, he has no place whatsoever on this platform. The possession will remain undoubtedly in the hands of those who are today lawfully in possession.

*Harijan, 26-1-1934, p. 1 at p. 2*



## 190. THE TEMPLE-ENTRY BILL

The Hon. Secretary, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Bombay Provincial Board, has addressed the Secretary to the Government of India, Legislative Department, New Delhi, as follows:

I have the honour to communicate hereunder the views of the Bombay Provincial Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh of the Temple-entry Disabilities Removal Bill, which has been circulated for public opinion under the orders of the Legislative Assembly.

At the outset I have the honour to observe that my Board are entirely in sympathy with the aims and objects of the Bill and are of opinion that it should be passed into law at the earliest opportunity. It is our firm belief that legislation of the type contemplated in the Bill is essential, if Government and Legislature desire to implement the pledges which have been held out on more occasions than one that all possible steps will be taken to remove the disabilities under which Harijans labour at present.

One of the main objections that has been taken against the proposed legislation is that it involves an element of compulsion and that it is proposed that either Government or the Legislature should not compel any individual or individuals or a religious organization to act in a manner which is opposed to so-called religious customs and usages. It is pertinent here to examine what these customs are and how they have developed in Hindu society.

At sometime beyond living memory, a custom grew up of treating certain sections of the Hindu community as the excluded classes, and in the development of that custom certain rights as Hindus were denied to the members of such excluded classes. Objection was taken if they entered the temples on the ground that they were unclean and their touch or mere shadow would pollute the devout Hindus who were visiting the temples for *darshan*. Gradually, the members of the excluded classes were thus completely debarred from entering the temples. This has, in the course of

time, come to be recognized as custom and usage, and this having obtained legal sanction, the Hindu community is obliged, whatever its present views may be, to exclude the untouchables from the temples.

The real position, therefore, is that compulsion is already there in the shape of the recognition given by British Courts of Justice to the custom and usage by which members of the excluded classes have been treated as untouchables and denied the rights of temple-entry. In Madras, such custom and usage has been specifically recognized by the Madras Religious Endowments Act, II of 1927, section 40 of which accords full legal sanction to it.

With the change of times and circumstances and with ideas developing from day to day, several customs and usages have undergone material changes. In some cases, the Government, relying on the opinion of leading Hindus, have thought fit to legislate against well-established and well-recognized customs and usages in face of the opposition of a majority of Hindus, with a view to bring the state of Hindu Society in line with modern ideas. In other cases, the opinion of the majority of Hindus has either thrown custom overboard, where the sanction of law was not necessary for such action, or got the Government to pass legislation to set aside such custom.

Apart from the strictly legal and technical attitude, to argue, therefore, that the Bill involves an element of compulsion, without considering what that compulsion consists of and how such compulsion is for the removal of a greater compulsion which already exists, would not be correct. The Trustees and beneficiaries are now by law compelled to exclude the Harijans from *darshan* at Hindu temples. If the prevalent opinion among the Hindus of today is that this element of compulsion should be done away with and it be left open to the Hindus to decide for themselves as to how far the excluded classes should be allowed to be treated as members of the Hindu community and to enjoy the rights or privileges of *darshan*, a state of circumstances must be brought into existence which would leave the door open for necessary action in that behalf. It does not necessarily follow that, on the passing of the Bill, a rush will be made at all the temples by the excluded classes to assert their rights of *darshan*. The disqualification being removed, it will then be a matter for adjustment

between Hindus and the members of the excluded classes to adjust affairs without friction and without bringing themselves under the provisions of the criminal law of the land. The view that the passing of the Bill would upset all principles and tenets of Hindu religion would be erroneous. In fact, even after the passing of the Bill, the excluded classes will not be able to have *darshan* at the temples without the goodwill and the tacit consent of the Hindus. That the entry of the excluded classes into the temples for *darshan* is not so abhorrent to the mind of the Hindus is apparent from the fact that on certain days of the year some very important temples observing the most orthodox and rigid rules are thrown open to all classes of Hindus, including the excluded classes. At all events, going to a temple for *darshan* is entirely voluntary. In certain circumstances and on certain occasions, even members of the so-called high class Hindus are prohibited entry into certain parts of the temples. In certain cases, such Hindus themselves observing certain rules refrain from going to temple, believing themselves to be in a state in which their attendance at the temples would pollute the temples as well as those attending there for *darshan*. The degree of compulsion, therefore, so far as this Bill is concerned, is infinitesimal as compared to the existing compulsion, which has already been imposed by reason of the recognition granted to custom and usage which had grown under circumstances which no longer exist.

The difficulty as regards the removal of custom and usage is all the greater, because in most of the cases there are no specific Trusts. Ordinarily, the Trustees would have the power to exercise their discretion, as prudent men of the world, in considering who should be admitted and to what right. But here the sanction obtained by custom and usage comes in the way. New Trusts cannot be declared. There are no specific Trusts and reliance is placed on custom and usage to shut out the discretion of the Trustees or even the beneficiaries, meaning the Hindus. With the passing of the Bill, the result will be that the power to exercise such discretion is restored to the Trustees and, where necessary, to the beneficiaries, who can by an express vote of majority decide how far the classes of beneficiaries should be extended and, that too, without in any way interfering with the existing rights, so that it comes to this that the compulsion and the consequent disability from which those in control of

temples are at present suffering is sought 'to be removed and the door thrown open and the power of discretion restored to them to act according to the circumstances and according to the wishes of those immediately concerned. It does not, as is apprehended in some quarters, direct the Trustees to commit breaches of Trust. In fact, the whole difficulty is created by the absence of specific Trusts. It only creates a situation where the Trustees, as prudent men and with the sanction of the majority, can extend the privileges of *darshan* etc. to the members of the excluded classes on such terms and under circumstances which may be acceptable to Hindus.

Under these circumstances, the element of compulsion, if any, involved in the Bill is really and substantively to eliminate the greater degree of compulsion which is at present extant.

The second objection is (as to) whether the Bill seeks to interfere with any person's religious practice or conscience. My Board hold the view that, having regard to the fact that the entry of members of the excluded classes on certain days of festival during the year in the most orthodox temples is not objected to by the Hindus and is not considered as interference with the religious practice or conscience of a high-class Hindu, the extending of that privilege to members of the excluded classes on other days in the year cannot, in substance, amount to any interference with the religious practice or conscience of a high-caste Hindu. Apart from this, every Hindu in going to temples submits to various customary restrictions and interference, and no pious Hindu complains, as his sole aim and object in attending the temple on any particular occasion is to have *darshan* and perform Pooja and that aim and object is not in any way interfered with by the permissive legislation now sought to be put on the Statute Book. The statutory recognition of the existing custom and usage in this respect serves, however, as a solid obstacle or bar against any modification of the existing state of things, and this is what makes legislation necessary, not with a view to hit or counter the religious practice or conscience of Hindus but to give those in authority over Hindu temples a right to give the members of the excluded classes their due status as Hindus and thereby prevent a cleavage in the community.

In effect, therefore, it merely amounts to a variation in the practice of worship hitherto observed, but such variation cannot be regarded as interference with the inherent or vested right of persons. In fact, the right is one which, in the ordinary course, would have been modified in the larger interests of Hindu Society or in the interest of certain classes but for the legal sanction accorded to custom and usage. Interference, therefore, as used does not amount to or mean an objectionable tampering with the vested rights of any person or persons, but is a mere statement of fact that, in the existing conditions as compared to what is proposed to be done, there would be a variation which may technically be called interference.

Experience shows that in spite of the willingness of the Trustees as well as the worshippers of a particular Hindu temple, it is well-nigh impossible for a public Hindu temple to throw its doors open to Harijans, in view of the English Law of Trusts and the known decisions of the High Courts in India. It is for this reason that my Board hold that the recognition of the custom and usage by the High Courts of India and the Privy Council makes legislation absolutely necessary, as the effect of the decisions of these Tribunals cannot be overcome in any other manner. The legislation now sought to be enacted is permissive, and with the provisions of criminal law now in force, it cannot be actively enforced without the goodwill of those vitally concerned, namely the caste Hindus.

The foregoing views are expressed purely from a legal point of view. The question of throwing open a temple to excluded classes is one of great public and practical importance. If a substantial majority of Hindus at a particular centre are in favour of admitting the excluded classes to the local public temples, the element of compulsion mentioned above need not stand in the way of the proposed legislation, as such element of compulsion would be found in the conduct of all human affairs.

But the compulsion involved in the Bill is, as above indicated, of a type which may be described as *vox populi, vox Dei* and to ask a body of people to act according to the opinion of the majority of that body cannot truly or partly be said to be compulsion. The effect of the Bill is actually to *remove* the compulsion resting on the Trustees to act according to a custom or usage, even if it has received judicial recognition, if

such custom or usage does not find favour with the majority of the people any longer. The law, as it stands at present, may be utilized as an engine of oppression even by a single caste Hindu worshipper at a temple to impose his will, not only on the Trustees of the temple, but on all the other worshippers at that temple who may be willing to allow a Harijan to worship at that temple. The real effect of the Bill is to deprive a caste Hindu of the engine of oppression which judicial decisions have provided him with. To put it in another form, it will deprive the caste Hindu of the power given to him by judicial decisions to compel the Harijans to submit for all time to the disabilities imposed on him. Though the proposed legislation involves compulsion in theory, in practice, if the proposed Bill becomes law, it will give liberty to the worshippers at a temple to conduct their worship in accordance with the prevailing views and wishes of the majority.

On the grounds set forth above, my Board are emphatically of opinion that not only are the aims and objects of the proposed measure unexceptionable, but the method by which it seeks to achieve them are such as to cause the minimum extent of inconvenience, hardship or social disturbances.

They, therefore, request that the Legislative Assembly will enact legislation on the lines proposed, at an early date, in the interests of the Hindu community as a whole, apart from the duty that Government and Legislature themselves owe to the Depressed Classes.

I disclose no secret when I inform the reader that this representation has been drawn up by an eminent lawyer of Bombay. It is an able and dispassionate examination of the legal position. But like all documents drawn up purely from the legal standpoint, this suffers from the usual limitations.

It was open to the Board to combine with the legal, the moral and religious argument. For, the representation is addressed not to a court of law but to a Government and, through it, to a Legislative Assembly, both

of which are bound to take note, as they have done, of extra legal matters. These often become decisive factors with bodies that are not hidebound by legal procedure and other legal limitations.

Thus, in my opinion, the Board might have embodied in their document their composition and their capacity to voice Hindu public opinion. It might have told the Assembly that the Bill was necessary, both in fulfilment of the Yeravda Pact and of the broad policy of the Government in respect of Harijans.

The Bombay lead can be well followed by the other provincial boards. They may examine the question with particular reference to their provinces, taking care always to understate rather than overstate the evidence as to Hindu public opinion.

The question might be asked why during the Harijan tour I did not myself take the vote of the public on the question of the proposed legislation. It presented itself to me in the beginning stages of the tour, and I came to the conclusion that, if I took the vote, it was highly likely that the people would give their votes because I was asking for it. I should not mind receiving co-operation of people in simple faith, where faith could be legitimately exercised. In this instance, faith had no play. People had to decide on a highly technical issue in which knowledge of parliamentary procedure and function would be presumed, I had no time nor inclination to give that kind of training to the vast mass of mankind that appeared at meetings. And if I had attempted any such thing, I would have strayed far away from my mission, which I had claimed to be purely spiritual. Then, if I had begun to take votes on the propriety or otherwise of temple-entry legislation, there would have been danger of my being engaged in

a hot controversy with *sanatanists*. This was the last thing in the world that I would do. I, therefore, deliberately refrained from putting the question of legislation to the vote of my audiences.

Whenever, therefore, I spoke on the question I contented myself with giving my opinion that it was the duty of every Hindu reformer to press for legislation, if the pledge given at Bombay in 1932 was to be redeemed. But if the vote of *savarna* Hindus in general was not to be taken, what was to be done? I came to the conclusion that those only could properly have any opinion on the question who were conversant with parliamentary procedure and functions. They could appreciate how under certain circumstances, for the very preservation of religious neutrality and freedom of conscience, on which *sanatanists* very properly insist, legislation might be imperatively necessary. Such bodies were, first of all, lawyers' associations and then, societies of shastris, Harijan Sevak Boards and other representative bodies who could claim to have a say in such matters. I hope, therefore, that all associations who are interested in the removal of untouchability and who have a right to be heard will make their opinion known to the public and the authorities concerned.

But I have no desire to force legislation upon an unwilling public. Nevertheless, it cannot be educated nor its opinion ascertained, without reasoned public discussion and legitimate canvassing. If in the end it is found that enlightened caste Hindu opinion is against legislation, I, for one, would not desire to see it carried by a mixed majority vote. All that I contend is that Hindus who have faith in temples have the right and owe it as a duty to enforce their opinion, wherever an overwhelming



majority wants to open public Hindu temples to Harijans. And if there is a legal hindrance, as lawyers say there is, it can only be, and therefore should be, removed by law.

*Harijan*, 30-3-1934, p. 52

## 191. THAT ILL-FATED MEASURE

The ill-fated Temple-entry Bill deserved a more decent burial, if it deserved it at all, then it received at the hands of the mover of the Bill. It was not a bill promoted by an individual for his personal satisfaction. It was a bill promoted by, and on behalf of, the reformers. The mover should, therefore, have consulted reformers and acted under instructions from them. So far as I am aware, there was hardly any occasion for the anger into which he allowed himself to be betrayed or the displeasure which he expressed towards Congressmen. On the face of it, it was, and was designed to be, a measure pertaining to religion, framed in pursuance of the solemn declaration publicly made in Bombay at a meeting of representative Hindus who met under the chairmanship of Pandit Malaviyaji on 25th September, 1932. The curious may read the declaration printed almost every week on the front page of the *Harijan*. Therefore, every Hindu, caste or Harijan, was interested in the measure. It was not a measure in which Congress Hindus were more interested than the other Hindus. To have, therefore, dragged the Congress name into the discussion was unfortunate. The Bill deserved a gender handling.

Having not a moment to spare myself during the exacting and swift Harijan tour, I had asked Shri Rajagopalachari in pursuance of the pledge given by me at public meetings and to *sanatani* friends in private and in these columns, to ascertain informally (as it could only be done informally) the views of the Hindu members of the Assembly, as, I thought, if it was discovered that the majority was opposed to it, steps should be taken to have the Bill withdrawn. This was the very simple

issue on which the Bill could either have been dropped or proceeded with. Both the *sanatanists* and the reformers would have understood the position. Its fate ought not to have been decided on a side issue. If C. Rajagopalachari or I had committed a mistake, we should have been made to pay for it. But the Bill was above persons. Right or wrong, it enunciated a great principle and, therefore, deserved a more decent treatment than it received.

As for the part played by the Government, this journal's policy is to avoid as much as possible criticism of the Government. But I should like to say that, with the material before it, the Government could only have taken the course it did. But the public should know that on behalf of the reformers there was not only no attempt made to canvass public opinion but a decision was deliberately arrived at that no attempt should be made to obtain signatures of the public in general in favour of the Bill, it being left open to expert bodies to send representations if they chose. This was duly announced in these pages. My co-workers and I came to the conclusion that the questions underlying the circulation were too technical for the public to decide. Thus, the question was not whether Harijans should or should not enter public Hindu temples precisely on the same terms as the others. The question was whether there should be any legislation in the matter and, if there should be, whether the Bill was good on its merits. In my opinion, both these questions were too technical to be put before the public. Surely, it is not impossible to conceive occasions when legislative help or interference is indispensable even in matters of religion. As a matter of fact, there are many cases of such legislation. But it was difficult to get an intelligent vote from the

public. Then on the merits, it was equally difficult to show to the public that the Bill was purely of a permissive nature and that no temple could be opened without the consent of the majority of the temple-going public. Such public education is not impossible under congenial circumstances. But it is wellnigh impossible when party feeling runs high and truth is at a discount.

The temple-entry battle has to continue. The promise made to Harijans must be redeemed and the temples have to be flung open. If they can be without legislative sanction, no one would be more glad than the reformers. Not that they want a single temple to be opened where the majority of *savarna* Hindus who are in the habit of using them are opposed. Law's assistance is invoked because lawyers opine that the law prevents such opening even where an overwhelming majority of temple-goers are agreeable. If such is the case, then permissive legislation is peremptory. Law alone can undo what law has done, whether it is judge-made or statutory or customary. But reformers will wait till such time as the passing of legislation becomes irresistible. But waiting is only for the wakeful. The hasty withdrawal of the Bill teaches its own lesson. There is no cause for disappointment. Redoubled effort is required. It is not necessary to know or prove that Harijans want temple-entry. Removal of the sin is necessary for the satisfaction of the *savarna* Hindus who have realized that untouchability is a canker eating into the vitals of Hinduism, which, if not removed in time, must kill Hinduism.

*Harijan*, 31-8-1934, p. 228

## 192. WHOSE VICTORY?

Harijan servants have need to exercise the greatest forbearance at this time of their trial. The Temple- entry Bill is gone. The *sanatanists* are jubilant. We must not mind their joy. Only yesterday we were what they are today. We may not hate them. We must love them. Let the reformers treasure the following lines a sister sends from A.E.'s *Interpreters*, which she venerates almost as a devout Christian his Bible. These are the beautiful lines:

Love and hate have a magical transforming power. They are the great soul-changers. We grow through their exercise into the likeness of what we contemplate. By intensity of hatred, nations create in themselves the character they imagine in their enemies. Hence it comes that all passionate conflicts result in an interchange of characteristics. We might say, with truth, that those who hate open a door by which their enemies enter and make their own the secret place of the heart.

Love is the only thing that can transform *sanatanists*. Let us realize that they are what they are, in spite of themselves. We have no right to judge them or become impatient with them. Surely, it is enough if we are true to ourselves, that is, if we act to our belief and render full twenty shillings in the pound to the Harijans.

Again, let us realize that in their victory lies their defeat; in our humiliation lies our victory. *Sanatanists* can no longer plead the Temple-entry Bill in defence of their opposition to the entry of Harijans to our temples by our common consent. Reformers can now prosecute the temple-entry question with redoubled zeal.

The reformers would sin, if they felt that the burial of the Bill meant the burial of the temple-entry movement. It is not so. Wherever we can, without bitterness, have temples opened by the consent of *sanatanists*, we must do so. It is possible that those who were holding themselves aloof from the temple-entry movement, on account of the Temple-entry Bill being prosecuted, will, now that it is out of the way, join the movement to have them opened without the aid of the law. For, be it remembered that the Bill is not dead, it is only suspended. Legislation has to come, if *sanatanists* do not heartily co-operate with the reformers in having temples opened to Harijans precisely on the same terms as to caste Hindus.

*Harijan*, 12-10-1934, p. 277

## 193. TEMPLE-ENTRY LEGISLATION IN BRITISH INDIA

(Originally appeared under the title "Temple Entry")

The Executive Committee of the Harijan Sevak Sangh has passed the following resolution:

The Executive Committee of the All-India Harijan Sevak Sangh notes with satisfaction the progress of the temple-entry campaign in Malabar District and Cochin State and the growing volume of public support in these places for temple-entry for Harijans, and gives full support to this work. This Committee further requests the Government of Madras and the Government of Cochin to help the rapid emancipation of Harijans by facilitating the declaration of all Hindu temples within their jurisdiction open to the Harijans.

It is hardly right to bracket the two Governments together. The Government of Cochin is a personal Government under a Hindu Prince who owns the temples of Cochin or who is the spiritual head of most of them. It is, therefore, within his right and, in my opinion, it is his duty to open the temples within his jurisdiction to the Harijans precisely as they are open to the so- called *savarna* Hindus. The appeal addressed to the Cochin Maharajah is, therefore, quite the proper thing.

But the Madras Government is a government responsible to the people of Madras which include all classes and creeds. It cannot, therefore, with any propriety pass legislation like the Cochin Durbar opening to Harijans all the temples within its jurisdiction. The temples can only be opened to Harijans either by the trustees of their own motion or at the instance of the *savarna* visitors who are in the habit of visiting particular temples. But the Madras Government can and ought to bring in enabling

legislation. It has been contended that some judgment of a court of law prevents temples from being opened to Harijans even if all the *savarna* trustees desire it. At the time of the Guruvayur Temple agitation I had discussed this judgment and expressed my doubt as to its validity and meaning. But it will be remembered that in order to remove any doubts an attempt was made in the Central Legislative Assembly to bring in an enabling bill. The attempt was unsuccessful. But I apprehend that under the new constitution the Provincial Legislatures have the power to bring in and pass enabling legislation. The Congress ministries are pledged to remove untouchability in every shape and form. *Savarna* Hindus were pledged at the time of the Yeravda Pact among many other things to fling open temples to Harijans. At the very first opportunity, therefore, Congress ministries have to bring in legislation, if it is legally within their power, to abolish untouchability in law and to enable trustees or temple-goers to open the temples to Harijans and thus put an end to the age-long curse of untouchability. The Provincial Harijan Sevak Sanghs can certainly mobilize *savarna* Hindu opinion in favour of the step. I observe that Harijans are already moving in the matter and rightly pressing for the opening of temples. I see too that Rao Bahadur M. C. Rajah has a bill to his credit. I hope that he will keep himself in touch with the Ministers and act in accordance with their advice. For he and they have a common cause to pursue.

*Harijan*, 20-11-1937, p. 337



## 194. WHY SEPARATE SCHOOLS AND TEMPLES ALSO?

(Originally appeared under the caption "Temples for Untouchables")

Swami Anand who has been leading a valiant fight for the so-called untouchables writes:

An extract from your contribution made to the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* has been reproduced by Bombay newspapers this week, which contains the following observations on the question of admission of untouchables into Hindu temples: "Our Municipalities can do much to bring about this consummation by opening model schools for the instruction of untouchable children, by inducing the trustees of temples to open them to untouchables and where this is not possible by building attractive temples in suitable places specially for the use of untouchables and encouraging the public to make use of those temples in common with untouchables," etc. etc.

In view of the rather tense situation prevailing in Bombay, Poona and this part of the country generally I am afraid your plea for building special temples for untouchables is likely to be misconstrued, your guarded and qualifying language notwithstanding. Will you please therefore explain your meaning in the columns of *Young ondia*?

In the beginning of the movement as I had conceived it on my return from South Africa in 1915, I had thought that it was wholly inconsistent with the movement for removing untouchability to build separate temples or schools for them. But experience taught me that the movement could not proceed on strict logic and that we Hindus had so

much suppressed a third of ourselves that even after the articulate Hindus had with one voice declared for removal, the suppressed brethren would for a long time need the helping hand in a variety of ways. After the theoretical lip-removal of untouchability, if no special effort was made, the vast bulk of them would not readily take advantage of the removal and the ignorant mass would not tolerate them especially when the latter would be naturally clumsy in their deportment or pardonably forward in the enjoyment of long withheld freedom. I am therefore convinced that the two things will have to go hand in hand perfect freedom to enter ordinary temples, and ordinary schools and to use common wells at the same time as erection of model schools and model temples specially designed for the convenience of untouchables but open to the others subject always to priority for untouchables. It was along this line of reasoning that I suggested in the brief note for the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* that the Municipalities could foster removal of untouchability by erecting temples and model schools for the suppressed classes side by side with the attempt to have the existing temples thrown open to these countrymen of ours.

My note may therefore on no account be taken as an excuse for condoning prohibition against entry into temples etc. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the manifesto of the Bombay leaders who have advised the removal of the prohibition against temple-entry throughout the Bombay Presidency. I have, therefore, just read with great joy the news that Ramachandra temple in Bombay has been thrown open to the suppressed classes by Sjt. Thakordas Nanabhai a trustee of

the temple. I hope that there will be no relaxation in the effort initiated in Bombay.

*Young India*, 28-11-1929, p. 388

## 195. JOINT OR SEPARATE?

Correspondents suggest that there should be separate temples, schools, wells etc., for Harijans for the time being. A general adoption of the suggestion may easily be the way to perpetuate untouchability, and we might as well have had separate electorates and elections for them, if we are to have everything else separate for them. I would certainly not have staked my life just to avoid separate electorates. I staked it, and it is still a stake, for the purpose of eradicating the present unnatural untouchability from the religion itself. I rose against separate electorates, because it would have spelt an end to the effort for the destruction of the canker. They would have meant an end to effective penance by the penitent caste Hindu. With the Yeravda Pact, such penance is a possibility, whether the penitents are in the majority or the minority. That there is a mighty upheaval in Hinduism and that we have two well-defined divisions working actively for their respective objectives is the surest justification for the Yeravda Pact. As a result of it, the religious untouchability goes or the reformer. If he is to be true to his pledge, the reformer has no other choice.

Therefore, separate temples and separate other services must be regarded with suspicion. Let us consider the limitations of the suggestion.

Till the legal obstacle in the way of opening public temples to untouchables is removed, the opening of existing temples on a large scale comes to a standstill. But the march of reform cannot be stayed. There are three ways of doing the thing.

- (a) Where public opinion and trustees are quite demonstrably in favour of opening temples, trustees may open the temples under their charge and may take the risk of an injunction being issued against them.
- (b) Private temples should be opened where the owners are willing to open them.
- (c) Wealthy and spiritually-minded people may open new temples under pure methods of consecration. (I add the adjective advisedly because I believe that all is not well with the existing temples). The temples will be purposely designed for the Harijans as well as for the other Hindus. These must, therefore, be situated in such localities as are easily accessible to Harijans.

Common schools and wells should be opened where the existing ones are not available for Harijans either owing to the violent and successful opposition of the neighbours or some other unavoidable cause. Harijans cannot be left uncared for in matters of necessary services till public opinion has ripened. If there is a clearly awakened body of Hindus who have the same feeling towards Harijans as if they were their own kith and kin they will not wait for public opinion to consolidate itself before taking action. They will do their best to supply pure water and good education to their own newly found kith and kin.

There is one special consideration in favour of opening what may be called preparatory schools for Harijan children. I cannot do better than quote the reason in the words of a co-worker who has gone to live in their midst and who writes:

My school is conducted in a Harijan verandah. Some of my scholars are those whose noses are full of slime and eyes full of dirt. They spit where they squat. The condition of their bodies is in keeping with their eyes and noses. That of the clothes defies description. Some have bits of rod' or sweets which they continually chew even whilst they are in the class. My lesson, therefore, begins with telling them how to keep clean, and behave. Whilst I am reciting the lesson, I do the cleaning myself. Lazy, talkative and quarrelsome, they provide me with a good lesson in patience. They are bad liars. Some of them are industrious and wise. I play with them and perhaps learn more than I teach. The attendance in my class varies. Sometimes I have only one youngster. The number has not yet gone beyond 15. Mind you, the school is only ten days old and I am new to it. I begin my class in the early morning. I sleep in a Harijan *dharmashala* about a furlong from the school. My work, therefore, begins as I leave my sleeping room or whatever you may call it. I have to walk with my eyes open, broom in hand, cleaning the approach to the quarters which is all made dirty every morning with human excreta. It is very wonderful how the children or their mothers snatch the broom from me and help to clean what is an apology for a road. I naturally sometimes enter their homes when they do not mind. Many of them are dark holes with inmates packed like matches. I observe these things and much more, but for the present I keep my lips sealed. For, I have not yet qualified myself by selfless service and love in order to be able to speak to them with authority. Truly, the sun is the greatest scavenger in our country, or else some of the places, whether in Harijan quarters or in the quarters of the so-called superior castes, would be rightdy uninhabitable even for those who are used to insanitary conditions. I can say at present that I rejoice in this new service and thank God that He has called me to it. But I am a novice. I know my limitations. I want to surmount them and, therefore, I often sing that beautiful verse we have at the Ashram: "Thou hast not become a true

Vaishnav, a true man of God, till..." I long to fulfil God's conditions for becoming a true Vaishnav.

This is but a sample of the condition of raw Harijan children. We want every one of these children to learn to live in a clean and decent manner. We want them all to attend the common public schools. Therefore, preparatory schools for them are an absolute essential if we mean honest business.

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

## **196. TEMPLE-ENTRY AND CONSTRUCTIVE WORK AMONG HARIJANS**

(From "Is This Brotherliness?")

Though I have written and I shall continue to write with vigour about the necessity of admission of Harijans to temples, I have never given and shall never give a back seat to the constructive work. But what I am certain about is that admission of Harijans to temples will automatically quadruple the pace of constructive reform.

*Harijan*, 18-2-1933, p. 3

## 197. TEMPLE-ENTRY v. ECONOMIC UPLIFT

One sees sometimes in the public Press criticism on the temple-entry question. It is double bared, being directed on the one hand by Harijans and on the other by *sanatanists*. Some of the Harijans say, "We do not want temple-entry; do not build temples, but use all you receive for economic uplift." Some *sanatanists* say, "Give up the temple-entry question altogether. You are hurting our feeling by forcing Harijans into temples." Both are wrong in substance. Not one single pice out of the purse has been or will be spent for building temples. Attempt is being made only to have public temples opened to Harijans on the same terms on which they are open to the other Hindus. It is a matter of choice for Harijans to visit or not to visit them. *Savarna* Hindus have to lift the bar against Harijans. For these millions who regard temples as treasure chests of spiritual wealth, they are living realities which they hold dear as life itself. If they are truly repentant toward Harijans, they must share these treasures with the latter. I know what the opening of temples means to Harijans. Only last week, between Dharwar and Belgaum, I opened three temples to Harijans in the presence of crowds of *savarna* Hindus and Harijans. If critics had been present at the opening and noticed the pleasure on the countenances of the Harijans present as they bowed before the image and received the *prasad*, their criticism would have been silenced. Harijans critics would have realized that, apart from themselves, Harijans at large did desire temple- entry. *Sanatanist* critics would have realized that temples, wherever they were opened, were being opened with the fullest concurrence of the temple-goers concerned

and in the presence of crowds of them. No hole and corner opening can do any good to Hinduism. To be of spiritual or any value at all, the opening has to be performed with due publicity, solemnity and the willing consent of the existing temple-goers, and not of such self-styled reformers as have no faith or interest in temples and for whom temples may even be a superstition. Temple-entry agitation requires no financial outlay, it does not lend itself to agitation except by a few workers who have faith in temples and whose word would command attention from the mass *savarna* mind. It is, therefore, a question that can only be and is being gently and cautiously handled. The only insistence is on the right and the duty of the believing reformer advocating temple-entry and showing that without it the reformation will not only be incomplete but fruitless. For, without temples being freely open to Harijans, untouchability could not be said to have been removed root and branch.

As for the economic uplift, it is altogether wrong to put it in opposition to temple-entry. Temple-entry can only help such uplift. For, when Harijans are freely admitted to temples, all the avenues to economic betterment must be automatically open to Harijans as to others. So far as the monies received are concerned, they will *all* be used *only* for economic uplift, if it is admitted that educational uplift also means economic, in that it makes the educated Harijan fitter for running life's race. I am aware that education among the *savarnas* has often rendered them less fit for the race. But that has been so, because their education has meant contempt for labour.

There is not much danger of such a mishap with the general body of Harijans for sometime to come at least. And the danger can be averted



altogether, if those who are in charge of the movement will take care to purge Harijan education of the evils of the current method, which ignores the technical side for the most part, if not altogether.

*Harijan*, 16-3-1934, p. 36

## 198. WHY SHOULD WE ENTER HINDU TEMPLES?

(From "A Harijan's Questions Answered")

1. Why should we enter Hindu temples?
2. Did not the Hindu deities that have incarnated oppress us?
3. Instead of opening temples and eradicating untouchability, suffice it if you make provisions for our livelihood.
  - 1) Harijans need not enter Hindu temples, if they do not wish it. But they should, if they have faith in them. The temple-entry movement has for its object, not the entering by Harijans into Hindu temples, but the opening of these temples to all those Harijans who wish to enter them for worship. In other words, it is a movement of repentance and change of heart in caste Hindus.
  - 2) I should be sorry if I found that the Hindu deities oppressed Harijans, and if they did, they were certainly not beneficent deities, but evil ones to be shunned.
  - 3) It is beyond me, a single, poor mortal, to make provision for the livelihood of millions. That can only be achieved by their whole effort and God's grace. But, if temples are flung open to Harijans and untouchability is eradicated, the dead weight that is grinding them down will have lifted, and they will have an equal opportunity with the rest of their fellowmen for earning an honest livelihood.

*Harijan, 20-4-1934, p. 76*

## 199. FOUR-FOLD PROGRAMME FOR RAISING HARIJANS

(Originally appeared under the title "The Pandalai Speech")

Great as this Proclamation is and great as is its religious merit, greater still is the responsibility that His Highness has taken upon his shoulders, and so also his advisers. Whilst without the effort of every *savarna* Hindu the Proclamation can undoubtedly be rendered ineffective, I must also say that the Proclamation would not have its full effect unless it is backed in an ample measure by State action. So far as I can see the Proclamation demands State activities in all departments of life. Of these I propose to take the religious first; because from it must follow activities in all the other departments. Temples have been matters of indifference, except to women, who have no capital save divine faith, and to men who from many mixed motives have been going to them. They have been neglected by what may be called the intelligentsia. The result has been that they have almost ceased to be repositories of Hinduism and have ceased to impart spiritual power to those who have followed the faith. They have almost ceased to shed unmistakable spiritual fragrance in and about and around them. Then, I venture to suggest that it is the duty of the State, or of the Maharajah, if there is any distinction between the two, for he is the custodian of the vast majority of Hindu temples—, that he should see to it that the temples are renovated spiritually, and have the authority and sanction that they used undoubtedly to have at one time. And I believe that it can only be done if they are in charge of priests who know what they have to do, who know something of the sanctity of them and of the duties to which they are

called. In other words, they should not be ignorant people following their calling for livelihood, but they should be men who are proud of their privilege of bringing the message of God to temple-goers, showing by their own conduct and their life that these temples are abodes of divinity.

Then there should be the correct kind of instruction given in these temples. The Harijans will be taken by the hand by someone in charge of temples and they will be told what they are expected to gain by temple-worship. This means undoubtedly, according to modern thought, a revolution in the upkeep and conduct of these temples. But the Proclamation itself is nothing short of a revolutionary document, and if that revolution is to touch, as it ought to touch, the lives of all Hindus, naturally temples have to be abodes of the living God, and not abodes of a mere mass of gold or other metals worked into figures. Then I should expect a history of these temples, understandable by the common folk, to be distributed freely or at a cheap price to all who want to know what these temples are. That means a training school for training the right kind of teachers who will be entrusted with the religious training of the people. If some such thing does not happen, I fear that the purpose of the Proclamation, viz., to expect and to induce lakhs and lakhs of Harijans to go to these temples in a religious spirit, will fail.

So much for the religious department. Then I take the economic. The economic life of the Harijans has got to be lifted out of its miserable state. I venture to think that by a judicious and thoughtful working out of the programme, it can be prosecuted in a short time and with a limited financial outlay, in such a manner that Harijans may be easily able to

hold their own by being taught to turn an honest *chakram*. Nor can the State now dare neglect the mental training I mean literary—of these people. I know to my cost that today it is very difficult to carry on a connected conversation with Pulayas and Pariahs so that you can get a ready response even about simple facts of life.

Similarly, the State has to raise the social status of these people. They should be invited to all State occasions and functions, as for instance Durbars. They must not be allowed to feel that these functions are a sealed book to them, and that they should have another agitation before they can attain a social status entitling them to be invited or allowed to take part in those functions. But if the Proclamation bears the meaning I have given to it, then the social uplift of the Harijans has to come as if by magic, as the religious status of going to the temples has come.

In my humble opinion, in suggesting this fourfold programme of the uplift of the Harijans in the State I have not suggested any programme beyond the capacity or resources of a State like Travancore.

But having addressed these few words to the State in all humility, I want to come back to you. The State may resolve to do all these things, but its resolution will not mean the coming-in of man-power in order to carry out all these things. And if, from the few words I have addressed to their Highnesses and their advisers, you think that after all it is Their Highnesses who have to do everything and you have to do nothing, then I am afraid that my labours will have gone in vain. The requisite man-power has got to be supplied by you, and as a man of experience I will tell you that man-power cannot come by offers of money. Thus, for instance, men who are capable of taking the management of temple

cannot be had by offering scholarships of hundreds of rupees. For such people have got to be fired by a religious spirit, by love of their own work, and should therefore be ready to work for a bare maintenance. It should be their proud privilege to take this training and to fit themselves for this highest task in life. Similarly, unless the State gets men required for giving Harijans educational training, the State can do nothing.

After all, there is a world of meaning about the title that the Maharajahs of Travancore have adopted for themselves, viz., Padmanabhas. They pride themselves in calling themselves servants of God, but that means that they are also servants of their people. So, as I said at one of these meetings, the Maharajahs are not the first lords among the people of Travancore, but they are the first servants among the people who are also servants. But the first servants of the people will fare badly unless they are ably assisted by the people who are their fellow servants. Therefore the meaning of His Highness the Maharajah going to the temple everyday and taking instructions as to his daily duties from Shri Padmanabha- swami means nothing less than that he should be assisted by his people for their own good—spiritual, religious, social, economic.

*Harijan*, 6-2-1937, p. 417

## 8. CIVIC, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL DISABILITIES OF HARIJANS

### 200. MY PROGRAMME FOR HARIJAN WORK

(From "Weekly Letter-No. 13" by C. S.)

Q.: What is your programme with regard to the Harijan work?

Gandhiji: My programme is to provide for them schools, hostels, medical aid, facilities for water—generally to do everything that would put them on a par with others.

Q.: In South India, we know that they are paid wages in kind and there are no fixed hours of work. Why do you not try to get for them more wages and fixed hours of work, instead of appealing for temple entry?

Gandhiji: These things do not arise from untouchability but from other causes.

Q.: The two questions are interwoven.

Gandhiji: I know they overlap each other. If I succeed in solving this question, I solve the rest. As a physician I know what to do. A physician finds the root of the disease and treats it. Similarly I treat the seat of the disease.

Q.: Of course you are more experienced than we are. But we feel that the Harijans want food for their stomachs and a social status. You merely harp upon temple-entry.

Gandhiji: Surely, you are wrong. You will find only a passing reference to it in all my speeches during the tour. But I cannot do without it.

*Harijan*, 9-2-1934, p. 1 at p. 2 354

## 201. WHY FOR HARIJANS?

(From "Notes")

Q.: The Harijans are specially favoured by the Government. Special facilities are provided on an extensive scale for their education, employment and advancement. Why should you again seek our help on their behalf? There are equally poor and even poorer people among the *savarnas*. Why don't you work for their betterment?

A.: This is a curious question. It is no wonder that Harijans are favoured by the Government. Whatever the reason, the fact is not to be deplored, if the favour really does them good. All Government favours do not. The motive behind seems to me to divide them from the so-called touchables. The reason lies with the latter. If touchables, had not misbehaved themselves, there would have been no division possible. And even though the Congress has been championing them, all these years, have the *savarna* Hindu masses improved their manners? The answer has to be "no" even though there has been considerable improvement. The Congress influence is most powerful for ending foreign rule. It is weak on social matters. Therefore, without entering into an unholy competition with the foreign Government, it is necessary for the reformers to do their duty by the Harijans until the bar sinister is completely removed. As for the *savarna* poor, there are many to look after them. Some go to the extent even of spoon feeding them.

Bombay, 16-3-1946

*Harijan*, 24-3-1946, p. 49



## 202. ON INCULCATING CLEANLINESS

(From "Ideal Harijan Teacher")

The dispensaries were organized under the late lamented Dr. Dev of the Servants of India Society who personally supervised this department of relief and attended to all serious cases. He penetrated the homes of the villagers and transformed little Bhitiharva in a few weeks' time from a dung and mud sodden village into a clean looking cluster of hamlets, with the willing assistance of the villagers, and if I remember rightly, without the cost of a single pice. Dr. Dev was not a mere overseer of works. He was himself the leading labourer working with the spade and the shovel.

What Dr. Dev himself did in Bhitiharva the teachers did with more or less success in the other villages. The village roads and wells were cleaned. Inroads were made into the huts with the willing consent of the dwellers. Their little yards were cleaned for them in the first instance. The teachers had to become one with the villagers, share their troubles and sorrows and point to them the way to health and happiness in that malaria and superstition ridden, unknown part of India, once the land of Janak and Sita. It was in remote Bhitiharva that Kasturbai made the discovery that several women had no wardrobe but the one ragged *sari* on their persons. When one of the poor but dignified ladies was gently advised to bathe daily, she hotly replied, "Come into my room, see if I have a change of *sari* and then give me your advice. You don't expect a lady to bathe naked, do you?" There was nothing more to be said. When I heard the tragic story, I could but drop a silent tear in shame and sorrow.

*Harijan*, 25-3-1933, p. 4

## 203. FLUSH SYSTEM—THE SHORTEST CUT?

(From "With Gandhiji in Gujarat—II" by M. D.)

There is one thing particularly noticeable about the discussions that take place in response to Gandhiji's invitation wherever he goes. No other topics are discussed except the live ones of untouchability and the khaddar programme, and a topic or two of immediate local interest. In Broach informal meetings were arranged especially for a tete-a-tete on these matters, which was made particularly lively, not as in other places because of the vehemence with which the objector advanced his objections, but because of the rather unusual nature of these objections and suggestions. There was another reason too. The objector in respect of the untouchability programme is almost always an old-fashioned or orthodox Hindu. In Broach he was a youth clean shaved and in European costume, looking recently returned from Europe. The uncertainty and inconsequent quality about all that he said made the whole thing very amusing.

"Is there not a substitute for untouchability, Sir?" was the first question that he could frame.

"I don't quite understand you. Will you make your meaning clearer? Do you want me to find out better or other methods of tackling the question?"

"Exactly that is what I mean."

"Have you any particular method in mind?"

"Yes, to abolish the present conservancy system."

"You mean to say the sweeper or the *bhangi* should no more be asked to do the business he has to do today?"

"Yes, I mean that."

"And everyone to help himself, is that it? I am entirely agreeable. Let us relieve the poor *bhangi* of his burden and take it upon ourselves."

"No, No, I mean no drastic thing of such a kind. I only say, let us substitute the present by a better method.e.g., the flush system of cleaning the closets. In Europe there is this system, and hence no untouchability." Part of the audience had already started laughing.

"But" said Gandhiji, "there was no untouchability in Europe even before this system came into being."

"That may be. But to me that appears to be the shortest cut—flush system everywhere cities and towns and villages."

"But there are no closets in villages and no *bhangi* charged with these duties. And yet there is\* untouchability. The village weaver who has to do with the closet as much or as little as you or I, is as much an untouchable as the sweeper. And you know, I hope, that though there are no closets to be cleaned in villages, untouchability persists in all its vigour only in villages."

The gentleman had no answer left and so he too joined in the surrounding laughter.

*Young India*, 30-4-1925, p. 150

## 204. AN ODIIOUS PRACTICE

(From "Notes")

A friend from Dholka writes:

In the voters' rolls for the Municipal, the Local Boards' and the Councils' elections that are being published at present, the names of franchise-holders, when they happen to be common folk, are, instead of being put down in full, recorded in an abbreviated form. This is, especially in the case of Harijans, an insult to the holders of the names. As I perused these lists in the papers, I felt that this was an uncalled for and gratuitous, though unintended, insult to the Harijans which must be stopped. I discussed this question with the Assistant Collector in charge of Dholka Taluq. I understand that instructions have been given to the *talatis* in this Taluq to record the names of Harijans in full. But in other places the odious practice remains in force. What is wanted is a general declaration of the official policy in this respect.

This might at first sight appear to be a trifling matter. But it has a significance. I have no doubt in my mind that the contemptuous way in which these people are treated in their daily intercourse is in some measure aggravated by this practice.

The correspondent is certainly right. By itself the matter might seem to be trivial, but it is one more instance of arrogation of caste superiority. It does, therefore, call for prompt attention. Apart from injuring Harijan feelings, the use of undignified nick-names in voters' lists scarcely does credit to our good taste. Let us hope that all those who have the service of the Harijans at heart will henceforth scrupulously eschew this objectionable practice and that the authorities will lose no time in taking the necessary steps to discontinue it in the course of administrative routine.

(Translated from *Harijanbandhu*)

*Harijan*, 12-9-1934, p. 275

## 205. IN THE GRIP OF UNTOUCHABILITY

(From "Notes")

We have heard much about untouchability and un-approachability of Travancore because there was Satyagraha there. The lamp of suffering brought the Travancore dirt to light but it seems that there is much more of it In Cochin than in Travancore. There the repeated attempts to bring even a resolution before the Cochin Legislative Assembly, asking the Cochin State to remove the ban on the use of public roads by untouchables was disallowed.

An assiduous member enquired in the Cochin Legislative Assembly: "How many tanks and wells maintained by Government or Municipal funds were closed to untouchables?" The reply was that 61 tanks and 123 wells were so closed. It would have been interesting if a supplementary question had been asked to elicit how many wells and tanks were accessible to untouchables.

Another question asked was: "On what ground was the use of certain roads constructed and maintained by the Public Works Department prohibited to untouchables," euphemistically called by the questioner "non-Hindus"? "Reasons given without any sense of shame on behalf of the Cochin Government were: "The roads are in close proximity to temples and palace. There cannot be a sudden break with the past. Long-standing customs have to be respected." The reader must note the word "palace". One may suppose, therefore, that the Panchama has no right of personal petition', for, he cannot traverse roads near the palace,

much less can he enter them. The officials who gave the heartless answer are able, educated and cultured men, in other walks of life even liberal minded; but they justify a cruel, heartless and irreligious custom on the grounds of antiquity.

One learns in law books that crimes and immoralities do not enjoy the benefit of prescription. Their antiquity cannot make them respectable. But it is evidently otherwise in the Cochin State. Who can deny the custom of untouchability is immoral, barbarous and cruel? Thus the laws of Cochin State are in a way much worse than those of South Africa. The common law of South Africa refuses to admit equality between white and coloured races. The common law of Cochin bases inequality on birth in a particular group. But the incidence of inequality in Cochin is infinitely more inhuman than in South Africa; for, an untouchable in Cochin is deprived of more human rights than the coloured man South Africa. There is no such thing as unapproachability or invisibility in South Africa. I have no desire to single out Cochin for its disgraceful treatment of untouchables; for, it is still unfortunately common to Hindus all over India more or less. But, in Cochin, besides the so-called sanction of religion, untouchability has the sanction of the State. Mere levelling up of public opinion, therefore, can be of no avail in Cochin unless it becomes so strong as to compel the State to abolish the barbarous custom.

*Young India* 29-4-1926, p. 158

## 206. A WAIL FROM MELA-ARASUR

I cannot recall a place where I have not received addresses from Harijans. Most of them have dealt with general grievances, but in two or three cases I can recall having had instances of specific complaints against the tyranny of caste Hindus. Mela-Arasur is a village in Lalgudi taluk, not far from Trichinopoly. After the usual complimentary paragraph, the appeal proceeds:

We the inhabitants of the village of Mela-Arasur, have got two tanks of drinking water, one of which is big and the other small, but both of which are being utilized by *savarnas* to our exclusion. We are debarred from touching the waters of the tanks and, unless there is anybody of the liberated classes to put water into our pots, we have to go off without water. We are about eighty families in all and can count a decent fraction of the entire population of the village. Our petition to the Government to remove this ostracism no doubt resulted in the putting up of notification that nobody should be obstructed from using the waters of the tank, but did not succeed in removing the ban, for the *savarnas* would take our attempts to heart and would not employ us in their fields, so much so that, in getting the evil of scarcity of water avoided, we got into the other evil of scarcity of food and employment. Thus, in this poor condition, we are undergoing a lot of inexpressible difficulties for the past 9 months without sufficient food to eat and clothes to put on. Our appeal to the biggest landholders here to remedy the same proved only a cry in the wilderness.

Ill-feelings are sourer. We take this opportunity of presenting to you this aspect of the situation, knowing that you alone will be able to relieve us of it, at the same time causing good feelings to come into existence once again between the *savarnas* and ourselves. Further more, we request you to be kind enough to relieve us from poverty and sufferance by giving to each family some donation, at least for sustaining three months, in such manner as you think best.

This was received at Trichy and I made public reference to it in my speech. If the statements made are true, the position reflects no credit on the *saoarna* Hindus of Mela-Arasur. It is to be hoped that the Provincial Harijan Sevak Sangh will use all its efforts to secure justice for the helpless Harijans who are so dependent upon the caste Hindus. It is relevant to know whether the Harijans have facilities for getting pure water apart from the tanks in question. If they have not, humanity demands that the supply of pure water is guaranteed to them by those who deny the use of public tanks to which the Harijans are entitled in law. The boycott of Harijans for their having dared to enforce their right to the use of the tanks is adding insult to injury. I hope, however, that the good offices of the local Harijan Sevak Sangh will result injustice being done to the Harijans and in the restoration of good relations between the two divisions of the same family.

The last sentence of the appeal demands an answer. Even if I had the ability, I would not have the wish to satisfy the signatories in their appeal for a donation that would sustain (them) for at least three months. Such donations are a waste of public money. They degrade those who receive them and put a premium on laziness. The able-bodied should ask for work, never charity. I know that in these days of scarcity even work is difficult to find in the case of the general body and more so in that of Harijans. But I believe that a person who is ready for any honourable labour will not have much difficulty in finding some work. I would, therefore, urge all friends of Harijans to discourage appeals for doles and endeavour to find employment for the unemployed who would not refuse to do any honourable labour.

*Harijan*, 2-3-1934, p. 20



## 207. WELLS FOR HARIJANS

The Government of Bombay are to be congratulated upon their decision to build wells for Harijans in the Presidency of Bombay. The sum set apart is a trifle for *the* work to be done. As is well known wells have been constructed for Harijans for years past in Gujarat by the late Anti-untouchability Board set up by the Congress, and since 1932 by the Harijan Sevak Sangh. The latter has an extensive programme of well-building for Harijans, and now Sjt. Juthabhai, a quiet and great worker, has made up his mind to devote his attention to this noble humanitarian work. It is greatly to be desired that in this work there would be perfect co-ordination between the various agencies working towards the same end. If co-operative effort is not possible, there may be at least a division of labour and areas. Whatever is done, the end should be quick work, good work and cheapest cost. The last can be satisfied only if there is unskilled voluntary labour forthcoming either on the part of Harijan Hindus or *savarna* Hindus or both.

*Harijan*, 11-5-1995, p. 99

## 208. WANTED ONE LAKH RUPEES

The Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh has already built many wells out of the fund that was placed at its disposal by Sheth Jugalkishore Birla. That fund is exhausted and there is still a need for building wells for Harijans. The orthodox opposition to the use by Harijans of common wells still continues in many places, and Harijans are obliged either to drink water out of cattle troughs or pay for water which people may for a consideration pour into their pots. Every additional well built is therefore undoubtedly a great comfort to Harijans, but it is also an increase in the wealth of the country. The Central Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh has resolved to make an appeal for one lakh of rupees for the purpose. Figures are being prepared for presentation to the public showing the wants of the different provinces. One lakh is nothing in comparison to the need. But the Sangh has not the resources to spend large sums on well-construction. It is slow work requiring special skill. Not every one can construct a well. And the work being scattered makes it very difficult to provide effective supervision. The policy of the Board is not to ask for what it cannot spend well and give a good account of to the public. I hope the modest appeal will receive prompt and adequate response.

*Harijan*, 25-5-1935, p. 116

## 209. WELLS FOR HARIJANS

Though the spectre of stricken Quetta haunts me still, I have neither compunction nor hesitation in asking the benevolent to respond quickly to the appeal for the Harijan wells fund published in these columns. Quetta has the whole world at its back. Harijans have only a few to help them. Not one sufferer from the Quetta disaster has to languish for thirst or to be obliged to drink filthy water which people would not have their cattle to drink.

We may not lose the sense of proportion in the face of overwhelming disasters. Not even the gaieties have been stopped except perhaps in some cases for a solitary moment. Must the burden of Quetta grief fall on the already bruised shoulder of the Harijan? Donors would be guilty of misappropriation before God's court, if they were to divert what they had intended for giving clean drinking water to Harijans or begrudge Harijans because the unexpected call of Quetta has come. The proper way is to revise the budget of personal expenses not that of charities, least of the penitential which the Harijan wells fund is.

It was not without purpose or experience that the appeal for prayer was made. Heart-felt prayer steadies one's nerves, humbles one and clearly shows one the next step.

Let the readers study the Punjab report on the drinking needs of the Harijans of that land of five mighty rivers. Is it not a shame that the rich people of the Punjab cannot provide clean water for Harijans? The appeal for a paltry lakh of rupees should be speedily oversubscribed

*Harijan*, 22-6-1935, p. 151

## 210. BARBAROUS IF TRUE

A correspondent sends me the following paragraph from the *Hindu's* own correspondent dated 8th June at Ramnad:

At a meeting of the Devacottah Panchayat Board held on Saturday at the Board's office, under the presidency of its President Mr. Mtt. Kr. Ar. Kr. Arunachalam Ghattiar, the usual procedure was adopted, viz., the Harijan member entered the meeting hall, signed his signature in the attendance register, receded to the exit door of the meeting hall, and stood all the while till the close of the meeting.

The Board sanctioned several estimates for providing electric lights in the various streets in the town and resolved to acquire sites for the construction of roads between Sriranga- puram, Natarajapuram and Arunagiripatnam.

I take the following from his letter enclosing the cutting from the *Hindu*:

I am sending herewith a cutting from the *Hindu* of the 11th which gives a rather interesting piece of news.

The Panchayat Board ~~referred to is in~~ heart of Chettinad and is supposed to be composed of Congressmen or men who had been elected quite recently on the Congress ticket to advance through local boards and panchayats the aims and objects for which the great Indian National Congress stands.

It is shocking to read that a body like this should in thistwentieth century, have the audacity to compel a Harijan member to stand out of the meeting hall in spite of die (act that he is himself a member of that body duly elected and representing a section of the community and thereby eqjoying all the privileges to which such a membership entitles him....

The irony of it all is that this piece of news should appear in the same issue as gives your speech at Bangalore to Harijan workers.

I do not know whether my correspondent is correct in saying that the Devacottah Panchayat is composed of Congressmen. If it is, so much the worse for the Congressmen concerned, for apart from manifest injustice of the conduct adopted by the panchayat towards its Harijan member, Congressmen are pledged opponents of untouchability. But whether the panchayat is composed of Congressmen or not, the conduct of the Board can only be characterised as barbarous, even as it would be of the Legislative Assembly if it made its member Rao Bahadur Rajah stand in a corner whilst its proceedings were going on. But the *Hindu* correspondent lets the public know that the procedure is usual for the Devacottah Panchayat. It is to be presumed that the occasion for noticing the usual event has been supplied by the fact that untouchability just now looms large especially in the South. Even if the practice of making Harijan members stand in a corner by certain panchayats is usual, public opinion should make it impossible of repetition. Evidently however the paragraph does not appear to have caused any public stir. The editorial columns of the Southern press seem too to have taken no notice of the incident which is ugly enough to demand strong condemnation. Thanks are therefore due to my correspondent for lifting the *Hindu* paragraph from oblivion.

Not only is the practice barbarous, I think it is also illegal. The Harijan member has a legal right to demand a seat side by side with his fellow members. It would be no answer to the charge that the Harijan member was party to his own insult, I can well understand poor Harijans in remote parts of India being too timid to assert their rights. And for Harijans, Devacottah is unfortunately remote enough.

Anyway it is the duty of the Provincial and the local Harijan Sevak Sanghs to investigate the matter and take such steps as may be proper to avoid a repetition of the insult offered not merely to the Harijan member but the whole society, if it is jealous of the rights of the least among its members equally with the greatest.

*Harijan*, 27-6-1936, p. 156

## 211. WHOLLY INDEFENSIBLE

(Originally appeared under the title "And Thou Too!")

An advocate from Tamilnad writes:

It is with great reluctance that I am disturbing you for a moment from your A.I.V.I.A. work. I am fully aware that you cannot spare even a minute of your precious time for other matters than the A.I.V.I.A. work. Still I write this letter to you since we want you to advise us on a problem which vitally affects us and which is in all respects like the Harijan problem the problem of pollution. The problem of pollution assumes importance especially so, when the bar sinister is sought to be perpetuated by intelligent and educated persons like the lawyers who are members of the Bar Association in Devakottah.

Briefly put the facts are: The Bar Association of this place is nearly 100 strong. All members of the Association are Brahmans except for three, of whom one is a Christian. The premises of the Association are attached to the court and used by the members of the Association for reading books, for hunting authorities on case law, for mfr'ng rest during leisure hours, etc. The members pay a monthly subscription and the Association is maintained from the subscriptions. The Associationa water pot for drinking purpose which is kept in a room. I am referring to these details because the troubleof pollution is centred on this water pot. The Christian member of our Association drank water from this pot; but the Brahman members did not like other than themselves to take water from the pot. So a jug of water was kept outside the exclusive room which was an indication to us that we must take water only from the jug kept outside. But the Christian member continued to take water from the original pot. On account of this there was an uproar in the Association and the Brahman members objected to our taking water from the pot kept in the room on the sentimental ground of pollution.

There are some of us who feel (1) that we have a right to take water from whichever pot we choose; (2) that since the water pot is maintained by the Association from the

funds subscribed by all of us, every member has the privilege to take water, from any pot kept in the Association without distinction of caste or creed; (3) that any objection from the so-called high caste men on the ground of sentiment and pollution is against reason and justice; (4) that the objection amounts to an introduction of privileges based on birth in an institution run and maintained from common funds and (5) that we members feel this is a veiled form of untouchability.

I am writing this to you so that you can give us the lead and valuable advice for us to follow, lest we should err. I also believe that your opinion on the matter may influence the members in forming a correct and proper opinion in the matter. Though this is a local problem I am confirmed in my belief that this problem is a live issue in other mofussil places in South India where there are bar associations and other public institutions.

I pray that your answer may be sent to me and published in the *Harijan*. I may also add that the subject is likely to be taken up for discussion by the bar association and I request you to give us your advice to guide us as early as possible.

This is an old letter. Probably the bar association referred to by my correspondent has settled the differences in an honourable manner. But I know the evil persists in many places. What is true of bar associations is equally true of schools and colleges. I have no manner of doubt that the setting up of such a bar in public schools and associations is a usurpation wholly indefensible, and I should be surprised if it is not also illegal. Those who have prejudices such as the correspondent describes may make their own individual arrangements but cannot deprive fellow members and fellow students of the right of using common property in a manner common to all.

*Harijan*, 20-2-1937, p. 13



## 212. THEY MUST ASSERT THEIR RIGHTS

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Harijans of Garhwal".)

Only the other day I had the good fortune to report a case of a Harijan bride being carried in a *palkhi* or *dandi* in Garhwai without let or hindrance. But Shri Shyamlal of the Harijan Sevak Sangh informs me that the case has proved to be an exception, and that prevention of the use of a *dandi* by Harijans flourishes almost as before. Two such cases have come under his observation only recently. Harijans who had dared to make use of *dandis* were "mercilessly beaten". There is an awakening among Harijans. They have approached the Commissioner for protection which he has promised if a fortnight's previous notice is given to him. But that means more bad blood. The real thing required is conversion of the caste Hindus. I understand that Pandit Jawaharlal is specially interesting himself in the matter. The U.P.C.C. is moving. All these are steps in the right direction. Let us hope that the labours of the reformers will bear fruit and Harijans will no longer need police protection. But they need not wait for the success of the reformers' labours. They must assert their rights even if it be by seeking police protection. It should be remembered that Garhwai produces fine soldiers. It is a part of India which is noted for its beauty. Shall caste Hindus alone be vile?

*Harijan*, 15-6-1940, p. 164 at p. 165

## 213. DISABILITIES OF HARIJANS IN INSTITUTIONS

(Appeared in "Notes" under the title "The Curse".)

A Harijan Sevak writes:

1. There are in our country hotels, hair cutting saloons, etc. which deny admission to Harijans. Is it not expected of our national workers—khadi, Hindi, and Congress propagandists—to boycott such institutions and use their influence to get these disabilities of the Harijans removed?
2. There are washermen employed by the A.I.S.A. Some of these washermen observe untouchability in their profession and are not prepared to wash the clothes belonging to persons other than Brahmans and Nairs. The A.I.S.A. dispenses with the washermen who are addicted to drink. Similarly, should not the A.I.S.A. dispense with those washermen who observe untouchability in their profession?

The questions are appropriate. Both have to be answered only in one way. All institutions which deny access to Harijans should be boycotted by those, whether Congressmen or others, who feel keenly that the curse of untouchability has to be removed if Hinduism is to remain as a faith to live for and, if need be, to die for. In the posers put forth by the Sevak the difficulty is sometimes serious. But nothing can be achieved unless serious difficulties are seriously faced and surmounted.

The question gives rise to a dilemma on some occasions. The washermen are supported by the A.I.S.A. in common with the other artisans. These cling to untouchability with a tenacity that defies all attempt to make them see the superstition that the curse is. Whilst I cannot off-hand ask A.I.S.A. workers to boycott the artisans that observe untouchability,

there is no doubt that "there should be greater vigilance than heretofore in these matters. Preference should certainly always be given to those who have shed the superstition. Much will depend upon the spirit in which the persons afflicted with the virus of untouchability are approached.

Sevagram, 23-3-1942

*Harijan*, 29-3-1942, p. 93

## 214. AGITATION FOR REMOVAL OF DISABILITIES

(From "Harijan Sevak Sangh Under Fire" by Pyarelal)

Q: Would you advise the so-called *savarna* Hindus to start, even under the present circumstances, an agitation in selected places for securing elementary civic and social rights for the Harijans? Would you for this purpose advise the Harijan Sevak Sangh to organize Satya- graha against the *savarna* Hindus if necessary?

A.: I would not advise the Sangh as an organisation to offer Satyagraha against the *savarna* Hindus, but I would certainly not only advise but expect members of the Sangh in their individual capacity to organise such Satyagraha in their respective places. I shall certainly support any such move on their part if it is undertaken in the proper spirit. It is their duty.

Q.: Would you, in the absence of popular governments in the provinces, advise the Sangh to carry on a vigorous and energetic programme of temple-entry for Harijans?

A.: I could. I understand it is being done even at present but at a rather slow pace. I would certainly like its tempo to be stepped up.

*Harijan*, 28-7-1946, p. 233 at p. 234

## 215. PROUD OR INSANE?

Who would not like to know Gujarat as proud? It is permissible affectionately to call her insane. As I write these lines in sorrow, the picture that comes before my mind is not of proud but of insane Gujarat.

Shri Parikshitlal is a servant of the Harijans. He aspires in that capacity to serve Gujarat but is baffled by the madness that has seized her people. One hears of living Harijans but in ParikshitlaTs story, Harijans dead are also untouchables. On the cremation ground, at any rate, there should be no distinctions between man and man. Once the dead body is reduced to ashes, all uncleanness vanishes. In spite of this, must Harijans be excluded from the common cremation ground? After much difficulty the *mahajans* of Navsari were persuaded to permit the body of an old Harijan to be cremated on the common ground. As a matter of fact, there was neither room for favour on one side nor for rejoicing on the other. But one has, at times, to be thankful for small mercies. It is well that the agitation in this case bore fruit.

The other instance is an unmixed tragedy. I do not propose to give the name of the village where it took place. The despicable part of it is that even if an epidemic breaks out among the cattle, it is the poor Harijans who are held responsible. The so-called caste Hindus will not take the trouble even to see the obvious cause of the disease. Grass grows in abundance during the rainy season. It is infested with all kinds of insects. The starved cattle go mad at the sight of green grass and devour it, insect and all. Is it any wonder that they fall ill and die? The cause of the

epidemic is obvious. The cattle of the Harijans suffer no less and yet the latter are held responsible for the calamity. They are subjected to maltreatment in the shape of abuse and assault from the caste Hindus. This, in brief, is the gist of a woeful tale, described in a letter before me. How I wish that my words could reach the ears of the villagers concerned!

Now that the reformers are at the helm of Government, much of the terrible ignorance of the villagers could be dispelled, if only the officials would make the effort. If the *mahajans* shed their superstition and the Government and Harijan workers do their duty and the Harijans are roused from their slumbers, it will be possible to deliver Gujarat from this dreadful evil.

New Delhi, 13-9-1946

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

*Harijan*, 22-9-1946, p. 317

## 216. HOW TO REMOVE UNTOUCHABILITY?

Q.: A Madras Harijan writes that while removing the ban on temple-entry and on use of public wells, giving scholarships for education etc., are all good in their own way, the real way to remove all traces of the curse of untouchability is to abolish *cheris* and separate living quarters for Harijans.

A.: It sounds well to say that untouchability will go by the board if Harijans are allowed to live wherever they choose. So far as I am aware there is no general law in existence which relegates Harijans to living in special quarters. It is an evil custom that forces them to do so. The custom is breaking down but very very slowly. Meantime it is the duty of everyone to get rid of it. It is a question of moving the hearts of people. Supreme sacrifice can achieve the desired result. Has not Tulsidas said:

Through sacrifice Brahma created die world,

Through sacrifice Vishnu protects,

Through sacrifice die whole of creation is sustained,

Therefore, Bhavani, go and perform sacrifice.

When one with that supreme gift is forthcoming, the taint will disappear and religion mil be purified and saved.

New Delhi, 5-10-1946

(From the original in Hindustani)

*Harijan*, 13-10-1946, p. 357

## 217. FOR EXPIATION OF THEIR SIN

(From "Notes")

The Harijan Sevak Sangh has been for some time issuing a monthly 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) History was made at Munyali, a Harijan village near Nand Prayag, when a Harijan bride was carried in a *dandi* (palanquin) for the first time in the locality with the consent of the caste Hindus.

When the taking of a Harijan bride in a *dandi* makes history we know how far we are from root and branch removal of untouchability. For the expiation of their sin against humanity the so-called caste Hindus should make it a point of themselves carrying in *dandis* Harijan brides in villages in all parts of India.

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

\*Item 2 and 3 omitted from this collection.



## 218. DOLA PALKI (BRIDAL CONVEYANCE)

### I

(From the original in Hindustani)

The Hindus of Garhwai District are so ignorant that they do not allow Harijan bridegrooms to ride or sit in any conveyance and pass in front of temples, public squares or the residential quarters of high caste Hindus. An evil custom like this should not really be tolerated today. One friend suggests that perhaps the best way to dispel ignorance would be to have a law enacted. This should be done. And, in any case, whenever a Harijan bridal procession is taken out, these unfortunate people should be afforded police protection. The district authorities should issue notices that no interference with the same shall be permitted. Anyone who tries to stop or causes to have stopped any such procession will be liable to punishment.

New Delhi, 6-10-1946

*Harijan*, 13-10-1946, p. 348

### II

The Dola Paliki dispute in Garhwal should be set at rest seeing that the U.P. Government are said to have passed orders for prompt measures to be taken against those who would interfere with Harijan bridegrooms riding on ponies or using any other form of conveyance in spite of custom to the contrary trotted out by objectors.

On the train to Calcutta

29-10-1946.

*Harijan*, 10-11-1946, p. 396

## 219. A WISE STEP

Shri G. D. Tapase, Minister for Backward Classes (Bombay) has sent me a copy of the Bombay Harijan (Removal of Social Disabilities) Act just passed by the Bombay Legislature. I give below the most relevant clauses:

3. Notwithstanding anything contained in any instrument or any law, custom or usage to the contrary, no Harijan shall merely on the ground that he is a Harijan—

- a. be ineligible for office under any authority constituted under any law; or
- b. be prevented from
  - i. having access to or using any river, stream, spring, well, tank, cistern, water-tap or any bathing place, burial or cremation ground, any sanitary convenience, any road or pathway which the members of all other castes and classes of Hindus have a right to use or have access to;
  - ii. having access to or using any public conveyance licensed by the Provincial Government or any local authority to ply for hire;
  - iii. having access to or using any building, well, cistern or place med for charitable or public purposes maintained wholly or partially out of the revenues of the Province or the funds of a local authority;
  - iv. having access to a place of public amusement or a place of public entertainment.
  - v. having access to a shop which the members of all other castes and classes of Hindus have a right to or have access to;
  - vi. having access to or using any place set apart or maintained for the use of Hindus generally but not for the use of any particular section or class thereof;

- vii. enjoying any benefit under a charitable trust created for the benefit of Hindus generally but not for the benefit of any particular section or class thereof.

3-A. No person in charge of any of the places referred to in sub-clauses (i), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) or any conveyance referred to in sub-clause (ii), or clause (b) of section 3 shall impose any restrictions on a Harijan or act in a manner as to result in discrimination against him.

4. No court shall in adjudicating any matter or executing any order recognize any custom or usage imposing any civil disability on any Harijan merely on the ground that he is a Harijan.

5. No local authority shall in carrying out the functions and duties entrusted to it under any law recognize any custom or usage referred to in section 4.

6. Whoever

- (a) prevents any person, by reason of his being a Harijan, from having access to or using any of the places referred to in sub-clauses (i), (iii), (iv) (v) and (vi) or any conveyance referred to in sub-clause (ii) of clause (b) of section 3 or from enjoying any benefit under a charitable trust referred to in sub-clause (vii) of clause (b) of the said section or abets the prevention thereof; or
- (b) imposes any restriction on a Harijan or acts in a manner so as to result in discrimination against him or abets any person to impose such restriction or to act in such manner

shall, on conviction, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine which may extend to Rs. 2000 or with both.

7. If any person who has been convicted of any offence punishable under this Act is again guilty of the same offence he shall be punished on the second conviction with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine which may extend to Rs 500 or with both and if he is again so guilty shall be punished on the third or any subsequent conviction with imprisonment for a term which may

extend to one year and shall also be liable to fine, which may extend to Rs. 1,000/-.

The author of the measure has kindly supplied me with the text of his speech delivered on his introducing the measure. From it I note below the most poignant passages.

This untouchability amounts to irrationality. As soon as a Harijan is born, untouchability applies to him. As a Harijan he is born, as a Harijan he lives all through his life and as a Harijan he dies. . . . However clean he may be, however wise he may be, however superior he may be, to the so-called orthodox Hindus he is not a superior being. The worst of it is that even after his death his dust and ashes are not allowed to mingle with the dust and ashes of the others. ... The agonies of the untouchable are further aggravated by the fact that he is treated as an untouchable not only by the caste Hindus but even by Christians, Muslims and others. To my mind the Bill gives a *sanad*, a charter, to the Harijans for the exercise of certain social, civic, fundamental rights.

It is worthy of note that the Bill was passed without opposition worth the name from the Hindu side. That is a good augury for the successful working of the Act. And yet it would not do to be over-sanguine about it. Unfortunately for us, we know that we pass resolutions by acclamation and allow them to become dead letter. The greatest vigilance will have to be exercised by the Government and the reformers in the strict enforcement of the law.

It is no use blinking the fact that the reign of irrationality referred to by the author of the Relief Bill is still very much to the fore in India. It is not merely in regard to untouchability but many other things. Reformers, therefore, have to watch the demon and utilize their watchfulness, courtesy and tact in dealing with those who are possessed by the demon.

New Delhi, 25-10-1946

*Harijan*, 3-11-1946, p. 384

## 220. A SIGN OF PROGRESS

Though I have noticed it in the Gujarati columns of the *Harijanbandhu* from a different source, at the risk of repetition in another form I must quote from a touching letter from Shri Parikshitlal Majumdar addressed to Shyamlalji, a copy of which has been sent by the latter.

I am very glad to inform you that after all, by the grace of God, the ice is at last broken. I am writing this from Bardoli of which you have heard. I can assure you that this year during the Gandhi Jayanti week nearly 40 public wells have been freely opened for the Harijans. Mind you, no pressure has been applied. People have taken to this programme of their own will. It has not been possible for our workers to attend all the places, but local people have invited Harijans and taken them to the public wells. I am still receiving further reports. I myself have attended some functions and personally have become a witness to the marvellous change. I thank God for it. No doubt, it is Gandhiji's efforts and the recent writings that have brought this change. Young men in villages have come forward and helped, the elders have remained behind, but they have either blessed the occasion or kept mum but nobody has opposed. I may further inform you that numerous of inter-communal dinners have been held. There was one such big dinner at Nadiad, the real capital of the Kaira District. Nearly 450 people, out of whom nearly 250 were caste Hindus brought cooked food from home and sat in front of the Ramji temple which has been built for the sweepers by Thakkar Bapa in 1928. 200 sweepers also joined and there was a merry party. Rationing regulations were not broken as people brought food from home. But it was a big gathering, unknown of its kind in the Kaira District.

One prominent well has been opened in Kadi, a citadel of orthodoxy and 150 people dined with Harijans at Padra in Baroda. There are numerous such incidents but I cannot enumerate them at present.

I should love to write a long letter in Gujarati to Bapa in this connection but it is difficult for him to read it. Please read this to him if possible.

Of course, compared to what we want to achieve, this progress is a miserable show. But seeing that Gujarat has been so far behind hand in this matter of removal of untouchability, the little progress of which Shri Parikshitlal takes note with pardonable satisfaction is pleasant, if it is permanent and is a precursor of better things to come. Every nail driven into the coffin of untouchability is a step in the right direction towards the purification of Hinduism.

Srirampur, 30-11-1946

*Harijan*, 15-12-1946, p. 445

## 221. HIGHER EDUCATION FOR HARIJANS

I hope all those who are interested in the removal of untouchability are familiar with Mr. David's scheme for the higher education of selected Harijans by caste Hindus. The scheme was published some time ago in the Bombay press after being enthusiastically accepted by the Servants of Untouchables Society. In Mr. David's words, "it aims at enabling a large number of untouchables to enjoy the benefits of the best higher education (including technical instruction) possible in this country." Under it, "well-to-do caste Hindus are expected throughout India each to bear the expenses for such education of at least one Harijan student for a period of 5 years. Scholarships should be given to selected candidates and the expenses imply the provision of educational fees, books and living expenses on a modest scale." Mr. David thinks that Rs 500/- per year per Harijan would be required for College education and half as much for High School education. He advises donors to subscribe, wherever it is possible, the whole amount covering 5 years in one lump sum.

"In order to build up the self-respect of Harijan scholars," says Mr. David, "it should be laid down that each scholar would be expected to reimburse the amount originally advanced for his education as soon as he is in a position to do so. Thus a student under this scheme would feel that his education was provided by means of a loan and not a gift." And if a large number of students discharge these debts of honour, Mr. David anticipates that a permanent fund will be created.



Mr. David advises the formation of a committee or committees in provinces which will frame rules for the selection of candidates, and the disbursements of subscriptions will be subject to the recommendation of such committee or committees. He is emphatic that the scheme, if carried out, should "produce important and sustained results", and make possible within a comparatively short period the creation of a large number of lawyers, teachers, doctors and engineers from among Harijans. The existence of a considerable number of such persons would be of material help in raising the social status of the depressed classes, and, he adds "it is framed on strictly non-controversial lines, thus widening to the maximum its potential field of response. It should win the support of even the staunchest *sanatanists*... It is an opportunity at hand for caste Hindus to give concrete expression of their feeling towards untouchables."

Let me hope, with Mr. David, that the scheme will commend itself to the "staunchest *sanatanists*" and that in case it would receive liberal support. I do not know whether the Central Board or the Bombay Board has received any donations. I venture to suggest to the Bombay Board that, if it has not already done so, it should form a small Committee getting, if possible, a *sanatanist* to work on it, frame rules and get scholarships.

Whilst it would be the most proper thing to get 1,000 donors who could contribute Rs. 2,500 or 1,250, as the case may be, for full 5 years' expenses, it is not necessary to confine oneself to the letter of Mr. David's scheme, so long as its spirit is observed. The central point of the scheme is that there should be a decent fund at once collected from

caste Hindus for the higher education of a select number of Harijan boys or girls.

I, therefore, invite subscriptions for the scheme. They will be duly acknowledged in these columns. Donors should send moneys to the Manager, Sjt. A. V. Patwardhan, marking the envelopes "the David Scheme". Acknowledgments will be published from week to week, and the money will be handed to the Central Board for their disposal strictly in accordance with the donor's instructions. As soon as the first full subscription is received, I would advise the Central Board to make its selection. Donors may make their own choice of the province from which Harijan boys or girls may be selected, or they may even make their own selection of such boy or girl and hand the donation to the Central Board or Provincial Board for disbursement to, and supervision of, the candidate so selected.

*Harijan*, 25-2-1933, p. 2

## 222. PREPARATORY SCHOOLS FOR HARIJAN CHILDREN

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

There was a meeting of Harijan workers at Belgaum, when Gandhiji had his silence and *Harijan-editing* days there. One of the workers had brought typed questions...

Another worker had the following question: "Some say that there should be no separate schools for Harijans at all, whereas others say that separate schools are absolutely necessary."

Gandhiji replied: "My opinion is that, whilst every facility should be provided for the admission of Harijans to public schools, for some time to come preparatory schools will be absolutely necessary for preparing Harijan children for the primary schools. It is futile to expect Harijan children all at once to flood primary schools. There is also a possibility of opposition to wholesale admission. Hence preparatory schools are necessary, if we honestly want to foster the education of Harijan children."

*Harijan*, 23-3-1934, p. 44 at p. 46

## 223. HARIJAN EDUCATION

The question of primary education is in many respects much more difficult than secondary and college education. And Harijan education is the most difficult of all. Be it in the crudest manner possible, a non-Harijan child receives some home culture. A Harijan child, being shunned by society, has none. Even when, therefore, all primary schools are open to Harijan children, as they must be soon or late and in my opinion sooner rather than later, preliminary schools will be needed for Harijan children if they are not to labour under a perpetual handicap. This preliminary training can be discovered and tried in all the numerous Harijan schools conducted under the aegis of Harijan Sevak Sanghs scattered throughout India. That preliminary training should consist in teaching Harijan children manners, good speech and good conduct. A Harijan child sits anyhow; dresses anyhow; his eyes, ears, teeth, hair, nails, nose are often full of dirt; many never know what it is to have a wash. I remember what I did when in 1915 I picked up a Harijan boy at Tranquebar and took him with me to Kochrab where the Ashram was then situated. I had him shaved. He was then thoroughly washed and given a simple dhoti, vest and a cap. In a few minutes in appearance he became indistinguishable from any child from a cultured home. His head, eyes, ears, nose were thoroughly cleaned. His nails which had become repositories of dirt were pared and cleaned. His feet which were laden with dust were rubbed and cleaned out. Such a process has to be gone through everyday, if need be, with Harijan children attending schools. Their lesson should begin for the first three months with teaching them

cleanliness. They should be taught also how to eat properly, though as I write this sentence I recall what I had seen during the walking pilgrimage in Orissa. Harijan boys and grown-ups who were fed at some of the stages, ate with much better cleanness than the others who soiled their fingers, scattered about the savings and left their places in a messy condition. Harijans had no savings and their dishes were left thoroughly clean. Their fingers, whilst they were eating, were after every morsel taken licked clean. I know that all Harijan children do not eat so cleanly as the particular ones I have described.

If this preliminary training is to be given in all Harijan schools, pamphlets giving detailed instructions for teachers in their languages should be prepared and distributed and inspectors of schools be required during their inspection to examine teachers and pupils on this head and to send full reports of the progress made in this direction.

This programme involves care in the selection of teachers and the training of the present staff. But all this is well worth the attention, if the Sangh is to discharge its trust by the thousands of Harijan children that are brought under its care.

*Harijan*, 18-5-1935, p. 108

## 224. MODEL SCHOOLS FOR HARIJANS

Seth Ghanashyamdas Birla, President of the Harijan Sevak Sangh, writes:

We are thinking of establishing a few residential schools mainly for educating Harijan boys, though not exclusively. So far, whenever we have talked of Harijan hostels or schools, we have thereby meant cheap schools or cheap hostels conducted by ill-educated and ill-paid teachers and wardens with boys half-starved. So long as we educate Harijans or children of poor parents in these cheap institutions, the boys will never succeed in shedding the inferiority complex from which they often suffer. And what will they learn from these unqualified and ill-paid teachers? These boys never get the opportunity to mix with the other boys. The harm due to this lack of contact between the poor and the well-to-do or between Harijans and *savama* is mutual. I therefore propose that we should have a few residential schools established in a pleasing environment. They should be of a standard that would compare favourably in every respect with a well-conducted public school. We should start a few such schools first of all as a trial.

They should be of the matriculation standard and affiliated to a university. They should, of course, be mostly residential. Personal attention to students should be a speciality. Education should be imparted through the medium of the mother-tongue. English should be taught as a second language. During the period of this education, the boys should be taught useful handicrafts chosen for their educative value.

In order to make this education thorough and self-sufficient, we should take two years more than the time needed for the matriculation examination. These two years should be utilized in giving extra training to the boys besides what they learn for the matriculation course.

We propose to have three crafts, one of which will be taken up by every boy at his option. These will be: either (1) carding, spinning, weaving, dyeing and bleaching; or (2) carpentry and smithy; or (3) paper-making, book-binding, and ordinary composing.

It is intended to employ a superior staff, adequately paid, to ensure good qualifications. The underlying idea is that the boys may not feel the want of a college education. There will be no bar to such. The boys, it is hoped, will not find it difficult to earn an honest livelihood after finishing the course. It will be the duty of the Board to accommodate such boys as may-like to be.

Besides the university course and craft, special attention will be given to increasing their general knowledge and hygiene. Music, games, exercises, riding, swimming, etc. should be taught. Religious or moral training should not be neglected. Equal respect for all religions should be inculcated, along with a good grounding in the principles of Hinduism and the peculiar beauties of our own culture.

Half the number of the students should be Harijans who would have free education and free boarding and lodging. The other half of the students, i.e. *savarnas* should be charged fees.

This is a very rough and brief outline of my idea of a good high school.

But there is difference amongst us about this outline. Some say: Why should we have the matriculation course? Others say: We should not undertake costly education as this will be a bad example to set. It is argued that we may employ most qualified men, but only if they come on a bare maintenance and out of a spirit of sacrifice. In other words, in their opinion, in this school there would be no room for teachers other than those prepared to lead a simple life of sacrifice. Some go to the extent of saying that we should rather have no school than start one which is not manned by a highly self-sacrificing staff.

I consider all this unpractical. I need not give my arguments. They are obvious.

Will you express your views on this question?"

I whole-heartedly support Seth Ghanashyamdas' scheme. The arguments advanced in opposition seem to be based more on caution than on principle. I too should side with the opposition, if the scheme was to be financed out of the meagre funds of the Harijan Board. But I assume that

the model schools would be financed by special donations enough to guarantee their full working. Having lived in South Africa for twenty years where every Indian is treated almost as a pariah, I know how sensitive the mind becomes under unnatural treatment. 'I took some time to regain my balance though I never lost the sensitiveness. I felt that I was a strange creature in the company of the general body of Europeans. The plight of Harijans in India is much worse because of their much greater ignorance and still greater poverty. Therefore, if we are to break down the double complex, we have to bring up a fair number of Harijan lads in surroundings in no way inferior to those that are available to the well-to-do class boys. The scheme under examination does not contemplate the production of clerks who would be too big for their boots and who would be naturally discontented because no one would have them as clerks. Boys trained under the scheme would be in no way inferior in knowledge to the other matriculates. But these will be better placed because their bodies will be specially looked after and their hands will have their cunning fully developed. Such boys will have their future assured. They will have self-confidence. They will not be torn from their kith and kin; on the contrary, they will be expected to serve fellow Harijans and give them benefit of the teaching they have received.

It may be objected that I am inconsistent in that I have spoken and written against the present system of education. The objection would be superficial. In the first place, the worst features of the system will be eliminated in that the training will be in the mother-tongue and the boys will be taught handicrafts which should enable them to earn an independent and decent living. Secondly, an objection that may be



applicable to boys who can be better educated cannot be held good in the case of boys who have no choice and who smart under the knowledge that they cannot have the education that thousands of boys have simply because they are not Harijans. I would not insult Harijan lads by arguing with them that what the thousands of non-Harijan lads are doing is wrong, and that therefore they had better be satisfied with the shanties which Seth Ghanshyamdas has referred to in his letter.

I plump for his scheme. I wish him all success. The sooner it is launched, the better for Harijans and better for India. These schools will be potent instruments for exorcising the demon of untouchability.

Sevagram, 16-2-1942

*Harijan*, 22-2-1942, p. 55

## 225. EXERCISING LEGAL RIGHTS

(From "Harijan Sevak Sangh")

Q.: Harijans are legally entitled to send their children to many educational institutions as also to draw water from public wells. But public sentiment still militates against this being put into practice. Should Harijans resort to the law courts for justice in these matters or wait patiently until the caste Hindus are converted?

A.: Where there is no danger of violence being done to them, the Harijans should exercise their legal right and where necessary resort to law courts. Harijan workers must continue agitation among caste Hindus and not rest content with mere legal rights.

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

## 226. EDUCATING NAMASUDRA CHILDREN

(From "Gandhiji's Walking Tour Diary")

Gandhiji took up the thread of his remarks of the previous evening about the Namasudras. He had no time to refer to the question of education. The blame for the neglect of education among them must lie solely upon the so-called high-caste Hindus. It was preposterous to expect those who were deliberately suppressed by Hindu society that they would themselves take to education. What he, however, deplored was that there were men among them who taught them not to accept good things from the so-called high-caste Hindus. He was of the opinion that it was mischievous propaganda. Therefore, he expected the Namasudras to give definite assurances about land and the attendance of boys and girls. In that case he had no doubt that there were enough penitent Hindus who would gladly take up the duty of educating these neglected children. He invited the Namasudras to send the required assurances to Thakkar Bapa who might be trusted by them to do the rest and he hoped that there were enough local Hindus who would offer their money and ability for the performance of the honourable duty of educating these children.

*Harijan, 23-3-1947, p. 78 at p. 79*

## 227. ADMISSION OF HARIJAN STUDENTS TO HOSTELS

Apropos the recent legislation enacted by the Government of Bombay extending to the Harijans the right of admission to temples, wells, *dharmaskalas*, schools, hostels etc., Shri Parikshitlal writes that though this automatically covers undenominational hostels as well, school and college hostels have not in actual practice been thrown open to the Harijan students. His experience has been that the school and college authorities have not adapted themselves to the spirit of the times to the extent the hostel students have. As the academic year will soon be over and fresh admissions will be made shortly, he has advised the authorities to do the needful before the Harijan students are forced to assert their legal rights in the matter and has also suggested to me to recommend the throwing open of the hostels in Bhavnagar and other Kathiawad States to the Harijan students.

I endorse his suggestion and would add that if the students in the hostel are sincere, they are sure to succeed in the matter. In the present age the autocratic will of the managing committees cannot prevail, particularly when, as in this case, they are in the wrong and the students are in the right. Be that as it may, the Harijan students should unquestionably be admitted to hostels with honour.

New Delhi, 6-1-1948

*Harijan*, 11-1-1948, p. 505

## 228. ECONOMIC UPLIFT AND WOES OF HARIJANS

(From a report of Gandhiji's reply to a public address at Kottayam as it appeared in "Weekly Letter—No. 11" by C. S.)

I ask *savarna* Hindus who are here if they have abolished the distinctions of high and low from their hearts. I tell you that the bitterest complaints have been received from the Thiyyas and Ezhavas of Travancore. ... It is totally wrong to believe that when Harijans are economically lifted all their woes will be over. You should know it is the economic uplift of some Harijans that has made them conscious of the degradation to which *savarna* Hindus have reduced them. I would like you to adopt a little humility and admit that there is much to be done in Kottayam itself.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1934, p. 4 at p. 7

## 229. WOES OF UNTOUCHABLES

Dear Mahatmaji,

I venture to bring to your notice some principles which, I think, must be kept in view in the conduct of the campaign on behalf of the untouchable Hindus.

Among the numerous disabilities from which they suffer, a clear distinction must be made between those which are *prima facie* civic in their nature and those which are *prima facie* non-civic or religious or communal in their character. It may be that all those disabilities are referable to "religion", i.e. to some beliefs (whether right or wrong, moral or immoral) held as part of religion. But for all practical purposes the untouchables' disabilities could and should be classified into (1) those which are civic in their nature viz., ban on the use of public utilities like roads, wells, *dharmashalas*, markets, schools and hospitals, and conveyances like ferryboats and railway-carriages, motorbuses, hotels, theatres and (2) those imposed upon them with regard to (a) the entry into religious buildings and places, like temples, *maths* and fair-grounds, which are open to all Hindus but the untouchables, and (b) the services of Hindu barbers, washermen, musicians and priests (all of whom, excepting of course the last, serve all clients, Hindu and non-Hindu, except their untouchable co-religionists).

And the following are the corollaries of this distinction:

- (i) The disabilities belonging to the first category (the civic) can and must be fought under the auspices of a non-denominational civic organization like the Indian National Congress *by all citizens irrespective of caste, creed, and sex*; and
- (ii) the disabilities of the second category (the "religious") can only be fought under the auspices of Hindu communal organization like the Hindu Sabhas (whose principal *raison d'être*, in my opinion, should be to fight these disabilities) or special *ad hoc* Hindu committees; but participation in the campaign should be open to all *Hindus without distinction of touchable and untouchable*.

The grounds for (i) are, I hope, obvious, enough. But there was once a breach of the principle. The Vaikom Satyagraha of 1924 and onwards was undertaken to remove what was clearly a civic disability—the ban, not on the entry into a temple, but on the use of that portion of a public road where it abutted on a temple compound, intended to prevent unapproachable passers-by from coming within the "pollution distance" of the idol, or the worshippers inside; but the restriction which you imposed on the fight, viz. that only Hindus should directly participate in it, was, in my opinion, almost as mediievally conceived as the ban which the State authorities enforced against the untouchables. "Religion" may have been at the bottom of the ban; but the disability as such was clearly of the civic category. The ban was on the use of a public highway, whatever may be the excuse, reason or unreason at the back of it. I only hope that the Vaikom mistake will not be repeated on similar occasions in future.

The reasons for (ii) are also, I hope, equally obvious. First, it is necessary to guard against the mistake of involving a non-denominational civic organization like the Indian National Congress in any sectarian quarrel, as when we yoked the democratic cause of Swaraj to the theocratic cause of the Turkish Sunni Khilafat in 1920 and onwards—with results which we all have been witnessing so far; for we know how the spirit exorcised out of its home in Turkey is obsessing us across the waters in this "Land of Regrets". Secondly, in any Satyagraha undertaken to secure the right of entry into orthodox temples for the untouchables, there should be no bar against the participation of any untouchable Hindu as such.

The advice you gave to the leaders of a temple-entry Satyagraha last year, that such Satyagraha should be offered by touchable Hindus alone, would be meaningless, unless by such Satyagraha you meant a campaign on the part of the touchable sympathizers of the untouchables for a boycott by all worshippers of such temples as do not admit the untouchables till such time as their managers accept the reform; that is, a boycott on the lines of that recently reported to be declared by the white students in Edinburgh against those restaurants in the city which observe the "colour bar" (literally the same as our *vama-matyada*) against their coloured fellow-students.

If it was not such an organized boycott that you meant, then the question would arise: How are the touchables to offer Satyagraha for entry into temples into which they themselves are not debarred from entering? In the Satyagraha at Vaikom you had allowed the Hindu untouchables to take part, and, indeed, on the lines on which the campaign was conducted, there could be no Satyagraha without the untouchables participating. Would it be in any way different with the temple- entry fight? I don't see that any principle of Satyagraha necessitates the advice to the untouchables and their sympathizers to leave off their temple-entry Satyagraha and entrust it to touchable reformers alone. Would it not be like saying that in the Satyagraha against the foreign rulers for Swaraj, only the Domiciled Europeans or Anglo-Indians (old Style) should take part and that other Indians should keep out?

In these days of the incessant talk of protection of minorities who dare deny that if any minority in India needs to have special provisions in the future constitution for itself, it is the untouchables?

Their want of self-assertion, their apathy towards their wrongs, their "pathetic contentment" with their lot—these, of course, are the greatest obstacles in the way of their emancipation from the bonds of diabolic custom. But as that fact is the greater measure of the touchables' sin against those people "more sinned against than sinning", it is also the greater measure of the touchables' obligation to atone for it by raising them, or rather by raising themselves from their own degraded humanity—degraded because of their treating their fellow- men and fellow-religionists as "lower than beasts".

Karwar, 17-6-1931

*I remain,*

*Yours sincerely,*

S. D. NADKARNI

The distinction made by Sjt. Nadkarni between civil and religious disabilities is unnecessary because useless. They are all religious because



imposed in the name of religion by co-religionists. A useful distinction will be between those disabilities which require legislative treatment and those that do not. In my opinion the confining of Vaikom Satyagraha to merely Hindus was perfectly sound and absolutely necessary. The writer perhaps confounds Satyagraha a special remedy with general agitation. Whilst all can take part in a general agitation, only the actual victims can adopt the remedy of Satyagraha. The Hindus have to do penance. How can Hinduism be purged by non-Hindus doing penance? It may easily lead to serious consequences if Mussalmans were to offer Satyagraha in a dispute between Hindus and Hindus especially in a matter the latter consider to be religious. Nor do I see any reason to alter the opinion that it is the business of "touchable" Hindus to lead the agitation side by side with the untouchables if only because the latter are today too powerless and too apathetic to their own sufferings. It is not so much the inability on the part of untouchables to enter temples that matters as the sinful insolence of the touchables who impose the atrocious disability which matters.

Hinduism will not be purified by "untouchables" taking by storm the possession of a temple; it will be purified by the trustees and the worshippers recognizing the sin of prohibition and flinging open the gates to the untouchables. It is for the Hindu reformers to multiply and offer Satyagraha against blind orthodoxy.

*Young India*, 23-7-1931, p. 190

## 230. AN IMPATIENT WORKER

An earnest but impatient workers has been trying to have temples and public places thrown open to Harijans. He had some success but nothing to be proud of. In his impatience, therefore, he writes:

It is no use waiting for these orthodox men to make a beginning. They will never move unless compelled to do so. Drastic steps are required to wipe off untouchability. I therefore beg you to kindly favour me with your opinion if Satyagraha at the entrance of the temples, by workers and Harijans preventing orthodox persons from entering the temples, will be an effective method. Appeals and entreaties have produced no effect, and to lose more time on these will, in my humble opinion, be sheer waste of valuable time.

Such blocking the way will be sheer compulsion. And there should be no compulsion in religion or in matters of any reform. The movement for the removal of untouchability is one of self-purification. No man can be purified against his will. Therefore, there can be no force directly or indirectly used against the orthodox. It should be remembered that many of us were like the orthodox people before our recognition of the necessity of the removal of untouchability. We would not then have liked anybody to block our way to the temples, because we in those days believed, no doubt wrongly as we now think, that Harijans should not be allowed to enter temples. Even so may we not block the way of the orthodox to the temples.

I should also remind correspondents that the word Satyagraha is often most loosely used and is made to cover veiled violence. But as the author of the word I may be allowed to say that it excludes every

form of violence, direct or indirect, veiled or unveiled, and whether in thought, word or deed. It is a breach of Satyagraha to wish ill to an opponent or to say a harsh word to him or of him with the intention of harming him. And often the evil thought or the evil word may, in terms of Satyagraha, be more dangerous than actual violence used in the heat of the moment and perhaps repented and forgotten the next moment. Satyagraha is gentle, it never wounds. It must not be the result of anger or malice. It is never fussy, never impatient, never vociferous. It is the direct opposite of compulsion. It was conceived as a complete substitute for violence.

Nevertheless, I fully agree with the correspondent that "most drastic steps are required to wipe off untouchability." But these steps have to be taken against ourselves. The orthodox people sincerely believe that untouchability, as they practice it, is enjoined by the shastras and that great evil will befall them and Hinduism if it was removed. How is one to cope with this belief? It is clear that they will never change their belief by being compelled to admit Harijans to their temples. What is required is not so much the entry of Harijans to the temples as the conversion of the orthodox to the belief that it is wrong to prevent Harijans from entering the temples. This conversion can only be brought about by an appeal to their hearts, i.e., by evoking the best that is in them. Such an appeal can be made by the appellants' prayers, fasting and other suffering in their own persons, in other words, by their ever increasing purity. It has never yet been known to fail. For it is its own end. The reformer must have consciousness of the truth of his cause. He will not then be impatient with the opponent, be prepared even to fast unto

death. Not everyone has the right or the capacity to do so. God is most exacting. He exacts humility from his votaries. Even fasts may take the form of coercion. But there is nothing in the world that in human hands does not lend itself to abuse. The human being is a mixture of good and evil, Jekyll and Hyde. But there is the least likelihood of abuse when it is a matter of self-suffering.

*Harijan*, 15-4-1933, p. 8

## **9. VYKOM SATYAGRAHA AGAINST UNAPPROACHABILITY AND UNTOUCHABILITY**

### **231. VYKOM SATYAGRAHA AGAINST UNAPPROACHABILITY AND UNTOUCHABILITY**

#### **I**

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Vykom Satyagraha".)

Vykom of which till lately no one outside Travancore, at most the Madras Presidency, knew anything has suddenly leapt to fame because it has become the seat of Satyagraha. The press contains bulletins of the daily progress of the movement from day to day. It has been undertaken in behalf of the untouchables of Travancore. The movement has given us another word to describe the condition of the suppressed classes. It is unapproachability. These poor countrymen of ours may not only not touch any other caste Hindus but they may not even approach them within a stated distance. The leaders of the movement with a view to remedying the evil have taken up only a fragment of the evil, hoping no doubt that if they deal with it successfully, they will have dealt it a death-blow at least in that part of India in which direct action is now going on. In the prosecution of the campaign some of the staunchest workers of Malabar have been imprisoned including my predecessor George Joseph.

As most of the leader have been imprisoned, an appeal has been made to the leaders all over India to come to the rescue. Whether such an appeal can or should be met or not need not be considered for the moment, as

Madras seems to be responding whole-heartedly. There can now be no receding. The struggle may last long if orthodox Hindu opinion is actively hostile to the movement. The Satyagrahis are certain to break down the wall of prejudice no matter how strong and solid it may be if they continue firm but humble, truthful and non-violent. They must have faith enough in these qualities to know that they will melt the stoniest hearts.

*Young India*, 17-4-1924, p. 131

## II

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Vykom Satyagraha".)

The anti-untouchability campaign at Vykom is providing an interesting study in Satyagraha, and as it is being conducted in a calm spirit, it must prove of great use for future workers along similar lines. The Travancore authorities, whilst they still remain unbending regarding the prohibition order, are carrying out their purpose in a courteous manner. The public already know how quickly the authorities tried to check violence against Satyagrahis. The treatment in the gaols too is in keeping with their conduct in the open. Here is what Mr. Menon writes from Trivandrum Jail:

The expected has happened. I am now within the walls of the Trivandrum Central Jail along with my friend Mr. Madhavan. We are treated as State prisoners. A separate block is set apart for our use. We are allowed our own clothes. A convict cooks for us. I am having the same food as I take at home. So is my friend Mr. Madhavan. Books and newspapers are also allowed. Of course in writing letters we are not allowed to say anything about the Vykom affair. Friends can see us between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. every day except Sunday.

I am sure that you would be glad to hear that the Superintendent and other authorities of the Jail are doing everything to make us comfortable. We receive from them the same polite treatment as we received from the Police officers at Vykam.

The Travancore Jail authorities deserve to be congratulated upon their considerate treatment of the Satyagrahi prisoners. Let us hope that on either side the present self-restraint and courteous conduct will be continued to the end.

*Young India*, 24-4-1924, p. 133

### III

(Originally appeared under the title "Vaikom Satyagraha".)

Vaikom Satyagraha has attracted such wide public attention, and though restricted to a small area, presents so many problems for solution that I offer no apology to the reader for constantly engaging his attention for it.

I have received several important and well thought out letters protesting against my countenancing it in anyway whatsoever. One such letter even urges me to use whatever influence I may have, for stopping it altogether. I am sorry that I am unable to publish all these letters. But I hope to cover all the points raised in these letters or otherwise brought to my notice.

The first may be cleared at once. Exception has been taken to Mr. George Joseph—a Christian—having been allowed to replace Mr. Menon as leader and organizer. In my humble opinion the exception is perfectly valid. As soon as I heard that Mr. Joseph was "invited to take the lead" and he contemplated taking it, I wrote to him as follows on 6th April:

"As to Vaikom. I think that you shall let the Hindus do the work. It is they who have to purify themselves. You can help by your sympathy and by your pen, but not by organizing the movement and certainly not by offering Satyagraha. If you refer to the Congress resolution of Nagpur, it calls upon the Hindu members to remove the curse of untouchability. I was surprised to learn from Mr. Andrews that the disease had infected even the Syrian Christians."

Unfortunately before the letter could reach him, Mr. Menon was arrested and Mr. George Joseph had taken his place. But he had nothing to expiate, as every Hindu has in the matter of untouchability as countenanced by the Hindus. His sacrifice cannot be appropriated by the Hindus in general as expiation made, say by Malaviyaji would be. Untouchability is the sin of the Hindus. They must suffer for it, they must purify themselves, they must pay the debt they owe their suppressed brothers and sisters. Theirs is the shame and theirs must be the glory when they have purged themselves of the black sin. The silent loving suffering of one single pure Hindu as such will be enough to melt the heart of millions of Hindus; but the sufferings of thousands of non-Hindus in behalf of the untouchables will leave the Hindus unmoved. Their blind eyes will not be opened by outside interference, however well-intentioned and generous it may be; for it will not bring home to them the sense of guilt. On the contrary, they would probably hug the sin all the more for such interference. All reform to be sincere and lasting must come from within.

But why may the Vaikom Satyagrahis not receive monetary aid from outside, especially if it be from Hindus? So far as non-Hindu assistance is



concerned, I am as clear about such pecuniary help as I am about such personal help. I may not build my Hindu temple with non-Hindu money. If I desire a place of worship I must pay for it. This removal of untouchability is much more than building a temple of brick and mortar. Hindus must bleed for it, must pay for it. They must be prepared to forsake wife, children and all for the sake of removing the curse. As for accepting assistance from Hindus from outside such acceptance would betray unreadiness on the part of the local Hindus for the reform. If the Satyagrahis have the sympathy of the local Hindus, they must get locally all the money they may need. If they have not, the very few who may offer Satyagraha must be content to starve. If they are not, it is clear that they will evoke no sympathy among the local Hindus whom they want to convert. Satyagraha is a process of conversion. The reformers, I am sure, do not seek to force their views upon the community; they strive to touch its heart. Outside pecuniary help must interfere with the love process if I may so describe the method of Satyagraha. Thus viewed the proposed Sikh free kitchen, I can only regard, as a menace to the frightened Hindus of Vaikom.

There is no doubt in my mind about it that the orthodox Hindus who still think that worship of God is inconsistent with touching a portion of their own co-religionists and that a religious life is summed up in ablutions and avoidance of physical pollutions merely, are alarmed at the developments of the movement at Vaikom. They believe that their religion is in danger. It behoves the organizers, therefore, to set even the most orthodox and the most bigoted at ease and to assure them that they do not seek to bring about the reform by compulsion. The Vaikom

Satyagrahis must stoop to conquer. They must submit to insults and worse at the hands of the bigoted and yet love them, if they will change their hearts.

But a telegram says in effect, "the authorities are barricading the roads; may we not break or scale the fences? May we not fast? For we find that fasting is effective."

My answer is, if we are Satyagrahis, we dare not scale or break fences. Breaking or scaling fences will certainly bring about imprisonment but the breaking will not be civil disobedience. It will be essentially incivil and criminal. Nor may we fast. I observe that my letter to Mr. Joseph with reference to fasting has been misunderstood. For the sake of ready reference I reproduce below the relevant part.

Omit fasting but stand or squat in relays with quiet submission till arrested.

The above is the wire sent to you in reply to yours. Fasting in Satyagraha has well-defined limits. You cannot fast against a tyrant, for it will be a species of violence done to him. You invite penalty from him for disobedience of his orders but you cannot inflict on yourselves penalties when he refuses to punish and renders it impossible for you to disobey his orders so as to compel infliction of penalty. Fasting can only be resorted to against a lover, not to extort rights but to reform him, as when a son fasts for a father who drinks. My fast at Bombay and then at Bardoli was of that character. I fasted to reform those who loved me. But I will not fast to reform, say, General Dyer, who not only does not love me but who regards himself as my enemy. Am I quite clear?

It need not be pointed out that the above remarks are of a general character. The words "tyrant" and "lover" have also a general application. The one who does injustice is styled "tyrant". The one who is in sympathy with you is the "lover". In my opinion, in the Vaikom movement opponents of the reform are the "tyrant". The State may or may not be that. In this connection I have considered the State as merely the police striving to keep the peace. In no case is the State or the opponents in the position of "lover". The supporters of Vaikom Satyagrahis enjoy that status. There are two conditions attached to a Satyagrahi fast. It should be against the lover and for his reform, not for extorting rights from him. The only possible case in the Vaikom movement when a fast will be justified, would be when the local supporters go back upon their promise to suffer. I can fast against my father to cure him of a vice, but I may not in order to get from him an inheritance. The beggars of India who sometimes fast against those who do not satisfy them are no more Satyagrahis than children who fast against a parent for fine dress. The former are impudent, the latter are childish. My Bardoli fast was against fellow-workers who ignited the Chauri Ghaura spark and for the sake of reforming them. If the Vaikom Satyagrahis fast because the authorities will not arrest them, it will be, I must say in all humility, the beggar's fast described above. If it proves effective it shows the goodness of the authorities, not that of the cause or of the actors. A Satyagrahi's first concern is not the effect of his action. It must always be its propriety. He must have faith enough in his cause and his means, and know that success will be achieved in the end.

Some of my correspondents object altogether to Satyagraha in an Indian State. In this matter too, let me quote the remaining portion of my foregoing letter to Mr. Joseph:

You must be patient. You are in an Indian State. Therefore, you may wait in deputation on the Dewan and the Maharajah. Get up a monster petition by the orthodox Hindus who may be well disposed towards the movement. See also those who are opposing. You can support the gentle direct action in a variety of ways. You have already drawn public attention to the matter by preliminary Satyagraha. Above all see to it that it neither dies nor by impatience becomes violent.

Satyagraha in an Indian State by the Congress for the attainment of its object is I think clearly forbidden. But Satyagraha in an Indian State in connection with local abuses may be legitimately taken up at any time provided the other necessary conditions are fulfilled. As in an Indian State there can be no question of non-co-operation, the way of petitions and deputations is not only always open, but it is obligatory. But, say some of my correspondents, the conditions for lawful Satyagraha do not exist in Vaikom. They ask:

1. Is unapproachability exclusively observed at Vaikom or is it general throughout Kerala?
2. If it is general, then what is the special reason for selecting Vaikom in preference to places within the British territory in Kerala?
3. Did the Satyagrahis petition the Maharajah, the local Assembly etc.?
4. Did they consult the orthodox sections?
5. Is not the use of the road the thin end of the wedge, is it not a step towards the abolition of caste altogether?

6. Is not the road a private road?

The first two questions are irrelevant. Unapproachability and untouchability have to be tackled wherever they exist. Wherever the workers consider a place or time suitable, it is their duty to start work whether by Satyagraha or other legitimate means.

My information goes to show that the method of petition etc., was tried not once but often.

They did consult the orthodox people and thought that they had the latter's support.

I am assured that the use of the road is the final goal of the Satyagrahis. It is however not to be denied that the present movement throughout India is to throw open to the suppressed classes all the *public* roads, *public* schools, *public* wells and *public* temples which are accessible to non-Brahmans.

It is in fact a movement to purify caste by ridding it of its most pernicious result. I personally believe in *varnaskram*, though it is true that I have my own meaning for it. Any way, anti-untouchability movement does not aim at inter-dining or inter-marrying. Those who mix up the touch and the last two things are doing harm to the cause of the suppressed classes as also to that of inter-dining and inter-marriage.

I have letters which protest that the road in question is a public road. In fact my informants tell me it was some years ago even accessible to the unapproachables as to other non-Brahmans.

In my opinion, therefore, there is a just cause for the Vaikom Satyagraha and so far as it is kept within proper limits and conducted with the

strictest regard to non-violence and truth, it deserves full public sympathy.

*Young India*, 1-5-1924, p. 144

#### IV

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Vaikom Satyagraha".)

The Vaikom Satyagraha is, I fear, crossing the limits. I do hope that the Sikh free kitchen will be withdrawn and the movement will be confined to Hindus only. Its inclusion in the Congress programme no more makes it a movement of Hindus and non-Hindus than the Khilafat became a Muslim and non-Muslim movement by reason of its inclusion in the Congress programme. Moreover the opponents of the Khilafat movement were non-Muslims represented by the British Government. It would be an intrusion, which Musalmans would rightly regard as impertinent, if Hindus or other non-Muslims interfered in an inter-communal religious dispute among themselves. Similarly would orthodox Hindus resent interference by others in what is purely Hindu reform. The Hindu reformers of Malabar will estrange the entire Hindu sympathy if they accept or encourage non-Hindu interference or assistance beyond sympathy. I am sure that the Hindu reformers who are leading the movement in Vaikom do not want to convert their orthodox brethren by compulsion. In any case let them recognize the boundary line which a Satyagrahi must not cross. I respectfully urge the reformers not to overawe the orthodox. I dissent from the view that once the disputed road to Vaikom is free the problem of untouchability is solved even in Malabar. Victory in Vaikom, if non-violent will no doubt shake the citadel of sacerdotal superstition in general, but the problem will have to be everywhere locally tackled

wherever it arises. Because a well in one place in Gujarat is thrown open for the use of the untouchables, it does not follow that all the wells in Gujarat will be opened for their use. And how would it fare with Hinduism if the Christian, the Muslim, the Akali, and other non Hindu friends of the Hindu reformers made a demonstration against the orthodox Hindus, financed the reformers and finally overawed the orthodox into subjection. Will that be Satyagraha, will submission then be voluntary, will it be a reform in Hinduism?

*Young India*, 8-5-1924, p. 150 at p. 151

## V

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the tide "Vaikom Satyagraha")

His Holiness Shri Narayana Guru, spiritual leader of the Tiyas, is reported to have disapproved of the present methods of Satyagraha at Vaikom. He suggests that volunteers should advance along barricaded roads and scale the barricades. They should enter temples and sit with others to dine. Though I have compressed the interview I have reproduced almost the exact words. Now the action proposed is not Satyagraha. For scaling barricades is open violence. If you may scale barricades, why not break open temple doors and even pierce through temple walls? How are volunteers to pierce through a row of policemen except by using physical force? I do not for one moment suggest that by the methods proposed the Tiyas if they are strong and are willing to die in sufficient numbers cannot gain their point. All I submit is that they will have gained it by something the reverse of Satyagraha, and then too they would not have

converted the orthodox to their view but would have imposed it on them by force. A friend who has sent me the press cutting recording the interview suggests that by reason of the violent advice of the Guru I should ask the local Congress Committee to call off Satyagraha. I feel that would mean want of faith in one's means and surrender to violence. So long as the organizers strictly keep within the limits which they have prescribed for themselves there is no cause for calling off Satyagraha. The friend cites Chauri Chaura as an illustration. In doing so, he has betrayed confusion of thought or ignorance of facts. The Bardoli Satyagraha was suspended because Congress and Khilafat men were implicated in the Chauri Chaura outrage. If Congressmen connected with the Vaikom movement entertain the suggestions said to be favoured by the Tiya spiritual leader, there would be a case for penance and therefore suspension but not otherwise. I would therefore urge the organizers at Vaikom to make redoubled efforts and at the same time keep stricter watch on the conduct of those who take part in the movement. Whether it takes long or short to reach the goal, the way is the way of peaceful conversion of the orthodox by self-suffering and self-purification and no other.

*Young India*, 19-6-1924, p. 201

## VI

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Vaikom".)

The Vaikom Satyagraha has entered upon probably the last stage. The newspapers report and the report is confirmed by private advice that the Travancore authorities have now practically abandoned the Satyagrahis to the tender mercies of *goondas*. This is euphemistically called the



organized opposition of the orthodox section. Every one knows that orthodoxy is often unscrupulous. It has as a rule prestige and public opinion behind it in comparison with the reformer. It therefore does things with impunity which the poor reformer dare not. But what baffles one is the attitude of the Travancore authorities. Are they conniving at this open violence against the innocent Satyagrahis? Has such an advanced State like Travancore abdicated its elementary function of protection of life and property? The violence of the *goondas* is said to be of a particularly barbarous type. They blind the eyes of volunteers by throwing lime into them.

The representatives from Kerala asked me if they should not have a resolution of the Congress supporting the movement. I told them that I did not like the idea. What they wanted was moral support. It would have been given by the Committee for the asking, if they had sent a resolution to the president. My responsibility in dissuading them was therefore serious. But I am convinced that all local movements must be self-reliant and the A.I.C.C. should give its moral support only in exceptional cases.... The Travancore authorities may however be respectfully told that the Congress cannot watch barbarity with philosophic indifference. So long as Satyagraha is met by ordinary state processes, the movement must remain local. But the letting loose of the *goondas* on the devoted heads of the Satyagrahis is bound to gather round the Satyagrahis the full weight of all-India public opinion.

A word now to the organizers of Vaikom Satyagraha. The challenge of the *goondas* must be taken up. But the Satyagrahis must not lose their heads. The khaddar dress of the volunteers is said to have been torn from them

and burnt. This is all most provoking. They must remain cool under every provocation and courageous under the hottest fire. Loss even of a few hundred lives will not be too great a price to pay for the freedom of the unapproachables. Only the martyrs must die clean Satyagrahis like Caesar's wife must be above suspicion.

*Young India*, 3-7-1924, p. 221

## VII

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "A Repudiation".)

With reference to the reported interview with the Tiya priest Shri Narayana Guru Swami, I gladly publish the following letter from Mr. Narayanan:

I was very much pained to see your note in *Young India* regarding the views of His Holiness Shri Narayana Guru Swami on the present methods of Satyagraha at Vaikom. A few days before that I happened to see the Swamiji with whom I had a fairly long conversation over the Vaikom struggle. The Swamiji himself told me at the outset that one Mr. Kesavan who had a talk with him sometime back in a railway train has misrepresented him to the public by publishing an unauthorised account of the so-called interview in the vernacular press. First of all Swamiji is not in the habit of granting interviews to press representatives. But he freely expresses his opinions to whomsoever he talks with on any subject. Very recently Sjt. G. Rajagopalachari also had a free talk with the Swamiji on the Vaikom affairs; and it is said that the Swamiji expressed himself in unmistakable terms his approval of the present methods of Satyagraha at Vaikom.

What the Swamiji says is this. It is true that he spoke in favour of entering temples and sitting with others to dine; because he has always been an advocate of temple-entry and inter-dining. But he lays great stress on non-violence. He says that even advancing into the prohibited area in the absence of barricades is an act of violence, because the prohibitory board at the boundary line carrying the Government order

itself is equivalent to a barricade of policemen who simply repeat the same order as the volunteers advance. He is of opinion that so long as the prohibitory board is there, the volunteers should remain at the boundary line praying God to give courage to the oppositionists to change their mind and cause the removal of the board. He might have told Mr. Kesavan that if the volunteers may advance into the prohibitory area disobeying the Government order put up in the prohibitory board, they may as well scale the barricades and advance. This, the Swamiji says might have been misunderstood by Mr. Kesavan. He drew my special attention to the fact that the volunteers must be of exemplary character, and that they must not even show signs of distemper at the greatest provocation. The Swamiji also expressed the view that the proposed procession on foot of 500 caste Hindus from Vaikom to Trivandrum will produce a great moral effect on all concerned. Lastly he wished all success to the movement saying that, if carried on in the same strain as at present, success is not far off.

After the foregoing was prepared I received the following authoritative letter:

The report of the interview K. M. Kesavan had with me in the railway train, published in the *Desabhimani*, seems to have been prepared without correctly understanding my meaning. The report was not shown to me before publication nor did I see it soon after it was published. The removal of untouchability is quite essential for the attainment of social harmony. I have no objection whatsoever to the Satyagraha movement started by Mahatma Gandhi to fight this evil nor to the co-operation of people in that movement. Any method of work that may be adopted for eradicating the evil of untouchability must be strictly nonviolent.

Muttakkadu

27-6-1924

NARAYANA GURU

*Young India*, 10-7-1924, p. 230 at p. 231

## VIII

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Vaikom Satyagraha".)

I tender my congratulations to the Maharanee Regent of Travancore on her generosity in releasing all the Satyagrahi prisoners. It is a pretty custom for a State to release a certain number of prisoners on a new head occupying the *gadi*. What can be more natural than that those prisoners who have no criminal taint in them should be released? I tender too my congratulations to the Satyagrahis on suspending Satyagraha for the time being. It paves the way for an understanding and enables the State authorities to review their attitude towards the Satyagrahis without embarrassment. It has been stated that the late Maharajah, most enlightened though he was in many matters, held very orthodox views on untouchability. Let me hope that H. H. the Maharanee Regent will recognize that untouchability is no credit to Hinduism, but that it is a serious blot upon it. The best service that a Hindu State can render to Hinduism is to rid it of the curse and set an example in liberalism to the Hindus of British India. The Satyagrahis will, I doubt not, make the way of the authorities smooth by continuing their selfrestraint and making it clear that they do not want anything more than a recognition of the most elementary human rights for the unapproachables and the untouchables.

*Young India*, 11-9-1924, p. 297 at p. 298

## IX

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the tide "Vykom Satyagraha".)

The Vykom Satyagraha has perhaps a meaning deeper than is generally realised. . The young men who have organized it are stern in discipline and gentle in their dealings with the orthodox section. But this is the least part of their trials. Some of them are suffering too the persecution of social boycott. We of the Western Presidency have no idea of what this persecution can mean. These young men who are taking part in the movement are not only being denied social amenities but are threatened even with the deprivation of their share in the family property. If they would go to law, probably they would get their due. But a Satyagrahi cannot go to law for a personal wrong. He sets out with the idea of suffering persecution. In a reform that the Vykom struggle seeks to achieve, the Satyagrahi seeks to convert his opponent by sheer force of character and suffering. The purer he is and the more he suffers, the quicker the progress. He must therefore resign himself to being excommunicated, debarred from the family privileges and deprived of his share in the family property. He must not only bear such hardships cheerfully but he must actively love his persecutors. The latter honestly believe that the reformer is doing something sinful and therefore resort to the only means they know to be effective to wean him from his supposed error. The Satyagrahi on the other hand does not seek to carry out his reform by a system of punishments but by penance, self-purification and suffering. Any resentment of the persecution, therefore, would be an interruption of the course of discipline he has imposed upon himself. It

may be a prolonged course, it may even seem to be never ending. A little bullying or even, moral suasion or coercion may appear more expeditious. What, however, I am showing here is not the greater efficacy of Satyagraha but the implications of the method the Satyagrahi has deliberately chosen for himself. Indeed I have often shown in these pages that Satyagraha is, as a matter of fact and in the long run the most expeditious course. But my purpose here is merely to show what the young Satyagrahis of Vykom are doing. The public know much of what they are doing in the shape of picketing but they know nothing of the silent suffering some of them are undergoing at the hands of their families and caste men. But I know that it is this silent and loving suffering which will finally break the wall of prejudice. I am anxious therefore that reformers should realize their responsibility to the full and not swerve by a hair's breadth from their self-imposed discipline.

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

## X

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "From Vykom".)

The following from the Satyagraha Ashram at Vykom cannot fail to be of general interest.

I hope you have got our telegram about the spinning competition. Two volunteers took 578 yds. and 508 yds. each, yarn being of 8 counts. Our weaving is not up to the mark now since some of the boys who knew weaving have left the Ashram on leave. We have, according to the directions of Vinobaji, reduced our number to barely fifty. But this has proved troublesome since the climate here is very bad and many of the resident volunteers become incapacitated to offer Satyagraha for six hours. So it has

become necessary to go in for some ten to fifteen volunteers more, so that we have to keep a permanent strength of 60 volunteers. I hope you will agree that this is necessary.

Of the 24 hrs. 8 hrs. for sleep, 6 hrs. for Satyagraha, 2 hrs. for spinning, 1 hr. for Hindi, 2 hrs. for Ashram work (sweeping, washing, etc.), 2 hrs. for meals, bath and other bodily wants, 1 hr. for reading room and 2 hrs. for daily prayer and meetings in which usually some good subjects are dealt with either by me or by some of the prominent guests who usually attend the Ashram.

Our treasurer is now exerting himself for building a school in memory of the Satyagraha campaign under orders from Shri Narayana Guru. All of us are anxiously waiting for your coming here. It has become almost an obsession with most people here to consider what they should do to expedite your coming. I hope that God will grant you the health and time to proceed here shortly.

The scrupulous care with which things are being managed by the Vykom Satyagrahis is the surest assurance of success. It may seemingly take long, but it is my deliberate conviction that it is none the less the quickest way. It is the only true way. The fight against untouchability is a religious fight. It is a fight for the recognition of human dignity. It is a fight for a mighty reform in Hinduism. It is a fight against the entrenched citadels of orthodoxy. Victory which is a certainty is worth the patience and the sacrifice, the band of devoted young Hindus is giving to it. The process of waiting is a process of self-purification for the young men engaged in the fight. If they persist they will be ranked among the makers of India of the future.

As for the Satyagrahis' longing that I should go to Vykom, I can only give them the assurance that I am longing to be with them. I am looking for a chance. But the choice becomes difficult when there are so many calls

upon my time. My heart and my prayers are with them; who knows that they are not more than my bodily presence in their midst.

*Young India*, 5-2-1925, p. 49 at p. 50

## XI

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Vykom Satyagraha".)

Here is a letter from a Vykom Satyagrahi:

Your kind card to hand. The Travancore Legislative Council yesterday voted by 22 against 21 against the right of entry to the Vykom temple road for which purpose Satyagraha is now being offered. Naturally people here are very much agitated and feel aggrieved all the more, because the voting was gained by the direct pressure brought by the Government on the voters. I am ashamed to say, one member of the Depressed and Prohibited Classes himself voted against the entry and sided with the Government. The situation hereafter is fraught with all kinds of difficulties. There is very little enthusiasm now for the peaceful methods of Satyagraha. Some have already begun to advocate "direct action" and even forcible entry into temples. Small-pox has broken out in the Satyagraha camp itself and with the growing heat of the advancing summer it may attack more and more. We are carrying the struggle with faith in your leadership and gospel of non-violence. But I am afraid the Provincial Congress Committee of Kerala is waning in its enthusiasm. They have collected very little money during the last many months by their own efforts. For everything we depend on your own esteemed help and advice. We are hard up for money. All Satyagrahis are anxiously awaiting your forthcoming visit which would, it is needless to say, be of inestimable help to our cause.

It is a good letter because it is a frank letter. I am unable to congratulate the Travancore Government, if the facts are as stated. But I do not know them. I therefore suspend my judgment till I know them first hand. I am eager to visit Vykom at the earliest possible date. I hope that it will not be long.



Meanwhile, Satyagrahis must not be dejected. They dare not give way to despair. Of all my Tamil lessons one proverb at least abides with me as an evergreen. Its literal meaning is, "God is the only Help for the helpless." The grand theory of Satyagraha is built upon a belief in that truth. Hindu religious literature, indeed all religious literature, is full of illustrations to prove the truth. The Travancore Durbar may have failed them. I may fail them. But God will never fail them, if they have faith in Him. Let them know that they are leaning on a broken reed if they are relying on me. I am living at a safe distance from them. I may wipe their tears, but suffering is their sole privilege. And victory will surely come out of their sufferings provided they are pure. God tries his votaries through and through, but never beyond endurance. He' gives them strength enough to go through the ordeal. He prescribes for them. For the Satyagrahis of Vykam their Satyagraha is not a mere experiment to be given up if it does not succeed within a prescribed time or after a prescribed force of suffering. There is no time limit for a Satyagrahi nor is there a limit to his capacity for suffering. Hence there is no such thing as defeat in Satyagraha. Their so-called defeat may be the dawn of victory. It may be the agony of birth.

The Vykam Satyagrahis are fighting a battle of no less consequence than that of Swaraj. They are fighting against an age-long wrong and prejudice. It is supported by orthodoxy, superstition, custom and authority. Theirs is only one among the many battles that must be fought in the holy war against irreligion masquerading as religion, ignorance appearing in the guise of learning. If their battle is to be bloodless, they

must be patient under the severest trials. They must not quail before a raging fire.

The Congress Committee may give them no help. They may get no pecuniary help, they may have to starve. Their faith must shine through all these dark trials.

Theirs is "direct action". They dare not be irritated against their opponents. They know no better. They are not all dishonest men as Satyagrahis are not all honest men. They are resisting what they honestly believe to be an encroachment upon their religion. The Vykom Satyagraha is the argument of suffering. The hardest heart and the grossest ignorance must disappear before the rising sun of suffering without anger and without malice.

I am alarmed at the appearance of small-pox in the Satyagraha camp. It is a disease born of filth and yields to hygienic treatment. They must isolate smallpox patients and discover the cause of the disease. Is their camp in a perfectly sanitary condition? Doctors have no medicine for small-pox. Water-cure is the best cure. Low diet or no diet is the safest. Let the patients have copious draughts of pure water. Above all neither the patients nor the others should lose nerve. The disease is also a course of suffering. Soldiers' camps are not free from disease. Indeed it has been ascertained that more soldiers die of disease than of bullet wounds.

For finance, they need not worry. Their faith will bring them all the pecuniary aid they may need. I know of no good cause that has died for want of funds.

*Young India*, 19-2-1925, p. 61

## XII

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the dde "More about Vykam".)

The following letter will be read with painful interest by those Hindus who look upon untouchability as a crime:

We have seen your article in *Young India* about us. It is our fervent prayer that we do really deserve the high terms in which you have been kind enough to characterise our activities here. On reading it we have become to some extent depressed by the sense of our own shortcomings and we are striving our utmost to come up to the level which will satisfy you when you come here and see things actually for yourself.

In the meantime the local Legislative Council has thrown out "our resolution" by a majority of 22 to 21 votes. The Government majority was made up of 15 officials, 3 nominated members, one Brahman representative of vested interests and three elected members. The constitution of the Council is 15 officials, 7 nominated non-officials and 28 elected non-officials. So of the 35 non-officials 21 voted for us, two stood neutral, 7 against us and the rest were absent. And of the 7 who voted against us, as already stated three alone were elcted from the general electorate.

It is clear from the facts stated above that the Government, far from taking a neutral attitude, actually went the length of canvassing against the resolution. You may remember that, the Regent Maharanee in her reply to the Caste Hindu jatha expressed a desire to know the attitude of the Councils before doing anything in the matter. Then we had expected that the Government would at least have kept a neutral attitude.

But now we find that it is not so. It has now become clear that the Government is to a large extent acting as the real opposition where enlightened opinion is in favour of reform.

But what, however, I wished to bring to your notice is this. The result of the resolution in the Councils may prove the last straw on the camel's back. There are

signs everywhere of an impatience at the gentle and "slow" method of Satyagraha. Even responsible leaders may fall victims to the general restlessness. So if it is absolutely impossible for you to go over here in the near future, it must be at least possible for you to issue an authoritative statement regarding the implications of Satyagraha. Such a statement coming from you is bound to have the healthiest effect on minds that have begun to waver in the face of the present heavy odds. Some people have begun to advocate social ostracism of the high castes, non-co-operation and so many other methods all of which are more or less dangerous in the present state of our society.

Considerable strength of mind and perseverance is required now even to manage the camp. But this is not the real difficulty. The matrix in which Satyagraha flourished is the general communal consciousness and I only point out that after ten months of Satyagraha when people realize, that the Travancore Council, has thrown out the "Freedom of Road" resolution, there is either a tendency to take to extreme steps or to completely collapse. Of these I am only afraid of the first and that is why I request that a message, clearly conveying to them all the implications of Satyagraha, how though seemingly dilatory in its working, yet is the quickest agent for success, and how other methods are less useful if not positively harmful especially in a "communal problem" etc. is highly necessary. I hope you will find time to do so.

That a State reported to be advanced should work in opposition to progressive opinion is a sad commentary on its "advanced" state. The progressives really won the battle from a moral standpoint. Whilst it is regrettable that 22 should have voted against the use by the so-called untouchables of the public road in question it is consoling to find that twenty-one members vindicated the position taken by the Hindu Reformers by voting in favour of their resolution. The saddest part of the letter, however, is the fact that the Satyagrahis seem to be losing hope. I do not wonder. Theirs is the first experience of sustained Satyagraha. Let me, however, assure them that victory is assured. For their cause is just,

their means non-violent. Let them realize too that by their sufferings they have attracted the attention of the world. Whoever knew Vykom before the struggle commenced? They should also know that they are fighting an age-long superstition. What is a year's suffering on the part of a few reformers in their attempt to break down the iron wall of prejudice? To lose patience is to lose the battle. They must fight to the finish. What is the alternative anyone can have in view? The breaking of heads will not serve the purpose. Orthodoxy will stiffen its back and will suck nourishment out of the blood of its martyrs. For if the orthodox are injured, sympathy will irresistibly be drawn towards them though their cause is wrong. To attempt to force the entry will invite stronger barricades. And, even if force succeeded, it would merely mean mechanical use of a single public road and not change of opinion.

What, however, the Hindu Reformers want is the conversion of the orthodox people who have made of untouchability a religion. This they will only do by sufferings such as they are now undergoing. Satyagraha is the shortest cut to success. All the reforms that have been brought about by violent methods have taken not one year but years. The victory of enlightenment over darkness in Europe was a long and torturing process. And one is not sure that it was a lasting success. There was no conversion of those who opposed and died. The others who were converted were attracted by the sufferings of those who died even whilst inflicting death on their opponents. The net legacy that age bequeathed the world was a confirmation of belief in methods of violence. I hope therefore that the Satyagrahis of Vykom will not swerve from their path even though their ranks may be thinned and victory may seem further off than

ever. Satyagraha is utter self-effacement, greatest humiliation, greatest patience and brightest faith. It is its own reward.

*Young India*, 26-2-1925, p. 73

### XIII

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Vykom Satyagraha".)

I offer no apology to the reader for giving much space in these pages to Vykom Satyagraha by reproducing the whole of that portion of the address of the Dewan of Travancore to its popular Assembly which deals with the Vykom Satyagraha\*. It enables the reader to understand and appreciate the nature of the brave struggle that is being carried on by a band of Satyagrahis as also the importance of the cause for which Satyagraha is being offered. Vykom is a test case so far as Travancore and for that matter Malabar is concerned. It affects the common rights of more than one-sixth of the entire population of Travancore. Those therefore who are interested in the removal of the curse of untouchability cannot but read the Dewan's address with interest. I do not propose to comment on it this week as it would be unfair to do in view of the fact that I am to have the honour of meeting him, before this will have been printed and in view of the further fact that I have not at the time of writing completed my investigations. But I cannot help endorsing the remark of Dewan Bahadur T. Raghaviah that "there is a world of difference between Satyagraha meant to be an educative force and Satyagraha intended as an instrument for the coercion of the Government and through them of the orthodox Hindu. What the

Satyagrahis should aim at is the conversion of the orthodox to whom untouchability is part of their faith." I make bold to state that from the very outset Satyagraha at. Vayom was intended to be an educative force and never an instrument of coercion of the orthodox. It was for that reason that the fast against the orthodox was abandoned. It was to avoid coercion of the Government by embarrassment that the barricades have been scrupulously respected. It was for that reason that no attempt was made to dodge the police. It has been recognized that what appears to the reformers as a gross and sinful superstition is to the orthodox a part of their faith. The Satyagrahi's appeal has therefore been to the reason of the orthodox. But experience has shown that mere appeal to the reason produces no effect upon those who have settled convictions. The eyes of their understanding are opened not by argument but by the suffering of the Satyagrahi. The Satyagrahi strives to reach the reason through the heart. The method of reaching the heart is to awaken public opinion. Public opinion for which one cares is a mightier force than that of gun powder. The Vayom Satyagraha has vindicated itself in that it has drawn the attention of the whole of India to the cause and it has been instrumental in the Travancore Assembly considering in a remarkable debate a resolution favouring the reform sought for and lastly in eliciting a considered reply from the Dewan of Travancore. I am sure that victory is a certainty if only the Satyagrahis will retain their patience and their spirit of suffering.

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

\* Omitted from this collection.

## XIV

(The following comments are taken from an article published under the title "All About Travancore".)

I have reserved the question that took me to Travancore to the last. I have positively dreaded to write about it. I have remained in exile during the best years of my life and after reaching the age of responsibility. Having returned, I have been absorbed in a series of undertakings which have excluded all other pursuits. I must therefore confess my ignorance of many things Indian that I should have known. Although I knew vaguely that Travancore was called a progressive State, I did not know anything of the marvellous progress it had made in some directions nor did I know of the ravishing beauty of its landscape. But when I saw with my own eyes what the State is, what a cultured ruler and what a cultured Dewan it had, this existence of unapproachability staggered and puzzled me.' How the inhuman thing could exist in such a State with such a sovereign, such a Dewan and such a people, baffled me as it still baffles me. But for the Satyagraha no one would have known anything of it. But now that it is known in its nakedness, I must own that I have become impatient for its removal. I am impatient because I am a Hindu, because the State is a Hindu State, because the Dewan is a Hindu, because the people are educated and because the evil is acknowledged. If it was the British Government, it could certainly plead neutrality if it wished. But since it is a Hindu Government and in this case and in such cases it is not dominated or influenced not so far as I am aware by the British Government, it cannot plead or profess neutrality. It must take the side of reform and oppose blind orthodoxy or superstition even as it would take the side of



the robbed and come down upon robbers with a heavy hand. A Hindu sovereign is the custodian of the dignity and protection of Hinduism against assault from without and disintegration and corruption from within. It can remove abuses that have crept into Hinduism without any difficulty or even in spite of it. Whilst therefore I have been able to appreciate the extreme caution observed by Her Highness and the Dewan Bahadur as representing the Government of Travancore, I have not been able to understand or appreciate the nervous anxiety about the consequences of removing the abuse. But I believe both to be anxious for the removal of the abuse. Though the local men have told me that but for the support, secret and open, given by Government officials to the opponents of reform there would not be even the little opposition that there is to the proposed reform. I have not been able to share this view. I am inclined to think that it is largely based upon suspicion. I therefore take at the face value the Dewan's references reproduced last week in these pages. I am of opinion that he sincerely believes that there is a legal difficulty and that public opinion is not ripe for the reform by legislation. He therefore wants to bring it about by consent. The reformers claim that public opinion of *savarna* Hindus has been expressed with sufficient emphasis in that the vast majority of the *savarna* Hindus voted for the council resolution favouring the reform and that the caste Hindu Jatha that travelled from Vaikom to Trivandrum last year proved the same thing. They further point out that of nearly eight lacs of caste Hindus over seven lacs are Nairs and that the Nairs are almost to a man in favour of the reform at least in so far as the use by the unapproachables of public or semi-public roads is concerned. They argue

further that the temples are public property of which the Government are trustees. All this argument deserves consideration. But I still feel that it is open to the Government to dispute the inference that the opinion of the *savarnas* is overwhelmingly in favour of -reform.

I had the privilege of meeting the opponents of reforms who kindly permitted me to wait upon them. They claim that the movement is confined only to a few youngsters, mostly outsiders, that the caste Hindus are overwhelmingly opposed to the claim of the unapproachables which they, the orthodox opponents, refuse to call reform. They contend that the prohibition to use the roads surrounding temples such as the one at Vaikom has been handed down from immemorial times and is based on direct writings of Shankaracharya. The spokesman said that if the unapproachables were permitted to pass through the roads in question, the orthodox would not be able to go to the temple for worship. Asked whether Christians and Musalmans were permitted to use these roads, he replied in the affirmative and said that they were superior to the unapproachables in as much as, he said, they the unapproachables were so born as a fit punishment for their misdeeds in the past incarnation and that the taint was indelible during their present incarnation. The spokesman who expressed these views is I am told a learned man. I have no doubt that he believes what he says. Whilst therefore I hold his view to be totally mistaken and contrary to Hinduism and humanity, I can find it in me to treat him as a friend worthy of regard and affection. That is my meaning of toleration. I do not look forward to a time when we shall all hold one and the same view but I do look forward to a time when we shall love one another in spite of the sharpest differences of opinion.

And so I made the following proposals to the friends:

1. They should produce Shankara's authority in support of their contention and I would advise the withdrawal of Satyagraha from Vaikom should the learned shastris, whom I may consult, regard it as authentic and clearly bearing the construction sought to be put upon it by the orthodox party. It could not bind me for all places for the simple reason that even if Shankaracharya held the view in his time, I would not be bound by what appeared to me to be contrary to religion and humanity.
2. The whole matter could be referred to arbitration consisting of a learned man to be nominated by them, another to be nominated by me on behalf of the Satyagrahis and the Dewan of Travancore to be the umpire.
3. A referendum to be taken of all the adult male and female caste Hindus of Vaikom alone or of the whole of Travancore or selected areas according as they preferred. The Government should be invited to participate in the organization of the referendum. The third proposal was put first by me as it was contended by the orthodox party that the caste Hindus were against the reform. But when I took them at their word and said that I would gladly agree to a referendum, the spokesmen veered around and said that in a matter of religious conviction a man could not be bound by the verdict of a majority. I appreciated the force of the suggestion and made the other two proposals. I may say in passing that I proposed a referendum because the present Satyagraha is based upon the supposition that *savarna* public opinion is in favour of reform.

None of the proposals was, however, accepted by the gentlemen and I am sorry to say that we parted company without coming to any understanding. I then waited upon Her Highness and she granted me a patient and courteous hearing. She was anxious for the opening of the road at Vaikom and appreciated the proposals made by me.

I waited also upon His Holiness Shri Narayana Swami Guru. He entirely approved of the Satyagraha movement and said that violence would never succeed and that non-violence was the only method. The next day I waited upon the Dewan Bahadur. He too said he was entirely on the side of reform. His only difficulty was that as an administrator he could not legislate unless there was strong and clearly expressed public opinion. I suggested that he should insist upon the opponents of reform accepting one of my proposals. They could not entrench themselves behind an ancient custom if it was, as this was, contrary to humanity and public morals.

Here the matter rests for the time being. The Satyagrahis hold the result in the hollow of their hands. They must continue without fatigue, without despair, without anger or irritation and with forbearance towards the opponents and the Government. By their dignified bearing and patient suffering they will break down the iron wall of prejudice and they will stimulate and draw public opinion towards them and will force the hands of the Government if the orthodoxy itself does not yield to their gentle treatment.

*Young India*, 26-3-1925, p. 101 at p. 103

## XV

(Originally appeared under the title "Satyagrahi's Duty".)

[The following is almost a verbatim report of the quiet talk I gave to the inmates of the Satyagrahi Ashram at Vykom. The Ashram has at the present moment over fifty volunteers who stand or squat in front of the four barricades which are put up to guard the four entrances to the Vykom temple. They spin whilst they are stationed there and remain there at a stretch for six hours. They are sent in two relays. I reproduce the talk as being of general interest and applicable to all Satyagrahis.—M. K. G.]

I am sorry that I shall be going away today without having a chat with you which I would regard as complete and satisfactory. But it seems it is not possible to do more. Those in charge of arrangements about my programme are of opinion that I ought to see, in order to help the cause, more places than Vykom. I have yielded to their advice but my own conviction based on past experience is that the success of the movement depends more on yourself than on outside support. If there is nothing in you, or if there is not much in you, any amount of enthusiasm brought about by a passing visit like mine will be of no avail. But if I had not come here and there had been no enthusiasm on the part of the public, and if you had been true to yourself there would have been nothing wanting. Your work would have commanded all the enthusiasm that might have been needed for a cause like this. Therefore if I could have passed here a longer time than I have, it would have been more profitable. However, that could not be done in face of the advice of friends who are guiding me.

But I want to tell you as briefly as I can what I expect of you. I would ask you to forget the political aspect of the programme. Political

consequences of this struggle there are, but you are not to concern yourself with them. If you do, you will miss the true result and also miss the political consequences, and when the real heart of the struggle is touched you will be found wanting. I am therefore anxious, even if it frightens you, to explain to you the true nature of the struggle. It is a struggle deeply religious for the Hindus. We are endeavouring to rid Hinduism of its greatest blot. The prejudice we have to fight against is an age-long prejudice. The struggle for the opening of the roads round the temple which we hold to be public to the unapproachables is but a small skirmish in the big battle. If our struggle was to end with the opening of the roads in Vykombathur you may be sure I would not have bothered my head about it. If therefore you think that the struggle is to end with opening of the roads in Vykombathur to the unapproachables you are mistaken. The road must be opened. It has got to be opened. But that will be the beginning of the end. The end is to get all such roads throughout Travancore to be opened to the unapproachables; and not only that, but we expect that our efforts may result in amelioration of the general condition of the untouchables and the unapproachables. That will require tremendous sacrifice. For our aim is not to do things by violence to opponents. That will be conversion by violence or compulsion, and if we import compulsion in matters of religion, there is no doubt that we shall be committing suicide. We should carry on this struggle on the lines of strict non-violence, i.e., by suffering in our own persons. That is the meaning of Satyagraha. The question is whether you are capable of every suffering that may be imposed upon you or may be your lot in the journey towards the goal. Even whilst you are suffering, you may have no bitterness no

trace of it against your opponents. And I tell you it is not a mechanical act at all. On the contrary I want you to feel like loving your opponents and the way to do it is to give them the same credit for honesty of purpose which you would claim for yourself. I know that it is a difficult task. I confess that it was a difficult task for me yesterday whilst I was talking to those friends who insisted on their right to exclude the unapproachables from the temple roads. I confess there was selfishness behind their talk. How then was I to credit them with honesty of purpose? I was thinking of this thing yesterday and also this morning, and this is what I did. I asked myself: "Wherein was there selfishness or self-interest? It is true that they have their ends to serve. But so have we our ends to serve. Only we consider our ends to be pure and therefore selfless. But who is to determine where selflessness ends and selfishness begins. Selflessness may be the purest form of selfishness." I do not say this for the sake of argument. But that is what I really feel. I am considering their condition of mind from their point of view and not my own. Had they not been Hindu they would not have talked as they did yesterday. And immediately we begin to think of things as our opponents think of them we shall be able to do them full justice. I know that this requires a detached state of mind, and it is a state very difficult to reach. Nevertheless for a Satyagrahi it is absolutely essential. Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstandings in the world will disappear, if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their standpoint. We will then agree with our adversaries quickly or think of them charitably. In our case there is no question of our agreeing with them quickly as our ideals are radically different. But we may be

charitable to them and believe that they actually mean what they say. They do not want to open the roads to the unapproachables. Now whether it is their self-interest or ignorance which tells them to say so, we really believe that it is wrong of them to say so. Our business therefore is to show them that they are in the wrong and we should do so by *our* suffering. I have found that mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are agelong and based on supposed religious authority. Reason has to be strengthened by suffering and suffering opens the eyes of understanding. Therefore there must be no trace of compulsion in our acts. We must not be impatient, and we must have an undying faith in the means we are adopting. The means we are adopting just now are that we approach the four barricades and as we are stopped there we sit down and spin away from day to day, and we must believe that through it the roads must be opened. I know that it is a difficult and slow process. But if you believe in the efficacy of Satyagraha you will rejoice in this slow torture and suffering, and you will not feel the discomfort of your position as you go and sit in the boiling sun from day to day. If you have faith in the cause and the means and in God the hot sun will be cool for you. You must not be tired and say "how long" and never get irritated. That is only a small portion of your penance for the sin for which Hinduism is responsible.

I regard you as soldiers in the campaign. It is not possible for you to reason out things for yourselves. You have come to the Ashram because you have faith in the management. That does not mean faith in me. For I am not Manager. I am directing the movement so far as ideals and general direction are concerned. Your faith therefore must be in those



who are managers for the time being. The choice before coming to the Ashram was yours. But having made your choice and come to the Ashram it is not for you to reason why. If we are to become a powerful nation you must obey all directions that may be given to you from time to time. That is the only way in which either political or religious life can be built up. You must have determined for yourselves certain principles and you must have joined the struggle in obedience to these principles. Those who remain in the Ashram are taking as much part in the struggle as those who go and offer Satyagraha at the barricades. Every piece of work in connection with the struggle is just as important as any other piece, and therefore the work of sanitation in the Ashram is just as important as spinning away at the barricades. And if in this place the work of cleaning the closets and compound is more distasteful than spinning it should be considered far more important and profitable. Not a single minute should be wasted in idle conversation, but we must be absorbed in the work before us and if every one of us works in that spirit you will see that there is pleasure in the work itself. Every bit of property, anything in the Ashram should be regarded by you as your own property and not property that can be wasted at pleasure. You may not waste a grain of rice or a scrap of paper, and similarly a minute of your time. It is not ours. It belongs to the nation and we are trustees for the use of it.

I know that all this will sound hard and difficult for you. My presentation may be hard, but it has not been possible for me to present the thing in any other way. For it will be wrong on my part if I deceive you or myself in believing that this is an easy thing.

Much corruption has crept into our religion. We have become lazy as a nation, we have lost the time sense. Selfishness dominates our action. There is mutual jealousy amongst the tallest of us. We are uncharitable to one another. And if I did not draw your attention to the things I have, it will not be possible for us to rid ourselves of all these evils. Satyagraha is a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth. I can only hope you will realize the import of what you are doing. And if you do, your path will be easy—easy because you will take delight in difficulties and you will laugh in hope when everybody is in despair. I believe in the illustrations *Rishis* or poets have given in religious books. For example, I literally believe in the possibility of a Sudhanva smiling away whilst he was being drowned in the boiling oil. For to him it was greater torture to forget his Maker than to be in boiling oil. And so it can be in a lesser measure here, if we have a spark of Sudhanva's faith in this struggle.

*Young India*, 19-3-1925, p. 94

## XVI

(Originally appeared under the title "Vaikom Satyagraha".)

After the last lines on the Vaikom affair were written for the last week's issue I received a wire from Mr. Pitt, Commissioner of Police, Travancore. It was then too late to publish in *Young India* the correspondence between the Commissioner of Police and myself. The reader must, however, have seen the correspondence in the press. It makes a distinct advance in the reform aimed at. The correspondence shows unmistakably

that the Travancore Government favour the reform and that they are also pledged to carry it out at the earliest opportunity. Let no one consider that in agreeing to a referendum or shastric interpretation I have endangered the reform itself. The present campaign in its inception is based on the assumption that the reform is required by the vast majority of the caste Hindus and that the prohibition against the suppressed classes is not warranted by the genuine Hindu scriptures. For me therefore not to have made the proposals would have betrayed woeful lack of resourcefulness. It was the most natural thing for a Satyagrahi like myself to have made the proposals which if they had proceeded from the orthodox party I could not have honestly rejected. Indeed I make bold to say that my proposals paved the way for the remarkable support the cause received everywhere, save among the very few members of the orthodox party. Had there been real opposition from the majority of caste Hindus or had there been any doubt as to the shastric endorsement of the reform, the Satyagraha would have assumed a different shape altogether. It would have been then a movement for a change in the religion rather than the removal of an irreligious custom. Indeed those who were in immediate charge of the movement never questioned the propriety of my proposals. I could not take any step without consultation with them and without their full concurrence. It now remains for Satyagrahis at Vykam to carry out the letter and the spirit of the agreement and for the caste Hindus to support the movement in the manner promised by them everywhere to ensure the speedy and successful ending of the struggle. The Satyagrahis must fulfil the letter by not overstepping the boundary line until a settlement is

reached or a crossing after due notice by me becomes necessary for furthering the object of the agreement. The spirit of it requires gentleness and utmost humility on the part of the Satyagrahis. There uniform courtesy towards the opponents of reform will break the edge of the opposition. They must regard the Government not as opposed to the reform but as pledged to carry it out at the earliest possible moment. I have not the slightest reason to doubt the word of Her Highness the Maharanee Regent or the Dewan or the Commissioner of Police. The conduct of Satyagrahis in the Ashram must be in correspondence with their bearing at the boundary line. The Ashram must be a busy hive in which every member is ever found at his own allotted task. It must be a model of simplicity and sanitation. The members are pledged to the Charkha work during all spare moments. The spinning, the carding and the weaving departments admit of considerable improvement. Every inmate should be an expert carder and spinner if every one cannot also become an expert weaver. The members must insist on spinning and weaving at least the cloth required by them. They should also learn Hindi well. They are or should regard themselves as trustees for the prestige and dignity of Hinduism. Theirs is a fight not to end with the opening of the roads round temples but it should be considered to be the beginning of a glorious struggle for the purity of Hinduism and removal of the abuses that have crept into it. They are not reformers who would take no note of the opposite side or would violate every sentiment of the orthodox people. They would vie with the tallest among the orthodox in purity of conduct and veneration for all that is good and noble in the shastras. They would not disregard scriptural authority without the

deepest thought and to that end some of them would even study Sanskrit and explore possibilities of reform within the four corners of the scriptures. They will not be in a hurry, but having fearlessly taken all the steps that they can consistently with their creed of truth and non-violence, will have the patience and the faith of the *Rishis* of old.

#### ENTRY INTO TEMPLES

For the opening of the roads is not the final but the first step in the ladder of reform. Temples in general, public wells, public schools must be open to the "untouchables" equally with the caste Hindus. But that is not the present goal of the Satyagrahis. We may not force the pace. The schools are almost all open to the "untouchables". The temples and the public wells or tanks are not. Public opinion should be carefully cultivated before the reform can be successfully carried out. Meanwhile the remedy lies in founding temples and digging tanks or wells that would be open to the untouchables and to the other Hindus. I have no doubt that the movement for the removal of untouchability has made tremendous headway. Let us not retard it by indiscretion or overzeal. Once the idea of pollution by the touch of a person by reason of his birth is gone the rest is easy and bound to follow.

*Young India*, 2-4-1925, p. 113

### XVII

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Vaikom".)

The reader will be glad to learn that the Travancore Government have released Sjt. Kurur Nambudri pad and withdrawn the prohibition order

against Sjt. Ramaswamy Naicker. I understand too that the Travancore Government is giving full effect to the agreement arrived at between the Commissioner and myself. I tender my congratulations to the Travancore Government on the admirable spirit with which it is acting in the matter of the long delayed reform. Let me hope that before long the prohibition against the use by "untouchables" of public roads surrounding temples will be a thing of the past. I need hardly point out to the Satyagrahis the absolute necessity of a scrupulous observance of their part of the compact.

*Young India*, 23-4-1925, p. 137

## XVIII

(Originally appeared under the title "Vaikom".)

The public must not be allowed to forget the Vaikom struggle. Let them understand that the Satyagrahis are at the present moment undergoing a higher form of discipline than they were before doing. Formerly they were plying their wheels in front of a physical obstacle to their further progress. It was barred by a barricade guarded by the police. Now, as the reader is aware, the barricade has been removed, the guard withdrawn and so is the notice of prohibition. The Satyagrahis are, therefore, voluntarily submitting to the self-imposed moral restraint, no doubt, in the clearly expressed hope that the *savarna* Hindus directly concerned will relent and that the Government will themselves make an early declaration that the roads are open to the so-called unapproachables as they are to every other human being and even to cats and dogs. The

Hindu Government of Travancore owes the suppressed classes a double duty, the one that every humane government owes to suppressed humanity under its care, and the other, a Hindu Government owes to Hinduism, that the State will lend no countenance to an inhuman superstition that has crept into Hinduism.

So far for the State.

The *savarna* Hindus of Travancore promised, and they owe it to themselves without the necessity of any promise to me, that they would not allow any rest to the Government till the roads in question were thrown open to the "unapproachables". They assured me that they would hold meetings throughout Travancore showing clearly to the Government that they regarded the prohibition as inconsistent with Hinduism and intolerable. Besides holding public meetings, they were to promote a monster petition signed by *savarna* Hindus demanding the opening of the roads. I wonder if those gentlemen who gave me the assurance are keeping their promise!

And now for the "unapproachables" miscalled. I understand that they are getting restive. They have a right to do so. I am further told that they are losing faith in Satyagraha. If so, their want of faith betrays ignorance of the working of Satyagraha. It is a force that works silently and apparently slowly. In reality, there is no force in the world that is so direct or so swift in working. But sometimes apparent success is more quickly attained by brute force. To earn one's living by body-labour is a method of earning it by Satyagraha. A gamble on the stock-exchange or house-breaking, either of which is the reverse of Satyagraha, may apparently lead to an instantaneous acquisition of wealth. But the world has by now,

I presume, realized that house-breaking and gambling are no methods of earning one's livelihood and that they do harm rather than good to the gambler or the thief. The "unapproachables" may force their way by engaging in a free fight with the superstitious *savarnas* but they will not have reformed Hinduism. Theirs will be a method of forcible conversion. But I am further told that some of them even threaten to seek shelter in Christianity, Islam or Buddhism if relief is not coming soon. Those who use the threat do not, in my humble opinion, know the meaning of religion. Religion is a matter of life and death. A man does not change religion as he changes his garments. He takes it with him beyond the grave. Nor does a man profess his religion to oblige others. He professes a religion because he cannot do otherwise. A faithful husband loves his wife as he would love no other woman. Even her faithlessness would not wean him from his faith. The bond is more than blood-relationship. So is the religious bond if it is worth anything. It is a matter of the heart. An untouchable who lives his Hinduism in the face of persecution at the hands of those Hindus who arrogate to themselves a superior status, is a better Hindu than the self-styled superior Hindu, who by the very act of claiming superiority denies his Hinduism. Therefore, those who threaten to renounce Hinduism are in my opinion betraying their faith.

But the Satyagrahi's course is plain. He must stand unmoved in the midst of all these cross-currents. He may not be impatient with blind orthodoxy, nor be irritated over the unbelief of the suppressed people. He must know that his suffering will melt the stoniest heart of the stoniest fanatic and that it will also be a wall of protection for the wavering Panchama brother who has been held under suppression for



ages. He must know that relief will come when there is the least hope for it. For such is the way of that cruelly-kind Deity who insists upon testing His devotees through a fiery furnace and delights in humbling him to the dust. In his hour of distress let the Satyagrahi recall to his mind the prayer of the fabled godly Elephant King who was saved only when he was at his last gasp.

*Young India*, 4-6-1925, p. 189

## XIX

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "True Satyagraha".)

For a long time I have purposely refrained from writing anything in these columns about Vaikom and its struggle against untouchability. Nor do I want as yet to say anything directly bearing on it. But I do want to tell the reader how the Satyagrahis at Vaikom are passing their time.

A letter was received at Calcutta from Vaikom dated the 1st of August. It has remained unpublished through oversight. But the substance of it is as fresh today as it was when it was received. I reproduce it below:

Now there are only ten volunteers including myself. One of us daily does the kitchen-work while others except one offer Satyagraha for three hours each. Including the time taken to go and return the time for Satyagraha comes to four hours. We regularly get up at 4.30 a.m. and prayer takes half an hour. From 5 to 6 we have sweeping, drawing water and cleaning vessels. By seven all of us except two (who go for Satyagraha at 5-45 after bath) return after bath and spin or card till it is time for going to the barricade. Most of us regularly give 1,000 yards each per day and some of us even more. The average output is over 10,000 yards per day. I do not insist on our doing any work on Sundays when each does according to his will. Some of us card and

spin for two or three hours on Sundays too. Anyhow no yarn is returned on Sundays. Those who are Congress members spin for the Congress franchise on Sundays. Some of us are now spinning on Sundays and other spare hours for our humble gift towards All-India Deshabandhu Memorial Fund which you have instituted. We wish to pack a small bundle of yarn to you on the 4th September (G.O.M. Centenary Day). I hope you will be glad to receive it. This we shall spin apart from our routine work. We mean either to beg or to spin the whole of that auspicious day and to send whatever is obtained. We have not yet settled what we should do.

This shows that the Satyagrahis of Vaikom have understood the spirit of their work. There is no bluster, there is no fireworks display; but there is here a simple determination to conquer by exact conduct. A Satyagrahi should be able to give a good account of every minute at his disposal. This the Vaikom Satyagrahis are doing. The reader cannot fail to notice the honesty in spinning Congress yarn, and the yarn for the G.O.M. Centenary during their off day. The idea too of spinning for the All-India Deshabandhu Memorial is in keeping with the rest of their doings. The letter before me gives me details of each member's spinning during the preceding week omitting Sunday. The largest quantity spun by a single inmate is 6,895 yards of 17 counts. The lowest is 2,936 yards of 18 counts. The remark against his name is that he was absent on leave for three days. The average per man per day during the week was 866.6 yards. I have also before me figures for the week ending 26th August. The highest during that week was 7,700 for a single individual, and the lowest was 2,000 the spinner having spun only two days during the week. The reader may ask what connection is there between the removal of untouchability and spinning. Apparently nothing. In reality much. It is not any single isolated act which can be called Satyagraha apart from the

spirit behind. Here, there is the spirit behind the spinning which is bound to tell in the long run; for, spinning to these young men is a sacrificial national act calculated unconsciously to exhibit true humility, patience and pertinacity—qualities indispensable for clean success.

*Young India*, 24-9-1925, p. 329

## XX

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Vaikom Satyagraha".)

Hindu reformers who are intent on removal of untouchability should understand the implications of Vaikom Satyagraha and its results. The immediate goal of the Satyagrahis was the opening of the roads surrounding the temple, not their entry into the latter. Their contention was that the roads should be opened to the so-called untouchables as they were to all other Hindus and non-Hindus. That point has been completely gained. But whilst Satyagraha was directed to the opening of roads, the ultimate aim of reformers is undoubtedly removal of every disability that "the untouchables" are labouring under and which the other Hindus are not. It therefore includes access to temples, wells, schools, etc., to which other non-Brahmans are freely admitted. But for achieving these reforms much remains to be done before the method of direct action can be adopted. Satyagraha is never adopted abruptly and never till all other and milder methods have been tried. The reformers of the South have to cultivate public opinion in the matter of temple-entry, etc. This is moreover a disability not peculiar to the South but unfortunately and, to our shame it must be admitted, common to more

or less extent, to Hinduism throughout India. I therefore welcome the decision of Sjt. Kellappen Nayar who was in charge of the camp at Vaikom to concentrate his effort on working among the unhappiest and the most suppressed among "the untouchables", i.e., Pulayas whose very shadow defiles. It is a golden rule to follow out every direct action with constructive work, i.e., work of conservation. Reform has to be undertaken at both ends to make *savarnas* do their duty by the untouchables whom they have so cruelly suppressed and to help the latter to become more presentable and to shed habits for which they can in no way be held accountable but which nevertheless have to be given up if they are to occupy their proper place in the social scale.

*Young India*, 14-1-1926, p. 17

## SECTION TWO: ABORIGINES AND SO-GALLED CRIMINAL TRIBES

### 232. OMISSION BY OVERSIGHT

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Adibasi".)

Thakkar Bapa complains that, whilst he likes the pamphlet dealing with the constructive programme, he misses in it mention of Adibasi or the so-called aboriginals, such as Santhals, Bhils, etc. The complaint is just. Many other causes are included in the constructive programme by implication. But that cannot and should not satisfy such a humanitarian as Thakkar Bapa. The Adibasis are the original inhabitants whose material position is perhaps no better than that of Harijans and who have long been victims of neglect on the part of the so-called high classes. The Adibasis should have found a special place in the constructive programme. Non-mention was an oversight. They provide a vast field of service for Congressmen. The Christian Missionary has been more or less in sole occupation of the field. Great as his labour has been, it has not prospered as it might have, because of his ultimate aim being the Adibasis' conversion to his fold and their becoming de-Indianized. Anyway no one who hopes to construct Swaraj on the foundation of non-violence can afford to neglect even the least of India's sons. Adibasis are too numerous to be counted among the least.

On the train Bardoli-Wardha, 9-1-1942

*Harijan*, 18-1-1942, p. 5

## 233. THE FOURTEENTH ITEM IN THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Adivasis".)

Adivasis have become the fourteenth item in the constructive programme. But they are not the least in point of importance. Our country is so vast and the races so varied that the best of us, in spite of every effort, cannot know all there is to know of men and their condition. As one comes upon layer after layer of things one ought to know as a national servant, one realizes how difficult it is to make good our claim to be one nation whose every unit has a living consciousness of being one with every other.

The Adivasis are 2 ½ crores in all India, i.e., 6 ½ per cent of the total population or nearly half of the Harijan population.

Shri Balasaheb Kher has thrown himself with his usual zeal into this much needed service in the Thana District. He says in the pamphlet issued by him on behalf of the AdivasiSeva Mandal of which he is President:

Many of these aborigines have been reduced to a state of actual slavery. *Beth* or *Veth* or forced labour is exacted from them without payment of any wages or with only a nominal payment by zamindars, *sowkars* or forest contractors. As mentioned in Mr. Symington's Report on the Aboriginal and Hill Tribes published by Government in 1939, "all jungle tract tenants (in the Province of Bombay) are liable to be called upon to work for their landlords. This forced labour is demanded for as many days as are necessary for the landlords' requirements. If they refuse or procrastinate, they are liable to assault or beatings." Says Mr. Symington: "I was told on credible authority, of men being tied up to posts and whipped. There are also rumours of men

in the past having been killed. The maximum remuneration of forced labour is one anna per diem. More often rice is given, barely sufficient for one man for one meal." The report describes the appalling condition of their slave life and then observes: "Landlords will not scruple to use their power in fulfilment of their purposes, for instance the use of their tenants' womenfolk for the gratification of their lust." It will thus be seen that these tribes live a life of perpetual fear, misery and ill-health. They are so illiterate that they cannot count numbers beyond twenty, and are thus easily cheated by landlords, *sowkars* and contractors. They cannot avail themselves of medical aid, having poor health, and live in insanitary conditions.

Balasaheb has made a modest beginning. He has started with a hostel for Adivasi boys. His work is all unassuming and solid. If he gets the true type of workers, what is a small beginning may one day blossom forth into an all-India organization covering the whole of the Adivasi population. Truly "the harvest is rich and the labourers few". Who can deny that all such service is not merely humanitarian but solidly national and brings us nearer to true independence?

Sevagram, 9-2-1942

*Harijan*, 15-2-1942, p. 38

## 234. THE BHILS OF RAJPUTANA

(From "Notes")

The Bhils of Rajputana are a simple and brave people. They have certain grievances. They have found in one Motilal Tajavat a friend and helper. He has been, it is said, weaning them from drink, gambling and meat-eating and asking them to live an orderly industrious life. He has been also advising them about their grievances. The only fault I can find is that he has been moving about with a large retinue of his followers. This has undoubtedly caused uneasiness among the States. Hearing all sorts of complaints against Mr. Motilal I asked Mr. Manilal Kothari to enquire. He did so with the permission and the help of the respective States and the Bhils have assured him that they do not mean any mischief at all. He has met Mr. Motilal also. The latter has assured Mr. Kothari of his peaceful intentions. But unfortunately in the meanwhile the Idar State is reported to have taken action against the Bhils and killed four of them. I do not know the full details nor do I know the reason for the action. I can only hope that they will settle the Bhil complaints by appointing an arbitration court and promise free pardon to Mr. Motilal if he comes out of the hills and surrenders himself. The Bhils have been long neglected by the States and reformers. If they are given a helping hand they can become the pride of India. All they need is the spinning wheel in their homes and schools in which their children can receive simple education. In the vast awakening that has taken place no race can be left out of the calculation of the States and reformers.

*Young India*, 2-3-1922, p. 129 at p. 133



## 235. OUR DUTY TO THEM

(A relevant extract from the above-mentioned article is given below.)

With an artist's pen Mr. Andrews in his article on the "Aboriginal Tribes" has combined three things. He has supported the fervent appeal of Mr. A. V. Thakkar for funds for the Bhil Seva Mandal in the Panchmahals. I heartily echo Mr. Andrews' sentiments. Mr. Thakkar needs no introduction from me. He had dedicated himself to the service of the motherland long before my return to India and become a famous man. His services in connection with the administration of famine relief organized by Gujarat for the help of the distressed in Orissa are still fresh in our memory. He has endeared himself to the untouchables of Gujarat by his single-minded devotion to their cause. But his restless nature has found a class of people in Gujarat more submerged and therefore more in need of a lifting hand than the untouchables themselves. He has therefore become the high priest of the simple Bhils of the Panchmahals. I hope that Mr. Thakkar's appeal will not fall upon deaf ears.

*Young India*, 2-10-1924, p. 323

## 236. AN APPEAL TO INDIAN HUMANITY

In another place will be found a substance of the observations made in the columns of *Navajivan* by Sjt. Kishorlal Mashruwala.\* He is a worker of long standing and was up to recently Registrar of the Gujarat Vidya-pith, and it was only due to illness that he was obliged to relinquish the post. He is one of the most thoughtful among the silent workers we have in India. He weighs every word he writes or utters. I mention these qualifications of his; for I am anxious that his reflections should not be dismissed out of consideration as so many writings nowadays have to be.

The story of the abuse of the helpless women of the Raniparaj community is a blot upon the nation. Sjt. Kishorlal Mashruwala has made his appeal to the Parsis and from his standpoint, rightly too. For it is the Parsis who will be better able, if any one is, to influence the Parsi men who are said to be corrupting innocent womanhood. But I am painfully aware of the fact, that it is not the Parsis alone who hold so cheap the honour of poor sisters. Indians belonging to the other faiths, placed in similar circumstances, have been known to behave exactly as the Parsi canteen-keepers are reported to be doing. But that is no justification whatsoever for the inhuman crimes of the latter. The lust for money, which drives these adventurers to a trade which they know saps the manhood of the otherwise fine forest-dwellers miscalled Kaliparaj i.e. black people, tempts them to the worse crime of defilement.

The British Government or rather the Government of India and the Baroda State must be held primarily responsible for the tragedy

described by Sjt. Mashruwala; for it is they, who for their wretched revenue allow liquor shops to be opened or to exist in the midst of these simple people. These people have never asked for these shops, and even if they had, it would be still criminal to open liquor shops for them, even as it would be to allow a little child to play with fire because he desires it. But a reformer does not *stop* before commencing action to philosophise or to distribute blame through golden scales. He begins his reform wherever the opportunity offers itself. And now that the corruption has been brought to light, it behoves Parsi reformers to go to the delinquents and appeal to their sense of honour and try to wean them from the crime of violating the womenhood of the simple innocent and guileless Raniparaj, even if they, cannot also be weaned from trafficking in liquor.

Unfortunately, there is much truth in the taunt levelled at us as a nation, that we have not sufficient regard for the honour of our women. It is no use false patriotism seeking cover under *tu quo que* argument; nor must we mix up sexual immorality in which depraved men and women of equal status indulge of their own free but unbridled will with the instances of crime quoted by Sjt. Kishorlal Mashruwala.

Immoralities of the first kind are bad enough and do incredible harm to mankind; but the crimes like those of the Parsi canteen-keepers are infinitely worse and have not yet, thank God, received the tacit endorsement of fashionable society. In the instances quoted by Sjt. Kishorlal Mashruwala, the canteen-keepers are in the position of trustees, and it is insufferable that they should induce ignorant women in whose midst they are living to become instruments of their criminal lust.

It is this kind of indifference to the honour of ignorant sisters who come under the influence or protection of the so-called better class men which has been justifiably criticized, and which we must, if we want to become a self-respecting and independent nation, outgrow at any cost. The honour of the least among our sisters must be as dear to us as that of our blood-sisters.

*Young India*, 26-5-1927, p. 168

\* Relevant extracts from the same are given at the end.

(N.B. The relevant extracts from an article by Shri K. G. Mashruwala in *Naaajivan* a summary of which in English was given by M.D. are reproduced below. Raniparaj people live in Surat District in Gujarat. A conference of these people had appointed a committee to inquire into their economic condition and their agrarian difficulties and suggest methods of reform. Shri K. G. Mashruwala who accompanied the Committee as an independent observer wrote down his impressions of which the extracts reproduced form a part.)

The first of the two pictures that have come under my observation is painful. It is disgraceful. It relates to Parsi canteen- keepers. I write this not having in view the liquor traffic which is mainly in the hands of the Parsis in those parts. It is a matter in which Government also is involved. I have quite another thing in mind.

They have penetrated to the remotest village in the jungle. I had an impression that this lone adventure had nothing worse than love of lucre to disgrace it. But I got a rude shock when I came to know that many of these men were living immoral lives with women of the Raniparaj tribe. One of the liquor-sellers seemed to admit the fact with some amount of pride. Another had seven children by a woman of the community. In a number of places I happened to be told of illegitimate children by Parsi fathers. In some places they are living a life of promiscuous immorality, and in others, each has a woman for himself. From a superficial view one is apt to think that these foresters must have very low morals and that they do not mind their women

being dishonoured. But one of them who gave me a most pathetic account of this convinced me that they put up with the humiliation not because they do not mind it, but because they are perfectly helpless.

Why they are helpless and why they are drawn into this immorality I shall leave the Raniparaj Committee to report. I simply want to invite the attention of my Parsi brethren to this sore spot which affects the moral being of their community. There should be no indifference to the debauchery that is being indulged in by some of its members in these forest tracts. I do not lay the blame at the door of the community as a whole. But I invite its attention to this deplorable state of things. This sort of relationship, if tolerated, will put a premium on vice and ruin the moals of the race.

## 237. A WELCOME STEP

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the above title.)

A correspondent from Holalkere in Mysore writes:

I am highly glad to inform you that the people belonging to Lambani community of my taluk have completely abstained from drinking toddy and other liquors since a month and a half. It was in the Lambani Conference held in this town at the end of last April that they had taken an oath not to touch any liquor, prostrating themselves before the evening sun. Since then, they have not swerved from their oath. If any one of that community is seen near a toddy shop, he is strictly dealt with by the Naik, Yajaman and Karabhan of that hamlet. Their women carry to us every day the glad news, there are no broils at their hovel and that they lead a very peaceful life. This is an instance to show that your movement of purification had entered our State even before your entering it. I congratulate the Lambani community upon the great step they have taken, and hope that they will not slide back like many who did so after the exultation of 1921 had subsided. Let me invite the attention of the community to the case recorded in these pages of the Raniparaj people of whom those abstainers who took to the Charkha as a means of occupying their time and attention, not only had no hankering after liquor but were able to double their savings. For, they not only saved what was spent upon the drink but they also added to their income by saving in the cost of clothing. It is the universal experience of temperance reformers that if the people who take pledges do not usefully occupy their time, the hankering returns and it becomes too strong to resist the temptation. I hope too that other villages will follow the example of Holalkere and that when I am enabled to begin my tour in Mysore, I shall receive side by side with glowing accounts which I have been promised of the progress of khadi, accounts also of eradication of the drink habit.

*Young India*, 16-6-1927, p. 197

## 238. LAMBANIS

(Originally appeared under the title "Backward Classes".)

Our woes are numerous. We have suppressed classes and we have also backward classes. The distinction between the two is, that the suppressed classes as a rule include only the so-called "untouchables", whereas, the backward classes refer to those who are mentally and morally behind the other classes. I have made the acquaintance of one such class in Mysore. They are the Lambanis. Since the Belgaum Congress one of them who has received a fair education has been exerting himself for their uplift. They had even a conference last year and the State contributed a small sum towards its expenses. These appear originally to have come from Gujarat. They are otherwise recognized as gypsies. Their dialect corresponds to Gujarati. The address which they gave me whilst I was passing Arsikere on my way to Hassan was written in Devanagari. The majority of the words in it were Gujarati. The curious student will see the specimens from the address reproduced in *Navajivan*. He will not fail to notice even the Gujarati grammar in the language of the address. The customs of these people I find described as follows in the address of the President of the Conference.

I am told that the Lambanis are otherwise known as Van- jar is; and that they were the grain-carriers of India when it had no good roads and railways; they worship to this day their queen Durga, a wealthy Lambani lady of the 13th century, who brought grain from Nepal, China and Burma, and saved many lives in a continuous famine that raged for twelve years in India; their chief God is Balaji and Goddess Tulaja Bhavani, and their principal feast is Gokulashtami, the day of the birth of Shri Krishna. They

long respected cows and Brahmins, and to this day they abjure animal food and liquor at death dinners; they cremate the married dead and bury the unmarried. They were as a rule robust and well-built class, and peaceful and well-behaved.

But alas! their carrying trade has practically ceased since the opening of roads and railways. Some of them now deal in cattle; some have settled as husbandmen, a few live by driving carts, a few others spin coarse hem "tag" and sell grass and fuel and work as labourers; some are under police surveillance, some are reputed to be robbers, cattle-lifters, kidnappers of women and children, manufacturers of false coin and distillers of illicit liquor. But these sinners can be reclaimed and should be reclaimed.

I understand that workers in their midst are now carrying on propaganda to combat the evil customs. Like all backward classes the Lambani women-folk are heavily laden with cheap and tawdry ornaments devoid of all art. Like the Raniparaj, the reform amongst these people has gone side by side with the introduction of the spinning wheel. The yarn which they presented to me of their own spinning was fairly good and fine. These Lam-banis number roughly 45,740 in Mysore State alone, and there are many also in British Karnatak. There is work here for many a reformer.

*Young India*, 18-8-1927, p. 263



## 239. SLAVE COMMUNITIES

We have the "untouchables" the shame and curse of the Hindu society. But we have also other communities whom we the so-called higher class treat almost as slaves and keep in quarters designed for our cattle. Representatives of one such community have addressed a letter which I condense as follows:

We are representatives of the Rajwar community living in the districts of Gaya, Patna, Monghyr and Palamau, in the Province of Bihar and Orissa, and number about 1,00,000.

We belong to one of the poorest and most illiterate communities in the whole province, and are looked down upon as a low caste.

We are landless labourers, as not even one in a thousand owns even an acre of land.

On refusal to give *begar* the zamindar forthwith begins a suit for arrears of rent, gets decree, puts the jot to auction and evicts the tenant from the land in his possession.

A Rajwar child no sooner he reaches his 6th or 7th year becomes almost the property of his parents' landlord; he is made to tend the landlord's cattle and do all sorts of odd jobs for which the landlord provides him with only his fooding and 4 yards of cloth per annum but the strangest and the most inhuman part of the whole thing is that the child is never allowed to live in the house of his master but is compelled to go every night to his own house even in the worst weather although the house may be a long way off. In fact he leads the life of a slave, a mere chattel of the landlord.

For working from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Rajwars are paid at the rate of 3 seers of unhusked rice per diem and no wages in cash are ever paid to them.

The *amlas* of zamindars if they don't find the male members in the tenant's house and if the zamindar's men need his labour on their master's behalf, the female members as well as the children, are made to do the work in his stead, in spite of the

inconvenience it causes to the family. And at times it so happens that the females are made to go 15 to 20 miles away carrying their master's load. And if any protest is made against the same the inevitable result is abuse, assault and violation of the modesty of the womenfolk and the forcible eviction from the homestead.

The Rajwar children are not allowed to be sent to the primary schools and the teachers too are not allowed to teach the boys by the landlord.

Whenever there is any theft or larceny or dacoity or any crime whatever in the locality where this community is living, the first suspicion and the first brunt of the police enquiry must be borne by it, although there may not be the slightest evidence for the same. The whole community has been subjected to the rides and regulations of the Criminal Tribes Act for over 15 years. Under that Act the members of this community, if they want to give their sons and daughters in marriage to those living in a different district, they are not allowed, or they are obstructed in such a way by the authorities and caste people that it becomes impossible to make such alliances.

We have already submitted these memorials to the District Magistrates of Gaya and Patna and to the Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa Government but we have not as yet learnt what steps the respective authorities have taken. We hope that you will do something to ameliorate our condition.

The letter is written for the representatives and probably also prompted by some unknown reformer among them. It is signed by about twenty-five representatives. What however matters is not who wrote it but the statements made therein, if they are true.

They are highly likely to be true in the main. For such treatment is not an isolated phenomenon of Bihar. Almost all the provinces have backward, suppressed, slave communities. They are no heritage from the British. We have had them for ages and all the greater shame on us for that.

We may plead a thousand excuses for their existence in the days gone by. But in these days of enlightenment, awakening and insistence on Swaraj

we have no excuse for tolerating the atrocity. Congress workers have to take up the cause of these communities wherever they are found. They should try to enlist the sympathy and co-operation of those who "own" these men and women. Swaraj is the sum total of all the activities that go to build up a free and vigorous nation conscious of the strength that comes from right doing. The existence of slave communities is a terrible wrong and must therefore be a hindrance in our march towards the goal.

*Young India*, 25-6-1931, p. 152

## 240. DHARALAS

(From "Notes")

Dharalas are a fierce military tribe in Gujarat. Their occupation is chiefly farming. But through economic distress they have taken to thieving. Murder is not an uncommon thing among them. The wave of self-purification that passed through India in 1921 could not fail to touch them. The class of workers that has come into being are working in their midst with the sole intention of carrying out internal reform among them. The brilliant Satyagraha movement initiated and led so successfully by Vallabhbhai during 1923 brought about a great awakening among these people. Their conference at Sojitra was one of the fruits of the reform. They listened to the proceedings in perfect silence. The resolutions carried were about abstaining from intoxicating drinks and drugs, from selling their daughters in marriage and from abduction, a habit which seems rampant among them.

*Young India*, 22-1-1925, p. 25

## 241. A CRIMINAL TRIBE

Perhaps there are not many places on this globe where crime is the profession of tribes as it is in India and it flourishes under the garb of religion. We have therefore in this country a law called the Criminal Tribes Act. The Aheris of Hissar District are supposed to be one of such tribes. On 7th June a conference of Aheris was held in the village of Gangan Kheri under the presidentship of Lala Thakurdas Bhargava. It was attended by over 1,000 Aheris and over 200 *savarna* Hindus. From the report before me it appears that the Aheris were told by some persons that if they embraced Islam they would be helped to become free from the application of the Act and the stigma of being a criminal tribe would no longer attach to them. Therefore the Aheris assembled declared their "undying faith" in Hinduism and appealed to the Government to free them from the application of the Act.

In these days of ferment mere conferences and resolutions will not prevent appeals for conversions against material inducements nor bring the freedom sought. The only way to avert danger of defection and to procure freedom from special hardships is self-purification and selfless continuous service of the depressed people by the *saoarnas*. Criminal tribes and untouchable castes are a scourge upon Hindu society for its godless treatment of its own members in the sacred name of religion. You cannot have a diseased limb without the whole body being affected. Therefore the only effective method is reform from within. If the whole society is purified, it will be immune from external attacks, no matter how fierce they are. Conversely, no battling against external attacks can

prevent internal disintegration. Indeed the energy expended in repelling external attacks must result in further exhaustion and therefore speedier destruction. I hope that the responsible *savarna* Hindus who attended the Conference will continue the work begun at the Conference and direct their energy in constructive channels.

*Harijan*, 1-8-1936, p. 200