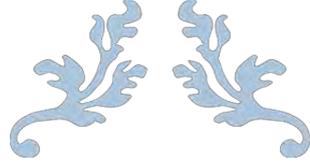


M. K. Gandhi

# TO STUDENTS





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By: M.K. Gandhi

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

This is an abridged edition of the volume *To The Students* published by the Navajivan Trust in 1949. That volume ran into over 300 pages. It contained in full all the matter by Gandhiji relating to students, and was arranged chronologically. Valuable as such a volume is, it was felt that it might be useful also to have a smaller book which will put before the student world concisely and systematically all that Gandhiji had to say to it, and in his own words. This present book is the outcome.

The arrangement in it is necessarily topical. But dates are given under each quotation to show when it was written or uttered. The quotations are limited per force to words addressed by Gandhiji specifically to students.

A cursory glance at the outline of contents will show that Gandhiji touched on every aspect of a student's life. It will also reveal that his greatest emphasis was on Religion, Character and Service. He knew the great importance of youth, and more especially of studentship, and saw the vital need to direct its perplexities, its enthusiasm and energy along lines which will bring the greatest happiness to it and to the nation and the world.

It is hoped that students will carefully study and take to heart the imperishable message that Gandhiji undoubtedly has for them.

Chicago, 8-11-50

BHARATAN KUMARAPPA U.S.A.



## NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH THEIR MEANINGS

*Adi Karnatak* - aboriginal of Karnatak *Ahimsa* - non-violence

*Alumni* - graduates or former pupils of a university or school

*Aparigraha* - non-possession *Ardhangana* - wife

*Ashrama* - one of the four stages of life according to Hinduism: student, householder, hermit and ascetic; hermitage *Asteya* - non-stealing *Avarna* - caste-less; untouchable

*Bande Mataram* - Hail, Mother! - the refrain of the Indian national anthem known by the same name

*Bhagawata* - a Hindu mythological book depicting the life of Krishna

*Bhajan* - a hymn

*Bhaji* - a leafy vegetable

*Bhakti* - devotion

*Brahmachari* - one observing continence; a student

*Brahmacharya* - continence

*Brahmacharyashrama*—the first of the four stages of life according to Hindu scriptures

*Brahman* - The Supreme Being

*Brahmanism* - religion of the *Brahmins*

*Brahmin* - a man belonging to the first of the four original castes of the Hindus

*Chapati* - a cake

*Charkha* - a spinning-wheel

Dal-a pulse



*Daridranarayan* - God of the poor or the poor as the embodiment of God

*Deti-leti* - dowry system as known in Sindh

*Devadasi* - a girl dedicated to the service of the deity

*Dharma* - religion; duty

*Gayatri*—a sacred incantation to the sun-god

*Goonda* - a hooligan

*Goondaism* - hooliganism

*Grihastha* - a house-holder

*Guru* - a religious preceptor, a teacher

*Harijan* - literally, man of God; the name Gandhiji gave for an 'untouchable'; name of a weekly edited by Mahatma Gandhi during 1933-'48 which still continues

*Himsa* - violence

*Jnana* - knowledge

*Kama* - lust, sexual love

*Khadi* - hand-spun, hand-woven cloth

*Khadi Bhandar*- Khadi shop

*Lokamanya* - respected by the people

*Mahajan* - elders of a caste or guild

*Mahatma* - high-souled man; a popular name given to Gandhiji



*Mantra* - a sacred text used for repetition and meditation

*Mukti* - liberation, freedom

*Panchama* - one belonging to the fifth class; an out-caste

*Pandit* - a learned man

*Ramanama* - name of Rama (i.e. God)

*Ramarajya* - a kingdom of Rama i.e. a kingdom of righteousness

*Rashtrabhasha* - national language

*Rishi* - a seer

*Sadhu* - a saint

*Saheblog*- members of the upper class

*Sandhya* - a morning and evening prayer of a Brahmin

*Sannyas* - renunciation

*Sati*—a virtuous wife

*Satya* - truth

*Satyagraha* - clinging to truth; civil or non-violent disobedience

*Savarna* - a member of the *varnas* or classes of Hindu society

*Shastra* - a scripture

*Shethia* - a member of a merchant class

*Skraddha* - a rite or ceremony performed in honour of the departed spirits of dead relatives

*Tapashacharya, Tapasya* - penance, austerity



*Vande Mataram* - see *Bande Mataram*

*Varnashrama dharma*- Hindu religion as based on the four classes and four stages of life

*Veda* - ancient Hindu scripture

*Vidyarthi* - a student

*Yajna* - a sacrifice

*Young India* - name of a weekly edited by Mahatma Gandhi during 1919-'32



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## SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTORY

### 1

#### MY CREDENTIALS

I have always cultivated close contact with them (the students). They know me and I know them. They have given me service. Many ex-collegians are my esteemed co-workers. I know that they are the hope of the future.

In the heyday of non-co-operation they were invited to leave their schools and colleges. Some professors and students who responded to the Congress call have remained steadfast and gained much for the country and themselves.

#### *Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*

I have come in contact with thousands of students during the last ten years. They have confided their innermost secrets to me and have given me the right to enter their hearts. I know therefore all your difficulties and every one of your weaknesses. I do not know whether I can render any effective help to you. I can but be your friend and guide, attempt to share your sorrows, and give you the benefit of my experience.

*Young India, 4-8-'27*

You have claimed for me an honour in connection the student world which I dare not appropriate. But I am endeavouring to claim another honour and that is to become a servant of the student world—not only of India, not only of Burma, but, if it is not too high a claim, the student world throughout the universe. I am in touch with some students in the remotest corners of the earth, and if God gives me a few more years I might be able to make good that claim.

*Young India, 4-4-'29*



## SECTION TWO: RELIGION

### 2

#### THE NEED FOR RELIGION

Throughout my travels I have been asked about the immediate need of India. And, perhaps, I would not do better than repeat this afternoon the answer I have given elsewhere. In general terms, a proper religious spirit is the greatest and most immediate need. But I know that this is too general an answer to satisfy anybody. And it is an answer true for all time. What, therefore, I desire to say is, that owing to the religious spirit being dormant in us, we are living in a state of perpetual fear. We fear the temporal as well as the spiritual authority. We dare not speak out our minds before our priests and our *pandits*. We stand in awe of the temporal power. I am sure that in so doing we do a disservice to them and us. Neither the spiritual teachers nor our political governors could possibly desire that we should hide the truth from them. Lord Willingdon, speaking to a Bombay audience, has been saying recently that he had observed that we hesitated to say 'No' when we really meant it and advised his audience to cultivate a fearless spirit. Of course, fearlessness should never mean want of due respect or regard for the feelings of others. In my humble opinion, fearlessness is the first thing indispensable before we could achieve anything permanent and real. This quality is unattainable without religious consciousness. Let us fear God and we shall cease to fear man. If we grasp the fact that there is a divinity within us which witnesses everything we think or do and which protects us and guides us along the true path, it is clear that we shall cease to have any other fear on the face of the earth save the fear of God. Loyalty to the Governor of governors supersedes all other loyalty and gives an intelligent basis to the latter.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

I confess to a deep sense of sorrow that faith is gradually disappearing in the student world. When I suggest to a Hindu boy to have recourse to Ramanama, he stares at me and wonders who Rama may be; when I ask a Mussalman boy to read the Koran and fear God, he confesses his inability to read the Koran and Allah is



a mere lip-profession. How can I convince such boys that the first step to a true education is a pure heart?

If the education you get turns you away from God, I do not know how it is going to help you and how you are going to help the world. You were right in saying in your address, that I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in every one, be he a Hindu, Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, or a Panchama, a Mussalman, a Parsi, a Christian,- man or woman.

*Young India, 4-8-'27*

Mere book reading will be of little help to you in afterlife. I know from correspondence with the students all over India what wrecks they have become by having stuffed their brains with information derived from a cartload of books. Some have become unhinged, others have become lunatics, some have been leading a life of helpless impurity. My heart goes out to them when they say that try as much as they might, they are what they are, because they cannot overpower the devil. 'Tell us,' they plaintively ask, 'how to get rid of the devil, how to get rid of the impurity that has seized us.' When I ask them to take Ramanama and kneel before God and seek His help, they come to me and say, 'We do not know where God is. We do not know what it is to pray.' That is the state to which they have been reduced. I have therefore been asking the students to be on their guard, not to read all the literature that is within their reach, and I ask their teachers to cultivate their hearts and establish with the students a heart-contact. I have felt that the teachers' work lies more outside than inside the lecture room. In this work-a-day life where teachers and professors work for the wages they get, they have no time to give to the students outside the class room, and that is the greatest stumbling block in the development of the life and character of students today. But unless the teachers are prepared to give all their time outside the class room to their students, not much can be done. Let them fashion their hearts rather than their brains.

*Young India, 4-4-'29*



The greatest men of the world have always stood alone. Take the great prophets, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed—they all stood alone like many others whom I can name. But they had living faith in themselves and their God; and believing as they did that God was on their side, they never felt lonely. You may recall the occasion when pursued by a numerous enemy Abu Bakr, who was accompanying the Prophet in his flight, trembled to think of their fate and said, 'Look at the number of the enemies that is overtaking us. What shall we two do against these heavy odds?' Without a moment's reflection the Prophet rebuked his faithful companion by saying, 'No, Abu Bakr, we are three, for God is with us.' Or take the invincible faith of Bibhishana and Prahlada. I want you to have that same living faith in yourselves and God.

*Young India, 10-10-'29*

No man can live without religion. There are some who in the egotism of their reason declare that they have nothing to do with religion. But it is like a man saying that he breathes but that he has no nose. Whether by reason, or by instinct, or by superstition, man acknowledges some sort of relationship with the divine. The rankest agnostic or atheist does acknowledge the need of a moral principle, and associates something good with its observance and something bad with the non-observance. Bradlaugh, whose atheism is well known, always insisted on proclaiming his innermost conviction. He had to suffer a lot for thus speaking the truth, but he delighted in it and said that truth is its own reward. Not that he was quite insensible to the joy resulting from the observance of truth. This joy however is not at all worldly, but springs out of communion with the divine. That is why I have said that even a man who disowns religion cannot and does not live without religion.

*Young India, 23-1-'30*

It is the fashion nowadays to dismiss God from life altogether and insist on the possibility of reaching the highest kind of life without the necessity of a living faith in a living God. I must confess my inability to drive the truth of the law home to those who have no faith in and no need for a Power infinitely higher than themselves. My own experience has led me to the knowledge that fullest



life is impossible without an immovable belief in a Living Law in obedience to which the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life.

*Harijan, 25-4-'36*

For me morals, ethics, and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like 'sounding brass' good only for making a noise and breaking heads. Morality includes truth, *ahimsa* and continence. Every virtue that mankind has ever practised is referable to and derived from these three fundamental virtues. Non-violence and continence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.

*Harijan, 3-10-'36*

If the word 'soul force' appears a meaningless term to our students today, it only shows to what an abject plight we are reduced. For is it not most tragic, that things of the spirit, eternal verities should be regarded as Utopian by our youth, and transitory makeshifts alone appeal to them as practical?

We have an ocular demonstration of the futility of mere numbers before us every day. What stronger proof of the proposition can be needed than that a nation of three hundred million Indians is today being ruled by less than one lakh Englishmen? The very sight of a lion puts to flight a thousand sheep. The reason is plain. The sheep are aware of their weakness, the lion of its strength. And the consciousness of strength in the latter overpowers the numerical strength of the former. By analogy may we not deduce that 'soul force' or 'spirit force' may not after all be a mere chimera or figment of imagination but a substantial reality?

I do not wish to disparage the strength of numbers. It has its use but only when it is backed by the latent spirit force. Millions of ants can kill an elephant by together attacking it in a vulnerable place. Their sense of solidarity, consciousness of oneness of spirit in spite of the diversity of bodies, in other words, their spirit force makes the ants irresistible. Even so the moment we



develop a sense of mass unity like the ants, we too shall become irresistible and shall free ourselves from our chains.

It is my firm faith that the students of our national schools, a mere handful though they may be, if they are inspired by a real spirit of sacrifice and service and a living faith in their ideals, will stand the country in far greater stead than all the students in Government educational institutions put together. That quality is more than quantity is sound theory because it is true in practice. Instead I hold that what cannot be proved in practice cannot be sound in theory.

When Galileo declared that the earth was round like a ball and turned on its axis, he was ridiculed as a visionary and a dreamer and was greeted with abuse. But today we know that Galileo was right, and it was his opponents, who believed the earth to be stationary and flat like a dish, that were living in the cloudland of their ignorance.

Modern education tends to turn our eyes away from the spirit. The possibilities of the spirit force or soul force, therefore, do not appeal to us, and our eyes are consequently rivetted on the evanescent, transitory, material force. Surely this is the very limit of dull unimaginativeness.

But I live in hope and patience. I have an unshakable faith in the correctness of my proposition, a faith that is based on my and my companions' experience. And every student, if only he has got the faculty of patient, dispassionate research, can experimentally prove this for himself:

1. That mere numbers are useless.
2. That all force other than soul force is transitory and vain.

It goes without saying, that if the above propositions are correct, it should be the constant endeavour of every student to arm himself with this matchless weapon of spirit force by dint of self-discipline and self-purification.

*Young India, 14-11-'29*

Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant of spirit glory in fighting alone. And you are all here to cultivate that valour of the spirit. Be you



one or many, this valour is the only true valour, all else is false. And the valour of the spirit cannot be achieved without sacrifice, determination, faith and humility.

*Young India, 17-6-'26*



### STUDENTS AND THE GITA

The other day, in course of a conversation, a missionary friend asked me, if India was really a spiritually advanced country why it was that he found only a few students having any knowledge of their own religion, even of the Bhagavadgita. In support of the statement the friend who is himself an educationist told me, that he had made it a point to ask the students he met whether they had any knowledge of their religion or of the Bhagavadgita. A vast majority of them were found to be innocent of any such knowledge.

I do not propose to take up at the present moment the inference, that because certain students had no knowledge of their own religion, India was not a spiritually advanced country, beyond saying that the ignorance on the part of the students of religious books did not necessarily mean absence of all religious life or want of spirituality among the people to which the students belonged. But there is no doubt, that the vast majority of students who pass through the Government educational institutions, are devoid of any religious instruction. The remark of the missionary had reference to the Mysore students and I was somewhat pained to observe that even the students of Mysore had no religious instruction in the State schools. I know also that there is a school of thought which believes in only secular instruction being given in public schools. I know also that in a country like India, where there are most religions of the world represented and where there are so many denominations in the same religion, there must be difficulty about making provision of religious instruction. But if India is not to declare spiritual bankruptcy, religious instruction of its youth must be held to be at least as necessary as secular instruction. It is true, that knowledge of religious books is no equivalent of that of religion. But if we cannot have religion we must be satisfied with providing our boys and girls with what is next best. And whether there is such instruction given in the schools or not, grown up students must cultivate the art of self-help about matters religious as about other. They may start their own class just as they have their debating and now spinners' clubs.



Addressing the Collegiate High School students at Shimoga, I found upon enquiry at the meeting that out of a hundred or more Hindu boys, there were hardly eight who had read the Bhagavadgita. None raised his hand in answer to the question, whether of the few who had read the Gita there was any who understood it. Out of five or six Mussalman boys all raised their hands as having read the Koran. But only one could say that he knew its meaning. The Gita is, in my opinion, a very easy book to understand. It does present some fundamental problems which are no doubt difficult of solution. But the general trend of the Gita is in my opinion unmistakable. It is accepted by all Hindu sects as authoritative. It is free from any form of dogma. In a short compass it gives a complete reasoned moral code. It satisfies both the intellect and the heart. It is thus both philosophical and devotional. Its appeal is universal. The language is incredibly simple. But I nevertheless think that there should be an authoritative version in each vernacular, and the translations should be so prepared as to avoid technicalities and in a manner that would make the teaching of the Gita intelligible to the average man. The suggestion is not intended in any way to supplement the original. For I reiterate my opinion that every Hindu boy and girl should know Sanskrit. But for a long time to come, there will be millions without any knowledge of Sanskrit. It would be suicidal to keep them deprived of the teachings of the Bhagavadgita because they do not know Sanskrit.

*Young India, 25-8-'27*

You state in your address that you read the Gospels daily even as I do. I cannot say that I read the Gospels daily, but I can say that I have read the Gospels in a humble and prayerful spirit, and it is well with you if you are also reading the Gospels in that spirit. But I expect that the vast majority of you are Hindu boys. I wish that you could have said to me that at least your Hindu boys were reading the Bhagavadgita daily to derive inspiration. For I believe that all the great religions of the world are true more or less. I say 'more or less' because I believe that everything that the human hand touches, by reason of the very fact that human beings are imperfect, becomes imperfect. Perfection is the exclusive attribute of God and it is indescribable, untranslatable. I do believe that it is



possible for every human being to become perfect even as God is perfect. It is necessary for us all to aspire after perfection, but when that blessed state is attained, it becomes indescribable, indefinable. And I therefore admit, in all humility, that even the Vedas, the Koran and the Bible are the imperfect word of God, and imperfect beings that we are, swayed to and fro by a multitude of passions, it is impossible for us even to understand this word of God in its fullness, and so I say to a Hindu boy, that he must not uproot the traditions in which he had been brought up, as I say to a Mussalman or a Christian boy that he must not uproot his traditions. And so whilst I would welcome your learning the Gospels and your learning the Koran, I would certainly insist on all of you Hindu boys, if I had the power of insistence, learning the Gita. It is my belief that the impurity that we see about boys in schools, the carelessness about things that matter in life, the levity with which the student world deals with the greatest and most fundamental questions of life is due to this uprooting of tradition from which boys have hitherto derived their sustenance.

But I must not be misunderstood. I do not hold that everything ancient is good because it is ancient. I do not advocate surrender of God-given reasoning faculty in the face of ancient tradition. Any tradition however ancient if inconsistent with morality, is fit to be banished from the land. Untouchability may be considered to be an ancient tradition, the institution of child widowhood and child marriage may be considered to be ancient tradition and even so many an ancient horrible belief and superstitious practice. I would sweep them out of existence if I had the power. When, therefore, I talk of respecting the ancient tradition, you now understand what I mean, and it is because I see the same God in the Bhagavadgita as I see in the Bible and the Koran that I say to the Hindu boys that they will derive greater inspiration from the Bhagavadgita because they will be tuned to the Gita more than to any other book.

*Young India, 22-9-27*

I cannot conceive anything so fortifying as a reverent study of the Bhagavadgita, and if students will remember that they are to learn it not in order to parade their Sanskrit knowledge, or even their knowledge of the Gita, they will know



that they learn it in order to derive spiritual comfort and to solve the moral difficulties that face them. No man who engages in a reverent study of that book can help becoming a true servant of the nation and through it of humanity.

*Young India, 3-11-'27*

The Gita contains the gospel of Work, the gospel of Bhakti or Devotion, and the gospel of Jnana or Knowledge. Life should be a harmonious whole of these three. But the gospel of service is the basis of all. And what can be more necessary for those who want to serve the country than that they begin with the chapter enunciating the gospel of work? But you must approach it with the five necessary equipments, viz. *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (truth), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy), *Aparigraha* (non-possession), and *Asteya* (non-stealing). Then and then only will you be able to reach a correct interpretation of it. And then you will read it to discover in it *ahimsa* and not *himsa*, as so many nowadays try to do. Read it with the necessary equipment and I assure you, you will have peace of which you were never aware before.

*Young India, 3-11-'27*



## RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

I have experimented with quite a number of boys in order to understand how best to impart religious instruction and whilst I found that book instruction was somewhat of an aid, by itself it was useless. Religious instruction, I discovered, was imparted by teachers living the religion themselves. I have found that boys imbibe more from the teachers' own lives than they do from the books that they read to them, or the lectures that they deliver to them with their lips. I have discovered to my great joy that boys and girls have unconsciously a faculty of penetration whereby they read the thoughts of their teachers. Woe to the teacher who teaches one thing with his lips, and carries another in his breast!

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, pp. 108-09*

A curriculum of religious instruction should include a study of the tenets of faiths other than one's own. For this purpose the students should be trained to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrines of various great religions of the world in a spirit of reverence and broadminded tolerance. This, if properly done, would help to give them a spiritual assurance and a better appreciation of their own religion. There is one rule, however, which should always be kept in mind while studying all great religions and that is, that one should study them only through the writings of known votaries of the respective religions. For instance, if one wants to study the Bhagavata one should do so not through a translation of it made by a hostile critic but one prepared by a lover of the Bhagavata. Similarly to study the Bible one should study it through the commentaries of devoted Christians. This study of other religions besides ones own will give one a grasp of the rock-bottom unity of all religions and afford a glimpse also of that universal and absolute truth which lies beyond the 'dust of creeds and faiths'.

Let no one even for a moment entertain the fear that a reverent study of other religions is likely to weaken or shake ones faith in ones own. The Hindu system of philosophy regards all religions as containing the elements of truth in them and enjoins an attitude of respect and reverence towards them all. This of course



presupposes regard for one's own religion. Study and appreciation of other religions need not cause a weakening of that regard; it should mean extension of that regard to other religions.

In this respect religion stands on the same footing as culture. Just as preservation of one's own culture does not mean contempt for that of others, but requires assimilation of the best that there may be in all the other cultures, even so should be the case with religion. Our present fears and apprehensions are a result of the poisonous atmosphere that has been generated in the country, the atmosphere of mutual hatred, ill-will and distrust. We are constantly labouring under a nightmare of fear lest someone should stealthily undermine our faith or the faith of those who are dear and near to us. But this unnatural state will cease when we have learnt to cultivate respect and tolerance towards other religions and their votaries.

*Young India, 6-12-'28*



## OTHER RELIGIONS

I shall say to the 75 per cent Hindus receiving instruction in this college that your lives will be incomplete unless you reverently study the teachings of Jesus, I have come to the conclusion, in my own experience, that those who, no matter to what faith they belong, reverently study the teachings of other faiths, broaden, instead of narrowing them, their own hearts. Personally, I do not regard any of the great religions of the world as false. All have served in enriching mankind and are even now serving their purpose. A liberal education to all should include, as I have put it, a reverent study of other faiths; but I do not want to labour this point, nor have the time to do so.

There is one thing which, as I am speaking to you, occurs to me, which came to me in my early studies of the Bible. It seized me immediately I read the passage, "Make this world the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything will be added unto you." I tell you that if you will understand, appreciate, and act up to the spirit of this passage, you would not even need to know what place Jesus or any other teacher occupied in your heart. If you will do the proper scavengers work, clean and purify your hearts and get them ready, you will find that all these mighty teachers will take their places without invitation from us. That, to my mind, is the basis of all sound education. Culture of the mind must be subservient to the culture of the heart. May God help you to become pure!

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, p. 144*

Your first object is to revive ancient culture. You have then to understand what that ancient culture is and it must be necessarily culture which all students, whether they may be Hindus, Christians, Buddhists or of any other faith, would be interested in reviving, because I take it that by ancient culture you do not want to confine yourselves purely to Hindu students.

I take it that this Students<sup>5</sup> Congress includes all students, Hindus, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists. Though today it has on its rolls no Muslim student or Buddhist student, it does not much matter for my argument, for the simple



reason that your ultimate object is attainment of Swaraj, not merely for the Hindus and Christians of Jaffna, but for all the inhabitants of this island of which Jaffna is but a part. What I have said with reference to the inclusion of students belonging to these religions must hold good. That being so, we hark back to the question, what ancient culture it is we want to revive. It must, therefore, be such as to be common to all these elements and such as to be acceptable to all these elements. Therefore, whilst that culture will undoubtedly be predominantly Hindu culture, it can never be exclusively Hindu. The reason why I say that it must be predominantly Hindu, is because you who are seeking to revive ancient culture, are predominantly Hindu, and are all the while thinking of that country which you rightly and proudly delight to call your motherland.

In Hindu culture I venture to submit Buddhistic culture is necessarily included for the simple reason that Buddha himself was an Indian, not only an Indian, but a Hindu amongst Hindus. I have never seen anything in the life of Gautama to warrant the belief that he renounced Hinduism and adopted a new faith. My task becomes easy when I consider also that Jesus himself was an Asiatic, and therefore it becomes a question really to consider what Asiatic or ancient Asiatic culture is. For that matter then, Mohammed was also an Asiatic.

Since you can only wish to revive all that is noble, and all that is permanent in ancient culture, your revival necessarily must not be antagonistic to any of these faiths. The question then is to find out the common factor, the greatest common measure belonging to all these great faiths. And thus you will come according to my own estimate of things noble and great to this very simple factor, viz., that you want to be truthful and non-violent, for truth and non-violence are common to all these great faiths.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, pp. 129-130*

In trying to explore the hidden treasures of ancient culture, I have come upon this inestimable boon that all that is permanent in ancient Hindu culture is also to be found in the teachings of Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed and Zoroaster. So I have come to this workable arrangement for myself. If I find anything in Hinduism which is ancient but repugnant to my Christian brother or my Mussalman brother,



I immediately begin to fidget and doubt the ancient-ness of that claim. So I came by a process of examination to this irresistible conclusion that there was nothing so very ancient in this world as these two good old things-truth and non-violence. And working along these lines of truth and non-violence, I also discovered that I must not attempt to revive ancient practices if they were inconsistent with, call it if you will, modern life as it must be lived. Ancient practices may have been perfectly good and perhaps absolutely necessary at the time when those practices were adopted, but they might be entirely out of date with modern needs and still not be contrary to truth or non-violence.

Then you can see how safe the road becomes in front of you and me when we summarily and mercilessly reject untouchability, Devadasi institution, drunkenness, sacrifice of animals in the very name of God whom we call Compassionate, All-merciful, Forgiving. We can unhesitatingly and summarily reject all those things, because they do not appeal to our moral sense. So much with reference to the negative side of it; but there is a positive side to it which is just as important as the negative.

In putting before you the positive side let me draw for you one very necessary corollary to the doctrine of non-violence. I put it before my very dear friends, the reformers, a very small body of staunch workers in Chettinad. The corollary or the deduction is this: That if we are to be non-violent we must then not wish for anything on this earth which the meanest or the lowest of human beings cannot have. If that is a sound proposition-and I claim that it is a direct corollary from the doctrine of non-violence,—then if you accept it, then it follows that we may not barter away our ancient simplicity for anything on this earth. Now, you will perhaps understand my determined opposition to the modern rush, the hypnotic dazzle that seems almost to overcome us and overtake us; and that is coming to us with such violent force from the West.

I have taken great pains in my writings as also in my speeches to distinguish between the modern methods adopted in the West, the multiplicity of wants and material comforts, and the essential teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. So, in the opening sentences of my speech I threw out the hint of what was to come



when I told you that after all Jesus was an Asiatic, Mohammed was an Asiatic; but drawing that sharp distinction between the teachings and message of Jesus and what is today going on in America, in England and other parts of the West, I have been able to live at peace with thousands upon thousands of my Christian friends in South Africa and now, because the circle is growing ever larger, throughout the world.

So you Hindus and Buddhists here—if there is even a handful of Buddhists—if you will be true to your ancient culture, you will refuse to have anything whatsoever to do with this hypnotic dazzle, even though it may come to you in the so-called Christian garb.

If you have an immovable faith in yourselves, if you will also cultivate inexhaustible patience, you will find that the Christian friends, even though they may come to you with the Western dazzle behind them, will shed all that dazzle and be converted to the doctrine of simplicity which alone can satisfy the test of the corollary that I have ventured to draw before this audience.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, pp. 131-33*



## 6

## PRAYER

A medical graduate asks:

"What is the best form of prayer? How much time should be spent at it? In my opinion to do justice is the best form of prayer and one who is sincere about doing justice to all, does not need to do any more praying. Some people spend a long time over *sandhya* and 95 per cent of them do not understand the meaning of what they say. In my opinion prayer should be said in one's mother-tongue. It alone can affect the soul best. I should say that a sincere prayer for one minute is enough. It should suffice to promise God not to sin."

Prayer means asking God for something in a reverent attitude. But the word is used also to denote any devotional act. Worship is a better term to use for what the correspondent has in mind. But definition apart, what is it that millions of Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians and Jews and others do every day during the time set apart for the adoration of the Maker? It seems to me that it is a yearning of the heart to be one with the Maker, an invocation for His blessing. It is in this case the attitude that matters, not words uttered or muttered. And often the association of words that have been handed down from ancient times has an effect which in their rendering into one's mother-tongue they will lose altogether. Thus, *the gayatri* translated and recited in, say, Gujarati, will not have the same effect as the original. The utterance of the word Rama will instantaneously affect millions of Hindus, when the word God, although they may understand the meaning, will leave them untouched. Words after all acquire a power by long usage and sacredness associated with their use. There is much, therefore, to be said for the retention of the old Sanskrit formulae for the most prevalent *mantras* or verses. That the meaning of them should be properly understood goes without saying.

There can be no fixed rule laid down as to the time these devotional acts should take. It depends upon individual temperament. These are precious moments in ones daily life. The exercises are intended to sober and humble us and enable us to realize that nothing happens without His will and that we are but clay in the



hands of the Potter. There are moments when one reviews ones immediate past, confesses ones weakness, asks for forgiveness and strength to be and do better. One minute may be enough for some, twenty four hours may be too little for others. For those who are filled with the presence of God in them, to labour is to pray. Their life is one continuous prayer or act of worship. For those others who act only to sin, to indulge themselves, and live for self, no time is too much. If they had patience and faith and the will to be pure, they would pray till they feel the definite purifying presence of God within them. For us ordinary mortals there must be a middle path between these two extremes. We are not so exalted as to be able to say that all our acts are dedication, nor perhaps are we so far gone as to living purely for self. Hence have all religions set apart times for general devotion. Unfortunately these have nowadays become merely mechanical and formal, where they are not hypocritical. What is necessary therefore is the correct attitude to accompany these devotions.

For definite personal prayer in the sense of asking God for something, it should certainly be in one's own tongue. Nothing can be grander than to ask God to make us act justly towards everything that lives.

*Young India, 10-6-'29*

"So far as congregational prayer is concerned, it is of no use. Can such a huge mass of men enter into any mental concentration upon a thing, however trifling it may be? Are the little and ignorant children expected to fix their fickle attention on the subtlest ideas of our great scriptures, God and soul and equality of all men and many other high-sounding phrases? This great performance is required to be done at a particular time at the command of a particular man. Can love for the so-called Lord take its root in the hearts of boys by any such mechanical function? Nothing can be more repugnant to reason than to expect the same behaviour from men of every temperament. Therefore prayer should not be a compulsion. Let those pray who have a taste for it and those avoid who dislike it. Anything done without conviction is an immoral and degrading action."

Let us first examine the worth of the last idea. Is it an immoral and degrading act to submit to discipline before one begins to have conviction about its necessity? Is it immoral and degrading to study subjects according to the school



syllabus if one has no conviction about its utility? May a boy be excused from studying his vernacular, if he has persuaded himself that it is useless? Is it not truer to say that a school boy has no conviction about the things he has to go through? His choice is exhausted if he had it, when he elected to belong to an institution. His joining one means that he will willingly submit to its rules and regulations. It is open to him to leave it but he may not choose what or how he will learn.

It is for teachers to make attractive and intelligible what to the pupils may at first appear repulsive or uninteresting.

It is easy enough to say, 'I do not believe in God.' For God permits all things to be said of Him with impunity. He looks at our acts. And any breach of His Law carries with it, not its vindictive, but its purifying, compelling, punishment. God's existence cannot be, does not need to be proved. God is. If He is not felt, so much the worse for us. The absence of feeling is a disease which we shall some day throw off *nolens volens*.

But a boy may not argue. He must out of a sense of discipline attend prayer meeting if the institution to which he belongs requires such attendance. He may respectfully put his doubts before his teachers. He need not believe what does not appeal to him. But if he has respect for his teachers, he will do without believing, what he is asked to do, not out of fear, not out of churlishness, but with the knowledge that it is right for him so to do and with the hope that what is dark to him today will some day be made clear to him.

Prayer is not an asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is a daily admission of one's weakness. The tallest among us has a perpetual reminder of his nothingness before death, disease, old age, accidents etc. We are living in the midst of death. What is the value of working for our own schemes' when they might be reduced to naught in the twinkling of an eye, or when we may be equally swiftly and unawares taken away from them? But we may feel strong as a rock, if we could truthfully say, 'We work for God and His schemes.' Then all is as clear as daylight. Then nothing perishes. All perishing is then only what seems. Death and destruction have *then, but only then*, no reality about them. For death or



destruction is then but a change. An artist destroys his picture for creating a better one. A watch-maker throws away a bad spring to put in a new and useful one.

A congregational prayer is a mighty thing. What we do not often do alone, we do together. Boys do not need conviction. If they merely attend in obedience to the call to prayer without inward resistance, they feel the exaltation. But many do not. They are even mischievous. All the same the unconscious effect cannot be resisted. Are there not boys who at the commencement of their career were scoffers but who subsequently became mighty believers in the efficacy of congregational prayer? It is a common experience for men who have no robust faith to seek the comfort of congregational prayer. All who flock to churches, temples, or mosques are not scoffers or humbugs. They are honest men and women. For them congregational prayer is like a daily bath, a necessity, of their existence. These places of worship are not a mere idle superstition to be swept away at the first opportunity. They have survived all attacks up to now and are likely to persist to the end of time.

*Young India, 23-9-'26*

"In your article bearing the above caption<sup>1</sup> you hardly do justice to the 'boy' or to your own position as a great thinker. It is true that the expressions used by the writer in his letter are not all happy but of his clarity of thought there is no doubt. It is also very evident that he is not a boy as the word is understood. I should be much surprised to find him under twenty. Even if he is young he seems to show sufficient intellectual development not to be treated in the manner of 'A boy may not argue.' The writer of a letter is a rationalist while you are a believer, two age-old types, with age-old conflict. The attitude of the one is, 'Let me be convinced and I shall believe,' that of the other is, 'Believe and conviction shall come.' The first appeals to reason, the second appeals to authority. You seem to think that agnosticism is but a passing phase among all young people and that faith comes to them sooner or later. There is the well-known case of Swami Vivekananda to support your view. You therefore proceed to prescribe a compulsory dose of prayer to the 'boy' for his own good. Your reasons are twofold: Firstly, prayer for its own sake, as a recognition of one's own littleness, and mightiness and goodness of the supposed higher being; Secondly, for its utility, for the solace it brings to those who want to be solaced. I



shall dispose of the second argument first. Here it is recommended as a sort of staff to the weak. Such are the trials of life, and such is their power to shatter the reason of men, that great many people may need prayer and faith sometime. They have a right to it and they are welcome to it. But there have been and there are always some true rationalists—few no doubt—who have never felt the necessity of either. There is also the class of people who while they are not aggressive doubters are indifferent to religion.

"As all people do not ultimately require the help of prayer and as those who feel its necessity are free to take to it and do take to it, when required, compulsion in prayer from the point of utility cannot be upheld. Compulsory physical exercise and education may be necessary for physical and mental development of a person, not so the belief in God and prayer for the moral side. Some of the worlds greatest agnostics have been the most moral men. To these I suppose you would recommend prayer for its own sake, as an expression of humility, in fact your first argument. Too much has been made of this humility. So vast is knowledge that even the greatest scientists have felt humble sometimes; but their general trait has been that of masterful inquiry, their faith in their own powers has been as great as their conquests of nature. Had it not been so we should still be scratching earth with bare fingers for roots, nay, we should have been wiped out of the surface of the earth.

"During the Ice Age when human beings were dying of cold and when fire was first discovered, your prototype in that age must have taunted the discoverer with what is the use of your schemes, of what avail are they against the power and wrath of God ?' The humble have been promised the Kingdom of God hereafter. We do not know whether they will get it, but here on this earth their portion is serfdom. To revert to the main point, your assertion about accept the belief and the faith shall come,' is too true, terribly true. Much of the religious fanaticism of this world can be traced directly to this kind of teaching. Provided you catch them young enough, and keep at them repeatedly and long enough you can make a good majority of human beings believe in *anything*. That is how your orthodox Hindu or fanatical Mahomedan is manufactured. There are of course always a small few in either community who will outgrow these beliefs that have been forced upon them. Do you know that if the Hindus and the Mahomedans stopped studying their scriptures until they reached maturity, they would not be such fanatical believers in their dogmas and would cease to quarrel for their sake? Secular education is the remedy for the Hindu-Muslim riots, but you will not be able to appreciate the solution for you are not made that way.



"Great as our debt is to you for setting an unprecedented example in courage, action and sacrifice in this country, where people have been always much afraid, when the final judgment is passed on your work it will be said that your influence gave a great setback to intellectual progress in this country."

I do not know the meaning of boy 'as the word is ordinarily understood', if a twenty-year-old lad is not a boy. Indeed I would call all school-going persons boys and girls irrespective of their ages. But whether the doubting student may be called a boy or a man, my argument must stand. A student is like a soldier (and a soldier may be 40 years old) who may not argue about matters of discipline when he has put himself and chooses to remain under it. A soldier may not remain a unit in his regiment and have the option of doing or not doing things he is asked to do. Similarly a student, no matter how wise or old he is, surrenders when he joins a school or a college the right, of rejecting its discipline. Here there is no underrating or despising the intelligence of the student. It is an aid to his intelligence for him to come voluntarily under discipline. But my correspondent willingly bears the heavy yoke of the tyranny of words. He scents compulsion' in every act that displeases the doer. But there is compulsion and compulsion. We call self-imposed compulsion self-restraint. We hug it and grow under it. But compulsion to be shunned even at the cost of life is restraint superimposed upon us against our wills and often with the object, of humiliating us and robbing us of our dignity as men and boys if you will. Social restraints generally are healthy and we reject them to our own undoing. Submission to crawling orders is unmanly and cowardly. Worse still is submission to the multitude of passions that crowd round us every moment of our lives ready to hold us their slaves.

But the correspondent has yet another word that holds him in its chains. It is the mighty word 'rationalism'. Well, I had a full dose of it. Experience has humbled me enough to let me realize the specific limitations of reason. Just as matter misplaced becomes dirt, reason misused becomes lunacy. If we would but render unto Caesar that which is Caesars all would be well.

Rationalists are admirable beings, rationalism is a hideous monster when it claims for itself omnipotence. Attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as is worship of stock and stone believing it to be God.



Who has reasoned out the use of prayer? Its use is felt after practice. Such is the world's testimony. Cardinal Newman never surrendered his reason, but he yielded a better place to prayer when he humbly sang one step enough for me.' Shankara was a prince among reasoners. There is hardly anything in the world's literature to surpass Shankaras rationalism. But he yielded the first place to prayer and faith.

The correspondent has made a hasty generalization from the fleeting and disturbing events that are happening before us. But everything on this earth lends itself to abuse. It seems to be a law governing everything pertaining to man. No doubt religion has to answer for some of the most terrible crimes in history. But that is the fault not of religion but of the ungovernable brute in man. He has not yet shed the effect of his brute ancestry.

I do not know a single rationalist who has never done anything in simple faith and has based everyone of his acts on reason. But we all know millions of human beings living their more or less orderly lives because of their childlike faith in the Maker of us all. That very faith is a prayer. The boy on whose letter I based my article belongs to that vast mass of humanity and the article was written to steady him and his fellow searchers, not to disturb the happiness of rationalists like the correspondent.

But he quarrels even with the bent that is given to the youth of the world by their elders and teachers. But that, it seems, is an inseparable handicap (if it be one) of impressionable age. Purely secular education is also an attempt to mould the young mind after a fashion. The correspondent is good enough to grant that the body and the mind may be trained and directed. Of the soul which makes the body and the mind possible, he has no care, or perhaps he is in doubt as to its existence. But his disbelief cannot avail him. He cannot escape the consequences of his reasoning. For, why may not a believer argue on the correspondent s own ground and say he must influence the soul of boys and girls even as the others influence the body and the intelligence? The evils of religious instruction will vanish with the evolution of the true religious spirit. To give up religious



instruction is like letting a field lie fallow and grow weeds for want of the tillers knowledge of the proper use of the field.

The correspondent's excursion into the great discoveries of the ancients is really irrelevant to the subject under discussion. No one questions, I do not, the utility or the brilliance of these discoveries. They were generally a proper field for the use and exercise of reason. But they, the ancients, did not delete from their lives the predominant function of faith and prayer. Works without faith and prayer are like an artificial flower that has no fragrance. I plead not for the suppression of reason, but for a due recognition of that in us which sanctifies reason itself.

*Young India, 14-10-'26*

I am glad that you all want me to speak to you on the meaning of and the necessity for prayer. I believe that prayer is the very soul and essence of religion, and therefore prayer must be the very core of the life of man.

*Young India, 23-1-'30*

Prayer is either petitional or in its wider sense is inward communion. In either case the ultimate result is the same. Even when it is petitional, the petition should be for the cleaning and purification of the soul, for freeing it from the layers of ignorance and darkness that envelop it. He therefore who hungers for the awakening of the divine in him must fall back on prayer. But prayer is no mere exercise of words or of the ears, it is no mere repetition of empty formula. Any amount of repetition of Ramanama is futile if it fails to stir the soul. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart. It must be in clear response to the spirit which hungers for it. And even as a hungry man relishes a hearty meal, a hungry soul will relish a heart-felt prayer. And I am giving you a bit of my experience and that of my companions when I say that he who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together but not a single moment without prayer. For without prayer there is no inward peace.

If that is the case, some one will say, we should be offering our prayers every minute of our lives. There is no doubt about it, but we erring mortals, who find



it difficult to retire within ourselves for inward communion even for a single moment, will find it impossible to remain perpetually in communion with the divine. We therefore fix some hours when we make a serious effort to throw off the attachments of the world for a while, make a serious endeavour to remain, so to say, out of the flesh. You have heard Surdass hymn.<sup>2</sup> It is the passionate cry of a soul hungering for union with the divine. According to our standards he was a saint, but according to his own he was a proclaimed sinner. Spiritually he was miles ahead of us, but he felt the separation from the divine so keenly that he has uttered that anguished cry in loathing and despair.

I have talked of the necessity for prayer, and therethrough I have dealt with the essence of prayer. We are born to serve our fellow-men, and we cannot properly do so unless we are wide awake. There is an eternal struggle raging in men's breast between the powers of darkness and of light, and he who has not the sheet-anchor of prayer to rely upon, will be a victim to the powers of darkness. The man of prayer will be at peace with himself and with the whole world, the man who goes about the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also miserable. Apart therefore from its bearing on man's condition after death, prayer has incalculable value for man in this world of the living. Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts.

*Young India, 23-1-'30*

Begin therefore your day with prayer and make it so soulful that it may remain with you until the evening. Close the day with prayer so that you may have a peaceful night free from dreams and nightmares. Do not worry about the form of prayer. Let it be any form, it should be such as can put us into communion with the divine. Only, whatever be the form, let not the spirit wander while the words of prayer run on out of your mouth.

If what I have said has gone home to you, you will not be at peace until you have compelled your hostel superintendents to interest themselves in your prayer and to make it obligatory. Restraint self-imposed is no compulsion. A man, who chooses the path of freedom from restraint i.e., of self-indulgence, will be a



bondslave of passions, whilst the man who binds himself to rules and restraints releases himself. All things in the universe, including the sun and the moon and the stars, obey certain laws. Without the restraining influence of these laws the world would not go on for a single moment. You, whose mission in life is service of your fellowmen, will go to pieces if you do not impose on yourselves some sort of discipline, and prayer is a necessary spiritual discipline. It is discipline and restraint that separates us from the brute. If we will be men walking with our heads erect and not walking on all fours, let us understand and put ourselves under voluntary discipline and restraint.

*Young India, 23-1-'30*

God never answers the prayers of the arrogant, nor the prayers of those who bargain with Him. Have you heard the story of Gajendra Moksha? I ask the Burmese students here who do not know one of the greatest of all poems, one of the divinest things of the world, to learn it from their Indian friends. A Tamil saying has always remained in my memory and it means, God is the Help of the helpless. If you would ask Him to help you, you would go to Him in all your nakedness, approach Him without reservation, also without fear or doubts as to how He can help a fallen being like you. He who has helped millions, who have approached Him, is He going to desert you? He makes no exceptions whatsoever and you will find that every one of your prayers will be answered. The prayer of even the most impure will be answered. I am telling this out of my personal experience. I have gone through the purgatory. Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything will be added unto you.

*Young India, 4-4-'29*

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1 See the previous extract.

2. मो सम कौन कुटिल खल कामी |

जीन तनु दियो ताहि बिसरायो ऐसो निमकहरामी ||

Where is there a wretch

So loathsome and wicked as I?

I have forsaken my Master,

So faithless have I been.



## SECTION THREE: CHARACTER

### 7

#### THE NEED FOR CHARACTER

Taking things as they are, we have to consider what is possible for students to do and what more we can do in order to serve the country. The answer that has come to me and to many, who are eager to see that the student world gives a good account of itself, is that students have to search within and look after their personal character. The end of all knowledge must be building up of character.

*Young India, 8-9-'27*

As father of, you might say, many boys and girls, you might almost say of thousands of boys and girls, I want to tell you, boys, that after all you hold your destiny in your own hands. I do not care what you learn or what you do not learn in your school, if you will observe two conditions. One condition is that you must be fearlessly truthful against the heaviest odds under every circumstance imaginable. A truthful boy, a brave boy will never think of hurting even a fly. He will defend all the weak boys in his school and help, whether inside school or outside, all those who need his help. A boy who does not observe personal purity of mind and body and action is a boy who should be driven out of any school. A chivalrous boy would always keep his mind pure, his eyes straight and his hands unpolluted. You do not need to go to any school to learn these fundamental maxims of life, and if you will have this triple character with you, you will build on a solid foundation.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, p. 109*

I have no doubt that your teachers repeatedly tell you that all this mental and literary training that you receive will be of no avail to you unless it is broad-based on truth and love. Truth will make you brave and fearless men, able to give a good account of yourselves, wherever you go. Love will make life bearable for you, because love has a special quality of abundance of love in return.

May God help you day after day to develop these qualities within yourselves.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, p. 150*



Mere learning will avail us nothing. We can attain Swaraj only by dint of sterling character. We must meet the satanic violence of the alien Government with our peaceful and spiritual movement, imperfect as it is. We must plant and water the seed of liberty so that it may in God's good time grow to become the fine tree of Swaraj. And it can only grow by force of character.

From Gandhiji's inaugural address to the Gujarat Vidyapith as its Chancellor,  
15-11-'20

Our is a temple not of book-learning but of liberty. Building of character is the task before us. We shall be fit for Swaraj to the extent that we are successful among our students. Work with students is the only instrument with which to fashion Swaraj.

From Gandhiji's inaugural address to the Gujarat Vidyapeeth as its  
Chancellor, 15-11-'20



## BRAHMACHARYA

According to Hinduism, the student is a *brahmachari*, and *brahmacharyashrama* is the student-state. Celibacy is a narrow interpretation of *brahmacharya*. The original meaning is the life or the state of a student. That means control of the senses, but the whole period of study or acquirement of knowledge by means of control of the senses came to be regarded as *brahmacharyashrama*. This period of life necessarily means very much taking and very little giving. We are mainly recipients in this state-taking whatever we can get from parents, teachers and from the world. But the taking, if it carries—as it did—no obligation of simultaneous repayment, it necessarily carried an obligation to repay the whole debt, with compound interest, at the proper time. That is why the Hindus maintain *brahmacharyashrama* as a matter of religious duty.

The life of a *brahmachari* and a *sannyasi* are regarded as spiritually similar. The *brahmachari* must needs be a *sannyasi* if he is to be a *brahmachari*. For the *sannyasi* it is a matter of choice. The four *ashramas* of Hinduism have nowadays lost their sacred character, and exist, if at all, in name. The life of the student *brahmachari* is poisoned at the very spring. Though there is nothing left of the *ashramas* today which we may hold up to the present generation as something to learn from and copy, we may still hark back to the ideals that inspired the original *ashramas*.

*Young India, 29-1-'25*

The ancient word for a *Vidyarthi* (student) was *brahmachari*, because all his study and activity had as their objective the search of Brahman, and he built his life on a sure foundation of stoic simplicity and self-restraint, which every religion has enjoined on the student. He who let the reins of his passions and desires loose in his youth was never able to curb them in his old age. I do not want you to eschew play and confine yourselves to the closet. But let ail your work and play have the exalted objective of a life of restraint, let them take you nearer to God.



*Young India, 21-7-'27*

Purity of personal life is the one indispensable condition for building a sound education. And my meetings with thousands of students and the correspondence which I continuously have with students in which they pour out their innermost feelings and take me into their confidence show me quite clearly that there is much left to be desired. I am sure that you understand thoroughly what I mean. In our languages there is a beautiful word, equivalent for the word student, that is, *brahmachari*. And I hope you know what the word *brahmachari* means. It means searcher after God, one who conducts himself so as to bring himself nearest to God in the least possible time. And all the great religions of the world, however much they may differ, are absolutely one on this fundamental thing that no man or woman with an impure heart can possibly appear before the Great White Throne. All our learning or recitation of the Vedas, correct knowledge of Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and what not will avail us nothing if they do not enable us to cultivate absolute purity of heart.

The experience, and I think I can say the experience, without a single exception, of those who have really carried on this search after truth to render their hearts pure is that it is an utterly impossible effort, unless it is accompanied by a heart prayer to the Almighty. Whatever, therefore, you do, do not lose faith in God.

*Young India, 8-9-'27*

Malaviyaji's one object in begging millions for you, in raising these palatial buildings, is to send out to the country gems of purest ray, citizens healthy and strong to serve their motherland. That purpose will be defeated if you allow yourselves to be swept with the wind that comes today from the West—the wind of impurity. Not that the methods have the general sanction of Europe. There are friends in Europe, a very few, who are fighting hard to counteract the poisonous tendency. But if you do not wake up betimes the immoral wave that is fast gathering strength might soon envelop and overwhelm you. I cry out to you, therefore, with all the strength at my command: 'Be warned, and flee from the fire before it consumes you.'

*Young India, 20-1-'27*



He (Gandhiji) warned them (the students) against the baneful poisonous literature from the West that was inundating the country and sought under the respectable and attractive garb of science to seduce them from the path of purity and self-restraint. Manifestoes justifying self-indulgence were sometimes issued over the signatures of bishops, doctors, and other men of weight and influence but they should never allow themselves to be drawn away from the straight and narrow path of virtue. The path of self-indulgence and moral indiscipline was the surest way to perdition. He appealed to them to cultivate a snow-white purity of mind and body and prayed to God that He might give them the wisdom and strength for it.

*Young India, 28-2-'29*

I am not prepared to hear this confession of incapacity from students, all your scholarship, all your study of Shakespeare and Wordsworth would be vain if at the same time you do not build your character, and attain mastery over your thoughts and actions. When you have attained self-mastery and learnt to control your passions you will not utter notes of despair. You cannot give your hearts and profess poverty of action. To give one's heart is to give all. You must, to start with, have hearts to give. And this you can do if you will cultivate them.

But what is it instead that we find today? The students in the U. P. today get married, not under compulsion from the parents, I am told, but out of their own insistent desire. During student days you are expected not to dissipate energy but to conserve it. I observe that over 50 per cent of you are married. If you will make the best of a bad job, you will in spite of your marriage put a severe restraint upon your passions and lead whilst you are prosecuting your studies a life of pure *brahmacharya*. And you will find that at the end of your studies you are all the better for that restraint, physically, mentally and spiritually. Do not by any means consider that I am presenting to you something that is utterly impossible of execution. The cult of those, who, though they may be married, are exercising perfect self-restraint on themselves, is increasing with much profit to themselves and to the general benefit of mankind. To those who are unmarried I would appeal to resist temptation.



*Young India, 19-9-'29*

Without continence a man or woman is undone. To have no control over the senses is like sailing in a rudderless ship bound to break to pieces on coming in contact with the very first rock. Hence my constant insistence on continence.

*Harijan, 3-10-'36*



## SEX EDUCATION

Sex complex is today steadily gaining ground in Gujarat as in the rest of India. And what is more, those who fall under its sway feel as if there is something meritorious about it. When a slave begins to take pride in his fetters and hugs them like precious ornaments, the triumph of the slave-owner is complete. But this success of Cupid, spectacular though it may be, will, I am convinced, prove to be shortlived and ignoble, and at long last end in inanition even like a scorpion whose venom is spent. But that does not mean that we can in the meantime afford to sit with folded hands. The certainty of its defeat need not, must not, lull us into a false sense of security. The conquest of lust is the highest endeavour of a man or woman's existence. Without overcoming lust man cannot hope to rule over self. And without rule over self there can be no Swaraj or *Ramaraj*. Rule of all without rule of oneself would prove to be as deceptive and disappointing as a painted toy mango, charming to look at outwardly but hollow and empty within. No worker who has not overcome lust can hope to render any genuine service to the cause of Harijans, communal unity, Khadi, cow-protection or village reconstruction. Great causes like these cannot be served by intellectual equipment alone, they call for spiritual effort or soul-force. Soul-force comes only through God's grace, and God's grace never descends upon a man who is a slave to lust.

What place has then instruction in sexual science in our educational system, or has it any place there at all? Sexual science is of two kinds, that which is used for controlling or overcoming the sexual passion and that which is used to stimulate and feed it. Instruction in the former is as necessary a part of a child's education as the latter is harmful and dangerous and fit therefore only to be shunned. All great religions have rightly regarded *kama* as the archenemy of man, anger or hatred coming only in the second place. According to the Gita, the latter is an offspring of the former. The Gita of course uses the word *kama* in its wider sense of desire. But the same holds good of the narrow sense in which it is used here.



This, however, still leaves unanswered the question, viz., whether it is desirable to impart to young pupils a knowledge about the use and function of generative organs. It seems to me that it is necessary to impart such knowledge to a certain extent. At present they are often left to pick up such knowledge anyhow with the result that they are misled into abusive practices. We cannot properly control or conquer the sexual passion by turning a blind eye to it. I am therefore strongly in favour of teaching young boys and girls the significance and right use of their generative organs. And in my own way I have tried to impart this knowledge to young children of both sexes for whose training I was responsible.

But the sex education that I stand for must have for its object the conquest and sublimation of the sex passion. Such education should automatically serve to bring home to children the essential distinction between man and brute, to make them realize that it is man's special privilege and pride to be gifted with the faculties of head and heart both, that he is a thinking no less than a feeling animal, as the very derivation of the word shows, and to renounce the sovereignty of reason over the blind instincts is therefore to renounce a man's estate. In man reason quickens and guides the feeling, in brute the soul lies ever dormant. To awaken the heart is to awaken the dormant soul, to awaken reason, and to inculcate discrimination between good and evil.

Who should teach this true science of sex? Clearly, he who has attained mastery over his passions. To teach astronomy and kindred sciences we have teachers who have gone through a course of training in them and are masters of their art. Even so must we have as teachers of sexual science, i.e. the science of sex control, those who have studied it and have acquired mastery over self. Even a lofty utterance, that has not the backing of sincerity and experience, will be inert and lifeless, and will utterly fail to penetrate and quicken the hearts of men, while the speech that springs from self-realization and genuine experience is always fruitful.

Today our entire environment—our reading, our thinking, our social behaviour—is generally calculated to subserve and cater for the sex-urge. To break through its coils is no easy task. But it is a task worthy of our highest endeavour. Even if



there are a handful of teachers endowed with practical experience, who accept the ideal of attaining self-control as the highest duty of man, and are fired by a genuine and undying faith in their mission, and are sleeplessly vigilant and active their labour will light the path of the children of Gujarat, save the unwary from falling into the mire of sexuality and rescue those who might be already engulfed in it.

*Harijan, 21-11-'36*



## SECTION FOUR: VIOLENCE & ANARCHY

10

### TERRORISM

When I consider what is going on today in India I think it is necessary for us to say what our opinion is in connection with the political assassinations and political dacoities. I feel that these are purely a foreign importation which cannot take root in this land. But you, the student world, have to beware lest mentally or morally you give one thought of approval to this kind of terrorism. I, as a passive resister, will give you, another thing very substantial for it. Terrorize yourself; search within; by all means resist tyranny wherever you find it; by all means resist encroachment upon your liberty, but not by shedding the blood of the tyrant. This is not what is taught by our religion. Our religion is based upon *ahimsa*, which in its active form is nothing but love, love not only to your neighbours, not only to your friends, but love even to those who may be your enemies.

One word more in connection with the same thing. I think that if we were to practise truth, to practise *ahimsa*, we must immediately see that we also practise fearlessness. If our rulers are doing what in our opinion is wrong, and if we feel it our duty to let them hear our advice even though it may be considered sedition, I urge you to speak sedition-but at your peril, you must be prepared to suffer the consequences. And when you are ready to suffer the consequences and not hit below the belt, then I think you will have made good your right to have your advice heard even by the Government.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

Max Muller has told us—we need not go to Max Muller to interpret our own religion, but he says,—our religion consists of four letters 'D-U-T-Y' and not in the five letters 'R-I-G-H-T'. And if you believe that all that we want can be got from better discharge of our duty, then think always of your duty; and fighting along those lines you will have no fear of any man, you will fear only God.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*



My views may not be acceptable to you, I know. All the same, I can only give you what is stirring me to my very depths. On the authority of my experiences in South Africa, I claim that your countrymen who did not have modern culture but who had the strength of the *rishis* of old, who had inherited *tapashcharya* performed by the *rishis*, without having known a single word of English literature and without knowing anything whatsoever of the present modern culture, they were able to rise to their full height. And, what has been possible for the uneducated and illiterate countrymen of ours in South Africa, is ten times possible for you and for me today in this sacred land of ours. May that be your privilege and may that be my privilege!

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

I honour the anarchist for his love of the country; I honour him for his bravery in being willing to die for his country; but I ask him: Is killing honourable? Is the dagger of an assassin a fit precursor of an honourable death? I deny it. There is no warrant for such methods in any scriptures.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

The worst feature of the attempted assassination of Sir Ernest Hotson, the Acting Governor of the Bombay Presidency, was that the act was done by a student of the College which had invited His Excellency when as its honoured guest he was being shown round the College premises. It was as though a host was injuring his guest under his own roof. The canon recognized throughout the world is that the deadliest enemy, when he is under one's roof as guest, is entitled to protection from all harm. The act of the student was therefore essentially foul play without a single redeeming feature.

For the Acting Governor it was a providential escape, and it was fortunate for India and more so for the student world. I tender my congratulations to Sir Ernest Hotson as also to the nation.

It would be well if the believers in violence will take a lesson from this happy tragedy-happy because no one has suffered but the assailant.



Has he suffered, is he suffering, or is he deluding himself with the belief that he is a hero? Let this event be a warning to the students. After all a school or a college is a sanctuary where there should be nothing that is base or unholy. Schools and colleges are factories for the making of character. Parents, send their boys and girls to them so that they may become good men and women. It would be an evil day for the nation, if every student is suspected as a would-be assassin capable of any treachery.

The Bhagatsingh worship has done and is doing incalculable harm to the country. Bhagatsingh's character about which I had heard so much from reliable sources, the intimate connection I had with the attempts that were being made to secure commutation of the death sentence carried me away and identified me with the cautious and balanced resolution passed at Karachi. I regret to observe that the caution has been thrown to the winds. The deed itself is being worshipped as if it was worthy of emulation. The result is goondaism and degradation wherever this mad worship is being performed.

The Congress is a power in the land, but I warn Congressmen that it will soon lose all its charm if they betray their trust and encourage the Bhagatsingh cult whether in thought, word or deed. If the majority do not believe in the Congress policy of non-violence and truth, let them have the first article altered. Let us understand the distinction between policy and creed. A policy may be changed, a creed cannot. But either is as good as the other whilst it is held. Those, therefore, who hold non-violence only as a policy may not, without exposing themselves to the charge of dishonourable conduct, use the Congress membership as a cover for violence. I cannot get rid of the conviction, that the greatest obstacle to our progress towards Swaraj is our want of faith in our policy. Let this fortunate failure of attempted assassination open our eyes.

"But look at the Governor's black record. Does not the doer himself say he shot because of the Sholapur deeds, because he superseded an Indian and became Acting Governor?" some hasty youths or even grown up people will argue. My answer is: We knew all this when in 1920 we settled the Congress policy of non-violence and truth. There were, within our knowledge at the time, deeds much



blackier than his worst enemies have imputed to Sir Ernest Hotson. The Congress deliberately and after full debate came to the conclusion in 1920, that the answer to the vile and violent deeds of the Government was not greater violence on our part, but that it was profitable for us to answer violence with non-violence and vileness with truth. The Congress saw further, that the worst administrators were not bad inherently, but that they were a fruit of the system of which they were willing or unwilling victims. We saw too that the system corrupted even the best among ourselves. And so we evolved a policy of non-violent action that should destroy the system. Ten years' experience has shown that the policy of non-violence and truth, though followed half-heartedly, has answered phenomenally well, and that we are very near the harbour. The record of Sir Ernest Hotson, however bad it may be, is wholly irrelevant and can in no way extenuate, much less excuse, the double crime of attempted assassination and treachery. The reported hostile demonstration by some students has made the ugly affair uglier still. I hope that the students and the teachers throughout India will seriously bestir themselves, and put the educational house in order. And in my opinion it is the peremptory duty of the forthcoming meeting of the All India Congress Committee to condemn the treacherous outrage and reiterate its policy in unequivocal terms.

*Young India, 30-7-31*



## ROWDYISM

I have two letters from schoolmasters, besides others from laymen, complaining of students' rowdyism in Travancore. The Principal of C. M. S. College, Kottayam, says that the students blocked the passage of those who wanted to attend the classes. They twice turned away girls who did not listen to them. They rushed at the classes and made noises, making classes impossible.

This violent participation by students in a struggle which its authors claim to be absolutely non-violent, makes progress difficult, if not impossible. So far as I know, the leaders of the movement do not want the students, even if they wish to participate, to depart in any way from the non-violent way. Obstruction, rowdyism and the like are naked violence. I am credited with influence over students. If I have any, I would ask them to observe non-violence in thought, word and deed. If, however, the forces of violence cannot be controlled by those who are in charge of the movement, it may be a question for them whether in the interest of the movement itself it is not wise to suspend civil disobedience.

I must not presume to lay down the law from this distance but I do feel from the evidence before me that the leaders would incur grave risk if they allowed students to think that their violence would help the movement or that it is secretly liked by the leaders.

*Harijan, 22-10-'38*

Giving a severe castigation to the unruly crowd that had indulged in window smashing and would have smashed in the roof too if they could, Gandhiji remarked that it augured ill for the Independence to come. The Working Committee which was holding its meeting in their city was considering how to win Independence for the people of India in the shortest time. It was not labouring for a change of masters. If the masses wanted to enjoy Independence, they had first to learn the secret of observing voluntary discipline. Otherwise discipline would have to be imposed upon them by the powers that be. That would not be Independence but its negation. Every people got the Government



they deserved. If they indulged in hooliganism, so would the Government and its officials in the name of law and order. The result would not be freedom or Independence but a balancing of anarchies, each trying to keep the other in check. Voluntary discipline was the first requisite of corporate freedom. If the people were well-behaved the Government officials would become their true servants. Otherwise they would ride on their necks, not without a semblance of justification. During the Boer War he had seen thousands of soldiers perform a noiseless march through a dense, tropical jungle in the middle of the night, in pitch darkness for not even a match-stick was to be struck to light a cigarette, lest it should betray their movements to the enemy. The whole troop formation moved like one man in perfect silence and harmony. The need for discipline for a nation on its march towards Independence was infinitely greater. Without it, *Ramarajya* which meant the kingdom of God on earth would remain an empty dream.

*Harijan, 18-8-'46*

Gandhiji addressed after prayer the students of Calcutta. Their Vice-Chancellor was good enough to see him about the evening's proceedings. He was nervous about the students' behaviour towards Shaheed Saheb. He said that he would have only the prayer and his usual after-prayer speech. It should not have been so. Everywhere there appeared to be anarchy in the student world. They did not tender obedience to their teachers and their Vice-Chancellor. On the contrary, they expected obedience from their teachers. It was a painful exhibition on the part of those who were to be the future leaders of the nation. They gave an exhibition of unruliness that evening. He was faced with placards in the foreign tongue depicting his comrade Shaheed Saheb in unbecoming language. He suggested to them that inasmuch as they had insulted Shaheed Saheb, they had insulted the speaker. Saheed Saheb could not be insulted by language used against him. But the speaker could not take up that attitude. The students should be, above all humble and correct.

*Harijan, 7-9-'47*



If he could speak from his knowledge of Hindu belief, the life of a student was to correspond to the life of a *sannyasi* up to the time his studies ended. He was to be under the strictest discipline. His behaviour was to be a pattern of exemplary self-restraint. Had they lived at all up to the pattern, they would not have done what they did at the prayer meeting.

*Harijan, 7-9-'47*



## STRIKES

The strike of nearly seven hundred students of the Gujarat College, Ahmedabad, which has now gone on for over 20 days is no longer a matter merely of local importance. A labour strike is bad enough, a students' strike is worse, whether it is justly declared or unjustly. It is worse because of the consequences it entails in the end and because of the status of the parties. Unlike labourers, students are educated and can have no material interest to serve by means of strikes, and unlike employers, heads of educational institutions have no interest in conflict with that of the students. Students moreover are supposed to be embodiments of discipline. A strike of students therefore produces far-reaching consequences and can only be justified in extraordinary circumstances.

But though occasions for students' strikes in well-ordered schools and colleges must be rare, it is not impossible to conceive such as to warrant strikes on their part. Thus for instance, if a principal running counter to public opinion refuses to recognize a day of universal rejoicing as a holiday which both parents and their school- or college-going children may desire, students will be justified in declaring a strike for that day. Such occasions will be more frequent in India as the students grow more self-conscious and become more alive to a sense of their responsibility to the nation.

In the case of the Gujarat College, I cannot help saying that so far as I have been able to judge, the students have had ample reason for the strike. It is quite wrong to say, as has been said in some quarters, that the strike has been engineered by a few mischievous students. It is impossible for a handful of mischief-makers to hold together seven hundred boys for over a fortnight. As it is, there are responsible citizens advising and guiding the students. Chief among these is Shri Mavlankar, a pleader of experience and known for his wisdom and moderation. He has been in touch with the Principal and is firmly of opinion that the students are absolutely in the right.

The facts can be briefly told. The students absented themselves from College with the rest of the boys all over India on the Simon Boycott Day. The absence



was no doubt unauthorized. The students were technically in the wrong. They should have at least asked for formal permission before they absented themselves. But boys are the same all the world over. One might as well hope to restrain the winds as hope to curb the roused enthusiasm of students. Theirs was at best a youthful indiscretion. This was condoned by the Principal after a great deal of negotiation; the boys being permitted optionally to appear for their terminal examination on a fee of Rs. 3 each, it being understood that the majority would appear and that those who did not would not be in any way punished. The Principal, however, it is alleged, broke his pledge and put up a notice making it compulsory for the boys to appear for the terminal examination upon payment of Rs. 3 each. This naturally incensed the boys. They felt, if the salt loseth its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?' They therefore struck work. The rest is simple. The strike continues and friends and critics alike certify to the great self-restraint and correct conduct of the boys. In my opinion, students of a college are in duty bound to resist such breach of honour by their Principal as is alleged against the Principal of the Gujarat College. It is impossible to render to a teacher that unreserved respect to which he is entitled by reason of his honourable calling when he is found to be guilty of breach of honour.

If the students are resolute there can be but one end to the strike, viz., withdrawal of the offending notice and an absolute promise of immunity from any punishment to the students. Indeed the most proper thing would be for the Government to appoint another Principal for the College.

There is in the Government Colleges too much of espionage and persecution of boys holding pronounced political views or taking any part in political gatherings not liked by the Government. It is high time that this unwarranted interference was stopped. In a country groaning as India is under foreign rule, it is impossible to prevent students from taking part in movements for national freedom. All that can be done is to regulate their enthusiasm so as not to interfere with their studies. They may not become partisans taking sides with warring parties. But they have a right to be left to hold and actively to advocate what political opinion they choose. The function of educational institutions is to impart education to



the boys and girls who choose to join them and there-through to help to mould their character, never to interfere with their political or other non-moral activities outside the school room.

The question therefore raised by the strike of Ahmedabad students is of first rate importance and they deserve the sympathy and support of other scholastic institutions and the public in general. Parents are as much concerned with the strike as school-going boys and girls. For the Ahmedabad students have, I understand, acted throughout with the approval of their parents or guardians.

*Young India, 24-1-'29*

The strike of the students of the Gujarat College, Ahmedabad, continues with unabated vigour. The students are showing determination, calmness and solidarity that are worthy of all praise. They are beginning only now to feel their strength. And I venture to think that they will feel it still more if they will do some constructive work. It is my conviction that our schools and colleges, instead of making us manly, make us obsequious, timid, indecisive and ballastless. Manliness consists not in bluff, bravado or lordliness. It consists in daring to do the right and facing consequences, whether it is in matters social, political or other. It consists in deeds not in words. The students have now before them probably a long time of waiting. They must not be disheartened if events shape themselves so. It will then be up to the public to intervene. It will then be up to the student world all over India to vindicate the right which is entirely on the side of the students. Those who would study the question in all its fullness can secure from Shri Mavlankar copies of all the relevant papers.

The fight of the Ahmedabad students is a fight not for their own personal rights, it is a fight for the honour of students in general and therefore in a sense for national honour. Students who have been fighting so pluckily as these are doing deserve the fullest public support.

And this the students will surely get if they will engage in some constructive national activity. They will lose nothing by doing national work. They need not confine themselves to the Congress programme, if it does not commend itself to them. The chief thing is to demonstrate their capacity for holding together and



doing independent solid work. The charge is often brought against us that we are good only at oratorical displays and fruitless momentary demonstrations, but fail when we are called upon to do work that requires cohesion, co-operation, grit and unflinching determination. The students have a splendid opportunity of falsifying the charge. Will they rise to the occasion?

They may not lose faith on any account whatsoever. The College is the nations property. If we were not demoralized, a foreign Government should never be able to hold our property or make it practically criminal for students to take part in the nations battle for freedom, which it should be the duty and privilege of students to lead.

*Young India, 31-1-29*

A college student of Bangalore writes:

"I have read your article in the *Harijan* and I request you to let me know your opinion on students taking part to strikes like Andamans Day, Abattoir Day, etc."

Whilst I have pleaded for the removal of restrictions on the speech and movements of students, I am not able to support political strikes or demonstrations. Students should have the greatest freedom of expression and of opinion. They may openly sympathize with any political party they like. But in my opinion they may not have freedom of action whilst they are studying. A student cannot be an active politician and pursue his studies at the same time. It is difficult to draw hard and fast lines at the time of big national upheavals. Then they do not strike or, if the word 'strike' can be used in such circumstances, it is a wholesale strike; it is a suspension of studies. Thus what may appear to be an exception is not one in reality.

As a matter of fact the question such as the correspondent has raised should not arise in the Congress Provinces. For there can be no curb which the best mind of the students will not willingly accept. The majority of them are, must be, Congress-minded. They may not do anything that would embarrass the Ministries. If they struck, they would do so because the Ministers wanted them to. But I cannot conceive of Congress Ministers wanting them to strike except when the Congress is no longer in office, and when the Congress declares, may be, a non-



violent active war against the Government of the day. And even then, I should think that to invite students in the first instance to suspend their studies for strikes would be tantamount to a declaration of bankruptcy. If the people in general are with the Congress for any demonstration in the nature of strikes, students will be left alone except as a last resort. During the last war the students were not the first to be called out but they were the last, so far as I recollect, and then only college students.

*Harijan, 2-10-'37*

Below is an extract from a letter from a teacher in the Annamalai University:

"Some time in November last, a group of five or six students organizedly assaulted the secretary of the University Union, a fellow student. Shri Srinivasa Sastri, the Vice-Chancellor, took a serious view of it and punished the leader of the group with expulsion from the University and the rest with suspension till the end of this academic year.

Some sympathizers and friends of these punished students wanted to abstain from attending classes and strike work. They consulted the other students the next day and tried to persuade them also to strike work as a mark of protest. But they could not succeed as the majority of the students felt that the punishment meted out to the six people was well deserved and so refused to join the strikers or show any sympathy for them.

The next day, about 20 per cent of the students stayed away from the classes; the remaining 80 per cent attended the classes as usual. I may add, the strength of this University is about 800.

The student who was expelled next came inside the hostel to direct the strike. Finding the strike unsuccessful he adopted other methods in the evening, as for example, bodily lying across the four main outlets from the hostel, locking some gates of the hostel, locking up some of the young boys inside their own rooms,—especially the junior kids who could be intimidated, into obedience. In this way in the afternoon, the rest of the students were prevented from coming outside the hostel gates by fifty or sixty people.

The authorities thus finding the gates closed wanted to make an opening in the fencing. But when they started pulling down the fence with the help of the servants of the University, the strikers prevented the other students from passing through the



breaches to attend college. They tried removing the picketers bodily but could not succeed. The authorities finding the situation unmanageable requested the police to remove the expelled student from the hostel premises as he was the source of all the trouble, which the police did. This naturally irritated some more of the students who began to show sympathy with the strikers. The next morning the strikers found the whole fencing removed from the hostel, entered the college premises and picketed—by lying across the staircase passages and entrances to class rooms. Shri Srinivasa Sastri then closed down the University for a long vacation of 1½ months from November 29th to January 16th. He gave a statement to the Press appealing to the students to come back from home in a chastened and happier mood for study.

But the college reopened with renewed activities on the part of the strikers who had extra advice during the vacation from... They went to Rajaji, it appears, but he asked them to obey the Vice-Chancellor and declined to interfere. He sent two telegrams also to the strikers, through the Vice-Chancellor, appealing to them to give up the strike and attend college classes and settle down to quiet work. Though on the majority of good students these telegrams had a good effect, the strikers remained adamant.

The picketing is still going on. It has almost become chronic. The strikers are about 35 to 45 in number. They have got about 50 sympathizers who dare not come into the open and strike with them, but from within they create trouble. Every day they come in a body and lie down in front of entrances to classes, and on the stairs leading to classes on the first floor and thus prevent the students from entering the classes. But the teachers shift from place to place and hold classes before the picketers can reach there. Each hour the venue of the classes is changed. Sometimes classes are held in the open air, so that the picketers cannot block the entrance by lying down. On those occasions the strikers disturb the classes by shouting and sometimes by haranguing the students who have assembled to hear lectures of their respective class teachers.

Yesterday there was a new development. The strikers came into the classes, rolled on the floor and uttered shouts. Some strikers, I heard, began writing on blackboards before the teacher could come. If any teachers are known to be meek, some of the strikers try to intimidate them also. In fact they threatened the Vice-Chancellor with 'Violence and bloodshed', if he did not accede to their demands.

One other important point I ought to tell you is that the strikers get help from some outsiders, employ *goondas* to enter the University premises and disturb the work



there. As a matter of fact I saw many such *goondas*-and people who are not students-wandering about in the verandahs, and near the classrooms also. Apart from it the students use abusive language against the Vice-Chancellor.

Now the point I am driving at is this: We have all been feeling, i.e., several teachers and a large number of students, that these activities are not truthful and non-violent and so are against the spirit of Satyagraha.

I learn reliably that some of the striker students persist in calling this non-violent. They say that if Mahatmaji declares this to be violent they will stop these activities."

The letter is dated 17th February and addressed to Kakasaheb Kalelkar whom the teacher knows intimately. The portion not printed by me seeks Kakasaheb's opinion whether the conduct of the students can be called non-violent and deplores the attitude of unruliness which has become rampant among so many students in India.

The letter gives the names of those who are inciting the strikers to persist in their behaviour. On the publication of my opinion on the strike, someone, presumably a student, sent me an angry telegram saying that the behaviour of the strikers is perfectly non-violent. Assuming the correctness of the version reproduced by me, I have no hesitation in saying that the attitude of the students is essentially violent. Surely, if someone blocks the passage to my house, his action is violence just as much as if he pushed me bodily from the doorstep.

If students have a real grievance against their teachers, they may have the right to strike and even picket their school or college but only to the extent of politely warning the unwary from attending their classes. They could do so by speaking or by distributing leaflets. But they may not obstruct the passage or use any coercion against those who do not want to strike.

And the students have struck against whom? Shri Srinivasa Sastriar is one of India's best scholars. He had become renowned as a teacher before many of the students were born or were in their teens. Any university in the world will be proud to have him as Vice-Chancellor as well for the greatness of his learning as for the nobility of his character.



If the writer of the letter to Kakasaheb has given an accurate account of the happenings in the Annamalai University, Sastriar's handling of the situation seems to me to have been quite correct. In my opinion the strikers are harming themselves by their conduct. I belong to the old school which believed in reverence for teachers. I can understand not going to a school for whose teachers I have no regard. But I cannot understand disrespect towards or vilification of my teachers. Such conduct is ungentlemanly, and all ungentlemanliness is violence.

*Harijan, 4-3-'39*

An Indian Christian student from a Missionary College in Bengal writes:

"Missionary colleges are meant to be centres of preaching and conversion to Christianity. The Missionaries talk of the Bible, Christ and Christianity, but when any matter of national importance to India arises they are surprisingly reactionary. We have annual socials in our college. On the evening of 7th September one such was held, and the opening item in our programme was the singing of *Bande Mataram* by a group of boarders; The Principal objected on the ground that it was difficult for Europeans to stand for ten minutes in honour of an Indian national song and that, if the practice of singing *Bande Mataram* was allowed, it would mean official recognition of it by them as a national song which they do not care to give. No compromise was possible in spite of every argument on the part of the students. The students have called a strike. In the same way the Congress should also resort to Satyagraha and non-cooperation, for imperialist Britain will never understand our point of view."

Of late I have written a great deal against strikes by students. I do not know the name of the college. Had I known it, I would have sought verification from the authorities. Therefore I base my opinion on the assumption that the facts are correctly stated by my correspondent. If they are, I am happy to be able to say that this strike was thoroughly justified. And I hope that it was wholly spontaneous and successful. Whether the song is in fact national or not is not for the Missionaries concerned to determine. For them it is surely enough to know that their students recognize the song as national. Professors and teachers, if they are to be popular with their pupils, have to identify themselves with their activities and aspirations so long as they are not unhealthy or immoral.



*Harijan, 6-10-'40*

(1)

I have received several letters from students in Madras and the United Provinces regarding their demonstrations over Pandit Jawaharlal Nehrus arrest and imprisonment and the threatened reprisals by the Governments concerned. The students now desire to have a strike of protest and ask for my advice.

When the whole world hangs its head in shame over the imprisonment of one of India's noblest and bravest sons, it is no wonder that the student world in India is shaken to its roots. Whilst, therefore, my sympathy is wholly with them, I must adhere to the view that the students were wrong in their walkout as a mark of their resentment over Jawaharlal Nehrus imprisonment. The Governments of the two provinces are more than wrong in their threats of reprisals.

The students will, however, do well not to resort to the contemplated strike of protest. If they desire my advice they should send an authorized representative, who is in full possession of the facts of which I have but a very superficial knowledge. I shall gladly give guidance for what it may be worth. They know how much I would value their whole-hearted co-operation in the struggle I am endeavouring to lead. In any case, they will spoil their own and damage the national cause by ill-conceived and hasty action.

(2)

My attention has been drawn to some paragraphs appearing in the Press, purporting to give my opinion about the questions agitating the students. I have not read all that has appeared in the Press, if only because I want to conserve my energy on which, of late, I have been obliged to put an unduly heavy strain. My opinion is firm. No provocation should be allowed to justify political strikes by students, unless they have made up their minds once for all to abandon their college or school studies. Unlike, as in free countries, our educational institutions are controlled by the rulers, from, whom the nation is struggling to free itself. Self-suppression is, therefore, the price the students must pay for receiving the education evolved and controlled by the rulers. They cannot have the cake and



eat it too. If they want the education which the schools and colleges impart, as evidently they do, they have to conform to the rules and regulations laid down for these institutions. Therefore, unless the heads of the institutions consent, there should be no political strikes. But I have suggested a way out. Students have ample time after school and college hours of which they are their own masters. They can hold meetings, express their sympathy with the national cause in an orderly manner, and they can have processions, too, if they like. Those who wish to take part in Civil Disobedience and accept my leadership can do so after suspending their studies for the time being, by conforming to the conditions laid down for offering Civil Disobedience and after receiving my permission.

Letters being received by me from individual students show that they have little faith in my leadership, for they have no faith in the constructive programme of which the centre and most visible part is Khadi. They do not believe in spinning, and, if my correspondents are to be accepted as reliable witnesses, their belief in non-violence is also of a doubtful quantity.

Students can play an effective part in the national struggle, if they will wholeheartedly come under discipline. But if they will act on their own and fritter away their energy in making ineffective demonstrations, they will hinder the national cause. I am glad to be able to testify that Congressmen are showing a measure of discipline which is an agreeable surprise to me. For, I was not prepared for it. Let it not be said of the student world that at the eleventh hour, they were found wanting. Let them remember that I am asking for greater steadfastness, greater courage, and greater self-sacrifice than can be devoted by undisciplined and thoughtless demonstrations. The students should also realize that the number of civil resisters will always be confined to a few, compared with the 350 millions forming the nation. There is no limit to the number who should take part in working the constructive programme. I regard this the most useful and effective part of the movement for independence, without which civil resistance will cease to be civil and, therefore, utterly valueless.

[The above are two statements issued to the Press by Gandhiji in November 1940.-  
Ed.]



## NON-VIOLENCE

Our Shastras lay down unequivocally that a proper observance of truth, chastity, scrupulous regard for all life, abstention from coveting others' possessions and refusal to hoard anything but what is necessary for our daily wants is indispensable for a right life; that without it a knowledge of the divine element is an impossibility. Our civilization tells us with daring certainty that a proper and perfect cultivation of the quality of *ahimsa* which, in its active form means purest love and pity, brings the whole world to our feet. The author of this discovery gives a wealth of illustration which carries conviction with it.

Examine its result in the political life. There is no gift so valued by our Shastras as the gift of life. Consider what our relations would be with our rulers if we gave absolute security of life to them. If they could but feel that, no matter what we might feel about their acts, we would hold their bodies as sacred as our own, there would immediately spring up an atmosphere of mutual trust, and there would be such frankness on either side as to pave the way for an honourable and just solution of many problems that worry us today. It should be remembered that in practising *ahimsa*, there need not be any reciprocation though, as a matter of fact, in its final stages it commands reciprocation. Many of us believe, and I am one of them, that through our civilization we have a message to deliver to the world.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

Ours will only then be a truly spiritual nation when we shall show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self. If we will but clean our houses, our palaces and temples of the attributes of wealth and show in them the attributes of morality, we can offer battle to any combination of hostile forces without having to carry the burden of a heavy militia. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and the irrevocable promise is that everything will be added unto us. These are real economics. May you and I treasure them and enforce them in our daily life.



*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

Q. Believing that mass revolution is the only means to achieve freedom, do you believe it a practical proposition that the mass will and can remain absolutely non-violent in thought and action in spite of all possible provocations in the course of such a revolution? It may be possible for an individual to attain that standard but do you think that it is possible for the masses to attain that standard of non-violence in action? A. This is a strange question coming from you at this time of the day, for the entire course of our non-violent fight bears testimony to the fact that wherever violence has broken out, it has broken out not on the part of the masses but, if I may put it like that, on the part of the classes, that is, it was manipulated by the intellectuals. Even in violent fighting, though the individual sometimes lets himself go and forgets everything the mass of the fighting force dares not and does not. It resorts to arms only under orders and has to suspend fire in response to orders, no matter how great the individual impulse to revenge or retaliation might, be. There is no *prima facie* reason why under non-violence the mass, if disciplined, should be incapable of showing the discipline which in organized warfare a fighting force normally does. Besides, a non-violent general has this special advantage: he does not require thousands of leaders to successfully carry on his fight. The non-violent message does not require so many for transmission. The example of a few true men or women if they have fully imbibed the spirit of non-violence is bound to infect the whole mass in the end. This was just what I experienced in the beginning of the movement. I found that people actually believed that in my heart of hearts I favoured violence even when I preached non-violence. That was the way they had been trained to read and interpret the utterances of the leaders. But when they realized that I meant what I said, they did observe non-violence in deed under the most trying circumstances. There has been no repetition of Chauri Chaura. As for non-violence in thought God alone is judge. But this much is certain that non-violence in action cannot be sustained unless it goes hand in hand with non-violence in thought.

*Amrit Bazar Patrika, 3-8-'34*



Q. We want to be precise as to what you mean by *non-violence*. If by non-violence you mean absence of personal hatred, we have no objection to it. What we object to is your identifying non-violence with non-killing. Wars are waged not on personal lines but to vindicate national honour or interests. Issues have always been fought out with the maximum amount of force both moral and physical. When all can successfully use physical force for the triumph of our national ideals and when it is the shortest cut why do you object to it? Besides the world is not even now advanced enough to appreciate moral persuasion.

A. My *ahimsa* does rule out the use of all force otherwise than moral. But it is one thing to say that physical force has been or is today being used in the world for the settlement of national issues; quite another thing to say that it should continue so to be used.

If we take to violence after the West we shall soon be bankrupt as the West is fast becoming. Only the other day, I was having a talk with an European friend. He was appalled at the prospect of wholesale exploitation of the coloured races of the world by the highly industrialized nations of the West with which civilization is today confronted. The principle of non-violence is today passing through a period of probation. The forces of the spirit are engaged in life and death grapples with brute force.

Let us in this crisis not shrink from the test.

*Amrit Bazar Patrika, 3-8-'34*

I am telling you (Students of Eton) God's truth when I say that the communal question does not matter and should not worry you at all. But, if you will study history, study the much bigger question-How did millions of people make up their minds to adopt non-violence and how did they adhere to it? Study, not man in his animal nature, man following the law of the jungle, but study man in all his glory. Those engaged in communal squabbles are like specimens in a lunatic asylum. But study men laying down their lives, without hurting anyone, in the cause of their country's freedom. Study man in his glory, man following the law of his higher nature, the law of love so that when you grow to manhood you will have improved your heritage. It can be no pride to you that your nation is ruling over



ours. No one chained a slave without chaining himself. And no nation kept another in subjection without itself turning into a subject nation. It is a most sinful connection, a most unnatural connection that is existing at present between England and India and I want you to bless our mission because we are naturally entitled to our freedom which is our birthright and we are doubly entitled to it by virtue of the penance and suffering we have undergone. I want you, when you grow up, to make a unique contribution to the glory of your nation, by emancipating it from its sin of exploitation, and thus contribute to the progress of mankind.

*Young India, 12-11-'31*

One who desires to practice *ahimsa* must for the time being forget all about snakes etc. Let him not worry if he cannot avoid killing them, but try for all he is worth to overcome the anger and ill-will of men by his patient endeavour as a first step toward cultivating universal love.

Abjure brinjals or potatoes by all means, if you will, but do not for heaven's sake begin to feel self-righteous or flatter yourself that you are practising *ahimsa* on that account. The very idea is enough to make one blush. *Ahimsa* is not a mere matter of dietetics, it transcends it. What a man eats or drinks matters little: it is the self-denial, the self-restraint behind it that matters. By all means practise as much restraint in the choice of the articles of your diet as you like. The restraint is commendable, even necessary, but it touches only the fringe of *ahimsa*. A man may allow himself a wide latitude in the matter of diet and yet may be a personification of *ahimsa* and compel our homage, if his heart overflows with love and melts at another's woe, and has been purged of all passions. On the other hand a man always over scrupulous in diet is an utter stranger to *ahimsa* and a pitiful wretch, if he is a slave to selfishness and passions and is hard of heart.

*Young India, 6-9-'28*

*Ahimsa* in education must have an obvious bearing on the mutual relations of the students. Where the whole atmosphere is redolent with the pure fragrance of *ahimsa*, boys and girls studying together will live like brothers and sisters, in



freedom and yet in self-imposed restraint; the students will be bound to the teachers in ties of filial love, mutual respect and mutual trust. This pure atmosphere will of itself be a continual object lesson in *ahimsa*. The students brought up in such an atmosphere will always distinguish themselves by their charity and breadth of view, and a special talent for service. Social evils will cease to present any difficulty to them, the very intensity of their love being enough to burn out those evils. For instance the very idea of child-marriage will appear repugnant to them. They will not even think of penalizing the parents of brides by demanding dowries from them. And how dare they after marriage regard their wives as chattel or simply a means of gratifying their lust? How will a young man brought up in such an environment of *ahimsa* ever think of fighting a brother of his own or a different faith? At any rate no one will think of calling himself a votary of *ahimsa* and do all or any of these things.

To sum up. *Ahimsa* is a weapon of matchless potency. It is the *summum bonum* of life. It is an attribute of the brave, in fact it is their all. It does not come within reach of the coward. It is no wooden or lifeless dogma, but a living and a life-giving force. It is the special attribute of the soul. That is why it has been described as the highest *dharma* (law). In the hands of the educationist, therefore, it ought to take the form of the purest love, ever fresh, an ever-gushing spring of life expressing itself in every act. Ill-will cannot stand in its presence. The sun of *ahimsa* carries all the hosts of darkness such as hatred, anger and malice before itself. *Ahimsa* in education shines clear and far and can no more be hidden, even as the sun cannot be hidden by any means.

*Young India*, 6-9-'28



## SECTION FIVE: POLITICS

14

### SHOULD STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN POLITICS?

"I am not against their learning modern politics. It will be a good thing if the teachers would collect and bring to their notice newspaper utterances for and against any pending question of the day and teach the students to draw their own conclusions. I have tried the scheme with success. In fact no subject is taboo to the students, as Bertrand Russel and others advocate students should be taught even sex questions. What I am dead against is the students being used as tools for purposes which serve not themselves or those who so use them."

The correspondent has written in the hope of my condemning the participation by the student world in active political work. But I am sorry to have to disappoint him. He should have known that in 1920-'21 I had not an inconsiderable share in drawing students out of their schools and colleges and inducing them to undertake political duty carrying with it the risk of imprisonment. I think it is their clear duty to take a leading part in the political movement of their country. They are doing so all the world over. In India where political consciousness has till recently been unfortunately confined in a large measure to the English educated class, their duty is, indeed, greater. In China and Egypt, it was the students who have made the national movement possible. They cannot do less in India.

What the principal might have urged was the necessity of students observing the rules of non-violence and acquiring control over the rowdies, instead of being controlled by them.

*Young India, 29-3-'28*

It can be said without fear of contradiction that it was the students of China who led the fight for freedom in that great country, it is the students in Egypt who are in the forefront in Egypt's struggle for real independence. Students of India are expected to do no less. They attend schools and colleges or should attend not for self but for service. They should be the salt of the nation.



*Young India, 12-7-'28*

There is in the Government colleges too much of espionage and persecution of boys holding pronounced political views or taking any part in political gatherings not liked by the Government. It is high time that this unwarranted interference was stopped. In a country groaning as India is under foreign rule, it is impossible to prevent students from taking part in movements for national freedom. All that can be done is to regulate their enthusiasm so as not to interfere with their studies. They may not become partisans taking sides with warring parties. But they have a right to be left free to hold and actively to advocate what political opinion they choose. The function of educational institutions is to impart education to the boys and girls who choose to join them and there through to help to mould their character, never to interfere with their political or other non-moral activities outside the school room.

*Young India, 24-1-'29*

I have letters from several provinces saying that the education authorities are imposing conditions on the return of students who had left their schools or colleges during the struggle. A circular of which a copy has been sent by one of the correspondents requires parents to give guarantees that their children will not take part in politics. These correspondents ask me whether these conditions are consistent with the Settlement.<sup>1</sup>

Without entering into that question for the time being I have no hesitation in saying that neither students nor parents if they have any self-respect left in them should accept such conditions. What will it profit the students or the parents if they have to lose their souls to gain the questionable advantage of a public education and a certificate? There are the national institutions open to the students. If they do not like these, they can study at home. It is a gross superstition to suppose that knowledge can be obtained only by going to schools and colleges. The world produced brilliant students before schools and colleges came into being. There is nothing so ennobling or lasting as self-study. Schools and colleges make most of us mere receptacles for holding the superfluities of knowledge. Wheat is left out and mere husk is taken in. I do not wish to decry



schools and colleges as such. They have their use. But we are making altogether too much of them. They are but one of the many means of gaining knowledge.

*Young India, 25-6-'31*

1 Gandhi-Irwin Settlement.



## PREPARATION FOR PARTICIPATION

The greatest obstacle in the way of the students is fear of consequences mostly imaginary. The first lesson, therefore, that students have to learn is to shed fear. Freedom can never be won by those who are afraid of rustication, poverty and even death. The greatest fear for students of Government institutions is rustication. Let them realize that learning without courage is like a waxen statue beautiful to look at but bound to melt at the least touch of a hot substance.

*Young India, 12-7-'28*

What happened to the students during the Rowlatt Act agitation is repeating itself now. During those precious days one of them wrote to me that he felt like committing suicide because he was rusticated. A student now writes:

"The students of...of...heard the Mothers call and responded to it. We observed *hartal* on the 3rd. For this courageous deed of ours, we are being fined Rs. 2/-per head. The poor students are losing their freeships, half-freeships and scholarships. Please write to Mr...the Principal or advise him through *Young India*. Tell him we are no criminals, we have committed no crime. Tell him we listened and responded to the Mother's call, we saved her to our utmost, from dishonour. Tell him we are no cowards. Please come forward to our aid."

I cannot follow the advice to write to the Principal. If he is not to lose his 'job', I suppose he has to take some disciplinary measures. So long as educational institutions remain under the patronage of the Government, they will be, as they must be, used for the support of the Government, and the students or the teachers who support anti-Government popular measures, must count the cost and take the risk of being dismissed. From the patriot's standpoint, the students did well and bravely in making common cause with the people. They would have laid themselves open to the charge of want of patriotism, if not worse, if they had not responded to the country's call. From the Government standpoint, they undoubtedly did wrong and incurred their severe displeasure. The students cannot blow hot and cold. If they will be with the people's cause, they must hold their scholastic career subservient to the cause and sacrifice it when it comes in



conflict with the interests of the country. I saw this quite clearly in 1920 and subsequent experience has confirmed the first impression. There is no doubt that the safest and the most honourable course for the student world is to leave Government schools and colleges at any cost. But the next best course for them is to hold themselves in readiness to be thrown out whenever a conflict occurs between the Government and the people. If they will not be, as they have been elsewhere, leaders themselves in the revolt against the Government, they must at least become staunch and true followers. Let their facing of the consequences be as brave as was their response to the nation's call. Let them not humiliate themselves, let them not surrender their self-respect in trying to re-enter colleges and schools from which they may have been dismissed. The bravery of their response will be counted as bravado, if it succumbs on the very first trial.

*Young India, 16-2-'28*

I am sure that every national educational institution will copy the noble example of the Gujarat Vidyapith which was the first to come into being in response to the call of non-co-operation in 1920. And I hope that the Government and aided institutions will also copy the example. Every revolution of modern times has found students in the forefront. This, because it is peaceful, ought not to offer less attraction to the students.

The motto of the Gujarat Vidyapeeth is: सा विद्या या विमुक्तये | It means: That is knowledge which is designed for salvation. On the principle that the greater includes the less, national independence or material freedom is included in the spiritual. The knowledge gained in educational institutions must therefore at least teach the way and lead to such freedom.

The most superficial observer will not fail to notice that the daily routine of the Satyagraha pilgrims constitutes by itself a perfect education. It is not a company of violent rebels who are moving about creating ravages and letting loose every passion; it is a band of self-restrained men who have declared non-violent rebellion against organized tyranny and who seek to secure freedom from it by severe self-suffering, spreading on their march the message of freedom through non-violence and truth. No father need feel the slightest anxiety about



dedicating his son or daughter to what is after all the truest education that can be conceived in the existing circumstances of the country.

Let me distinguish between the call of 1920 and the present call. The call of 1920 was for emptying Government institutions and bringing into being national ones. It was a call for preparation. Today the call is for engaging in the final conflict, i.e. for mass civil disobedience. This may or may not, come. It will not come, if those who have been hitherto the loudest in their cry for liberty have no action in them. If the salt loses its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? The students are expected to precipitate a crisis not by empty, meaningless cries but by mute, dignified, unchallengeable action worthy of students. It may again be that the students have no faith in self-sacrifice, and less in non-violence. Then naturally they will not and need not come out. They may then, like the revolutionaries, (whose letter is reproduced in another column) wait and see what non-violence in action can do. It will be sportsmanlike for them either to give themselves whole-heartedly to this non-violent revolt or to remain neutral, and (if they like) critical, observers of the developing events. They will disturb and harm the movement, if they will act as they choose and without fitting in with the plan of the authors or even in defiance of them. This I know, that if civil disobedience is not developed to the fullest extent possible now, it may not be for another generation. The choice before the students is clear. Let them make it. The awakening of the past ten years has not left them unmoved. Let them take the final plunge.

*Young India, 20-3-'30*

Q. Although a college student I am a four anna member of the Congress. You say I may not take any active part in the coming struggle whilst I am studying. What part do you expect the student world to take in the freedom movement?

A. There is a confusion of thought in the question. The fight is going on how and it will continue till the nation has come to her birthright. Civil disobedience is one of the many methods of fighting. So far as I can judge today, I have no intention of calling out students. Millions will not take part in civil disobedience. But millions will help in a variety of ways.



1. Students can, by learning the art of voluntary discipline, fit themselves for leadership in the various branches of the nation's work.
2. They can aim not at finding lucrative careers but at becoming national servants after completing their studies.
3. They can set apart for the national coffers a certain sum from their allowances.
4. They can promote intercommunal, inter-provincial, and intercaste harmony among themselves and fraternize with *Harijans* by abolishing the least trace of untouchability from their lives.
5. They can spin regularly and use certified Khadi to the exclusion of all other cloth as well as hawk Khadi.
6. They can set apart a certain time every week, if not, every day, for service in a village or villages nearest to their institutions and, during the vacation devote a certain time daily for national service.

The time may of course come when it may be necessary to call out the students as I did before. Though the contingency is remote, it will never come, if I have any say in the matter, unless the students have qualified themselves previously in the manner above described.

*Harijan, 17-2-'40*



### STUDENTS AND SATYAGRAHA

Q. Why do you object to students participating in the Satyagraha campaign, if it is launched? And why must they leave school or college for good, in case they are permitted? Surely students in England are not silently looking on when their country is engaged in a war.

A. To withdraw students from schools and colleges is to encourage them in a programme of non-co-operation. It is not on our programme today. If I were in charge of the Satyagraha campaign, I should neither invite nor encourage the students to leave their schools and colleges. We have seen by experience that the students have not yet got over their passion for Government schools and colleges. That these institutions have lost their glamour is a gain, but I do not set much store by it. And if the institutions are to continue, withdrawal of students for Satyagraha will do them no good and will be of little help to the cause. Such withdrawal will not be non-violent. I have said that those who intend to join the campaign should leave their schools or colleges for good and resolve to devote themselves to the nations service even after the struggle is over. There is no comparison between the students here and those in England. There the whole nation is involved in the war. The institutions have been closed down by the managers. Here, on the contrary, students leaving their schools and colleges would do so in spite of the heads of those institutions.

*Harijan, 15-9-'40*



## SACRIFICE

No sacrifice is worth the name unless it is a joy. Sacrifice and a long face go ill together. Sacrifice is making sacred'. He must be a poor specimen of humanity who is in need of sympathy for his sacrifice. Buddha renounced everything because he could not help it. To have anything, was a torture to him. The Lokamanya remained poor because it was painful for him to possess riches. We are as yet playing at sacrifice. The reality has still to come.

*Young India, 25-6-'25*

That sacrifice which causes pain loses its sacred character and will break down under stress. One gives up things that one considers to be injurious and therefore there should be pleasure attendant upon the giving up. Whether the substitute is effective or not is a different question altogether. If the substitute is effective, it is no doubt well; but it is well also even if the substitute is ineffective. It must lead to an effort to procure a better substitute, but surely not to a return to what has been given up after full knowledge and experience of its harmful character. Till at least we arrive at a complete and effective substitute, the first step, it is quite plain, must be the giving up of Government institutions. Those students therefore who took that step did well if they understood what they were doing. And only the sacrifice of such students will be of increasing benefit to the country as time passes. But those who are repenting or dissatisfied with their own lot should certainly have no hesitation in going back to Government institutions. After all it is a conflict of ideal and if the ideal that Non-co-operation stands for is good and is congenial to the Indian soil, it will triumph over every conceivable obstacle.

*Young India, 15-7-'26*



## STUDENTS AND POWER POLITICS

Students cannot afford to have party politics. They may hear all parties, as they read all sorts of books, but their business is to assimilate the truth of all and reject the balance. That is the only worthy attitude that they can take.

Power Politics should be unknown to the student world. Immediately they dabble in that class of work, they cease to be students and will, therefore, fail to serve the country in its crisis.

(From a letter to the General Secretary of the All-India Students' Federation, Jan. 26, 1941.)



## STUDENTS' FEDERATION

"There is an attempt today to bring together all the existing students' organizations in a National Convention, to revise the basis of the student movement and to evolve a united national organization of students. What, in your opinion, should be the scope of this new organization? What activities should this students' organization undertake in the new circumstances in the country?"

There is no doubt that there should be one national organization including the Hindus, the Muslims and the others. Students are the makers of the future. They cannot be partitioned. I am sorry to observe that neither the students have thought for themselves nor have the leaders left them to their studies so that they can become good citizens. The rot began with the alien government. We, the inheritors, have not taken the trouble to rectify the errors of the past. Then the different political groups have sought to catch the students as if they were shoals of fish. And stupidly the students have run into the net spread for them.

It is therefore a Herculean task for any students' organization to undertake. But there must be a heroic spirit among them who would not shrink from the task. The scope will be to knit them together into one. This they cannot do unless they will learn to steer clear of active politics. A student's duty is to study the various problems that require solution. His time for action comes after he finishes his studies.

"Today students' organizations are more concerned with passing resolutions on political affairs than devoting their energies to the task of national reconstruction. This is partly due to the attempts which political parties have been making to capture the students' organizations for their party purposes. Our present disunity too can be traced to these party politics. We, therefore, want to evolve some method by which we can prevent the repetition of all this party politics and disunity in the proposed National Union of Students. Do you think it is possible for the students' organizations to eschew politics completely? If not, what, in your opinion, is the extent to which students' organizations should interest themselves in politics?"

This question is partly answered above. They must eschew active politics. It is a sign of one-sided growth that all parties have made use of the student world for



their purpose. This was probably inevitable when the purpose of education was to create a race of slaves who would hug their slavery. That part of the business is over, I hope. The students' first business is to think out the education that the children of a free nation should receive. The education of today is obviously not such. I must not go into the question as to what it should be. Only they must not allow themselves to be deceived into the belief that it is the function only of the elders in the university senates. They must stimulate the faculty of thinking. I do not even remotely suggest that the students can force the situation by strikes and the like. They have to create public opinion by offering constructive and enlightened criticism. The senators having been brought up in the old school are slow to move. They can truly be acted upon by enlightenment.

"Today, the majority of students are not interesting themselves in national service. Many of them are cultivating what they; consider 'fashionable' western habits, and more and more students are resorting to bad habits like drinking etc. There is little efficiency and little desire for independent thinking.] We want to tackle all these problems, and build up character, discipline and efficiency in youth. How do you think we can do it?"

This deals with the present distemper. It will disappear when a calm atmosphere is produced, when the students cease to be agitators and take to sober studies. A student's life has been rightly likened to the life of a *sannyasi*. He must be the embodiment of simple living and high; thinking. He must be discipline incarnate. His pleasure is derived from his studies. They do provide real pleasure when study ceases to be a tax the student has to pay. What can be a greater pleasure than that a student marches from knowledge to more knowledge?

*Harijan, 17-8-'47*

A correspondent says:

"You have begun writing in time about the student world of India. Your opinion was highly necessary. The late H. G. Wells has somewhere described the students as 'Undergraduate Intelligence'. The exploitation of the half-baked student world is highly dangerous. It tears the students under exploitation from the essential work of study and its assimilation. In these critical times the harm done by the exploitation of 'Undergraduate Intelligence' recoils upon the exploiters. Your writing referred to



above gives rise to one question: Was it not Gandhiji who first drew the students to politics? I know that this is not true. But it is necessary for you to reiterate your position.

"The second thing is: What should students' organizations do? What should be their objective? Today, as you know, students' organizations are considered as stepping stones to entrance into political life. Some exploit them for that purpose."

If there is one compact students' organization, it can become a mighty instrument of service. Their objective can only be one: never for the purpose of finding a lucrative career but fitting themselves for the service of the motherland. If they were to do so, their knowledge would attain a great height. Agitation is only for those who had completed their studies. While studying, the only occupation of students must be to increase their knowledge. The education, as it is prescribed today, is detrimental, conceived in terms of the masses of India. It is possible to show that the present education has been of some use to the country. I regard it as negligible. Let no one be deceived by it. The acid test of its usefulness is this: Does it make, as it should, an effective contribution to the production of food and clothing? What part does the student world play in allaying the present senseless slaughter? All education in a country has got to be demonstrably in promotion of the progress of the country in which it is given. Who will deny that education in India has not served that purpose? Hence, one purpose of the organization should be to discover the defects of the present education and seek to remove them, so far as] possible in their own persons. By their correct conduct they will be able to convert to their view the heads of education. If they do so, they will never be entangled in party politics. In the revised scheme, constructive and] creative programme will naturally have its due place. Indirectly, their action will keep the politics of the country free of the spirit of exploitation.

Now for the first question: What I said in the matter of students' education at the time of the country's battle for freedom is evidently forgotten. I did not invite the students to devote themselves to politics whilst they were I in schools and colleges. I had inculcated non-violent non-co-operation. I had suggested that they should empty these educational Institutions and throw themselves in the battle for freedom. I had encouraged national universities and national schools



and colleges. Unfortunately, the trap 1 of the education given in our schools and colleges was too strong for the students. Only a handful were able to disengage themselves from it. Thus, it is not proper to say that I drew the students to the politics of the country. Moreover, when after 20 years of exile in South Africa, I returned to India in 1915, the students, while they were engaged in their studies, had already been drawn to the political life. Probably, there was no other way. Our foreign rulers had so devised the whole life of the country that nobody could engage in politics suitable for the delivery of the country from bondage. The foreign rulers had so devised and controlled the education of the youth of the country that they remained under their control and millions were kept in comparative darkness. This was the way in which foreign control was rendered as permanent as possible. Therefore, apart from the colleges and schools controlled by foreign rulers, patriotic workers were not to be found.

*Harijan, 7-9-'47*



## STUDENTS' CONFERENCES

The Secretary of the Sixth Sindh Students' Conference sent me a printed circular asking for a message. I received a wire also asking for the same thing. But being in a somewhat inaccessible place, both circular letter and the telegram were received too late for me to send a message. Nor am I in a position to comply with numerous requests for messages, articles and what not. But as I profess to be interested in everything connected with students as I am somewhat in touch with the student world all over India, I could not help criticizing within myself the programme sketched in the circular letter. Thinking that it might be helpful, I reduce some of it to writing and present it to the student world. I take the following from the circular letter which by the way is badly printed and contains mistakes which are hardly pardonable for a-students' society:

"The organizers of this Conference are endeavouring their utmost to make this Conference as interesting and Instructive as possible....We intend organizing a series of educational discourses and we request you to give us the benefit....The problem of female education here in Sindh deserves a special consideration.... We are not blind to the other necessities of students. Sports competitions are being organized and along with elocution competitions they will, it is hoped, make the Conference more interesting. Nor have we eliminated drama and music from our programme....Pieces in Urdu and English will also be staged."

I have not omitted a single operative sentence that would give one an idea of what the Conference was expected to do, and yet one fails to find a single reference to things of permanent interest to the student world. I have no doubt that the dramatic and musical and gymnastic performances were all provided on a "grand scale". I take the phrase in inverted commas from the circular. I have no doubt also that the Conference had attractive papers on female education. But so far as the circular is concerned, there is no mention of the disgraceful *deti leti* (dowry) practices, from which the students have not freed themselves and which in many respects make the lives of Sindhi girls a hell upon earth and of parents of daughters a torture. There is nothing in the circular to show that the Conference intended to tackle the question of the morals of the students. Nor is



there anything to show that the Conference was to do anything to show the students the way to become fearless nation-builders. It is a matter of no small credit to Sindh that it is supplying so many institutions with brilliant professors, but more is always expected from those who give much. And I, who have every reason to be grateful to Sindhi friends for giving me fine co-workers for the Gujarat Vidyapith, am not going to be satisfied with getting professors and Khadi workers. Sindh has got its Sadhu Vaswani. It can boast of a number of great reformers. But the students will put themselves in the wrong, if they will be contented with appropriation of the merit gained by the *sadhus* and reformers of Sindh. They have got to become nation-builders. The base imitation of the West, the ability to speak and write correct and polished English, will not add one brick to the temple of freedom. The student world, which is receiving an education far too expensive for starving India, an education which only a microscopic minority can ever hope to receive, is expected to qualify itself for it by giving its life-blood to the nation. Students must become pioneers in conservative reform, conserving all that is good in the nation and fearlessly ridding society of the innumerable abuses that have crept into it.

These conferences should open the eyes of students to the realities before them. They should result in making them think of things which, in the class room adapted to its foreign setting, they do not get an opportunity of learning. They may not be able in these conferences to discuss questions regarded as purely political. But they can and they must study and discuss social and economic questions which are as important to our generation as the highest political question. A nation-building programme can leave no part of the nation untouched. Students have to react upon the dumb millions. They have to learn to think not in terms of a province, or a town, or a class, or a caste, but in terms of a continent and of the millions who include 'untouchables', drunkards, hooligans and even prostitutes, for whose existence in our midst every one of us is responsible. Students in olden times were called *brahmacharis*, that is, those who walked with and in the fear of God. They were honoured by kings and elders. They were a voluntary charge on the nation, and in return they gave to the nation a hundredfold strong souls, strong brains, strong arms. Students in the modern



world, wherever they are to be found among fallen nations, are considered to be their hope, and have become the self-sacrificing leaders of reforms in every department. Not that we have no such examples in India; but they are far too few. What I plead for is that students' conferences should stand for this kind of organized work befitting the status of *brahmacharis*.

*Young India, 9-6-'27*



## SECTION SIX: EDUCATION

21

### SCIENCE AND VIVISECTION

I am not opposed to the progress of science as such. On the contrary the scientific spirit of the West commands my admiration and if that admiration is qualified, it is because the scientist of the West takes no note of God's lower creation. I abhor vivisection with my whole soul. I detest the unpardonable slaughter of innocent life in the name of science and humanity so-called, and all the scientific discoveries stained with innocent blood I count as of no consequence. If the circulation of blood theory could not have been discovered without vivisection, the human kind could well have done without it. And I see the day clearly dawning when the honest scientist of the West, will put limitations upon the present methods of pursuing knowledge. Future measurements will take note not merely of the human family but of all that lives, and even as we are slowly but surely discovering that it is an error to suppose that Hindus can thrive upon the degradation of a fifth of themselves or that peoples of the West can rise or live upon the exploitation and degradation of the Eastern and African nations, so shall we realize in the fullness of time, that our dominion over the lower order of creation is not for their slaughter, but for their benefit equally with ours. For I am as certain that they are endowed with a soul as that I am.

*Young India, 17-12-25*



## EDUCATION THROUGH ENGLISH

It is a matter of deep humiliation and shame for us that I am compelled this evening, under the shadow of this great college in this sacred city, to address my countrymen in a language that is foreign to me. I know that if I was appointed an examiner to examine all those who have been attending during these two days this series of lectures, most of those who might be examined upon these lectures would fail. And why? Because they have not been touched. I was present at the sessions of the great Congress in the month of December. There was a much vaster audience, and will you believe me when I tell you that the only speeches that touched that huge audience in Bombay were the speeches that were delivered in Hindustani? In Bombay, mind you, not in Banaras where everybody speaks Hindi. But between the vernaculars of the Bombay Presidency, on the one hand, and Hindi on the other, no such great dividing line exists as there does between English and the sister languages of India; and the Congress audience was better able to follow the speakers in Hindi. I am hoping that this University will see to it that the youths who come to it will receive their instruction through the medium of their vernaculars. Our language is the reflection of ourselves, and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence the better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India? (*Cries of 'Never'*). Why this handicap on the nation? Just consider for one moment what an unequal race our lads have to run with every English lad. I had the privilege of a close conversation with some Poona professors. They assured me that every Indian youth, because he reached his knowledge through the English language, lost at least six precious years of life. Multiply that by the number of students turned out by our schools and colleges and find out for yourselves how many thousand years have been lost to the nation. The charge against us is, that we have no initiative. How can we have any if we are to devote the precious years of our life to the mastery of a foreign tongue? We fail in this attempt also. Was it possible for any speaker yesterday and today to impress his audience as



was possible for Mr Higginbotham? It was not the fault of the previous speakers that they could not engage the audience. They had more than substance enough for us in their addresses. But their addresses could not go home to us. I have heard it said that after all it is English-educated India which is leading and which is doing everything for the nation. It would be monstrous if it were otherwise. The only education we receive is English education. Surely, we must show something for it. But suppose that we had been receiving, during the past fifty years, education through our vernaculars, what should we have today? We should have today a free India, we should have our educated men, not as if they were foreigners in their own land but speaking to the heart of the nation; they would be working amongst the poorest of the poor, and whatever they would have gained during the past fifty years would have been a heritage for the nation (*Applause*). Today even our wives are not the sharers in our best thought. Look at Professor Bose and Professor Ray and their brilliant researches. Is it not a shame that their researches are not the common property of the masses?

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

Alongside of my suggestion about Hindustani, has been my advice that the students should, during the transition period from inferiority to equality,—from foreign domination to Swaraj, from helplessness to self- help,—suspend their study of English. If we wish to attain Swaraj before the next Congress, we must believe in the possibility, we must do all that we are capable of doing for its advancement, and one must do nothing that would not advance it or would actually retard it. Now, adding to our knowledge of English cannot accelerate our progress towards our goal and it can conceivably retard it. The latter calamity is a reality in many cases for there are many who believe that we cannot acquire the spirit of freedom without the music of the English words ringing in our ears and sounding through our lips. This is an infatuation. If it were the truth, Swaraj would be as distant as the Greek Kalends. English is a language of international commerce, it is the language of diplomacy, and it contains many a rich literary treasure, it gives us an introduction to Western thought and culture. For a few of us, therefore, a knowledge of English is necessary. "They can carry on the



departments of national commerce and international diplomacy, and for giving to the nation the best of Western literature, thought and science. That would be the legitimate use of English. Whereas today English has usurped the dearest place in our hearts and dethroned our mother-tongues. It is an unnatural place due to our unequal relations with Englishmen. The highest development of the Indian mind must be possible without a knowledge of English. It is doing violence to the manhood and specially the womanhood of India to encourage our boys and girls to think that an entry into the best society is impossible without a knowledge of English. It is too humiliating a thought to be bearable. To get rid of the infatuation for English is one of the essentials of Swaraj.

*Young India, 2-2-21*

You and I, and every one of us has neglected the true education that we should have received in our national schools. It is impossible for the young men of Gujarat, for the young men of the Deccan to go to the Central Provinces, to go to the United Provinces, to go to the Punjab and all those vast tracts of India which speak nothing but Hindustani, and therefore I ask you to learn Hindustani also in your leisure hours.

And then you are free to go out to your villages—you are free to go to every part of India but Madras, and be able to speak your mind to the masses. Do not consider for one moment that you can possibly make English a common medium of expression between the masses. Twenty two crores of Indians know Hindustani—they do not know any other language. And if you want to steal into the hearts of 22 crores of Indians, Hindustani is the only language open to you.

I know thousands of students—black despair stares them in the face if they are told that they cannot get Government employ. If you are bent upon ending or mending this Government how do you propose to get Government employ? If you do not want to fall back upon Government, what is your English knowledge worth? I do not wish to underrate the literary value of the English language. I do not wish to underrate the vast treasures that are buried in English books. I do not want to suggest to you that we have overrated the importance of the English



language but I do venture to suggest to you that the English language finds very little place in the economy of Swaraj.

*Young India, 2-2-'21*

As a result of English being medium of instruction, we have lost all originality. We have become birds without wings. The most we aspire to is a clerkship or editorship.

*Young India, 10-2-'27*

I am certain that the children of the nation that receive instruction in a tongue other than their own commit suicide. It robs them of their birth-right. A foreign medium means an undue strain upon the youngsters, it robs them of all originality. It stunts their growth and isolates them from their home. I regard therefore such a thing as a national tragedy of first importance.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, p. 106*

He told them (the students) that if they had no love for their mother tongue or the national language which was Hindustani they could not expect to be enlisted as soldiers in India's fight for Swaraj. No one who was indifferent to his mother tongue could claim to be a lover of his country, and he reminded them of the late General Botha who, although he knew English, insisted, when he went to London, upon speaking to the King in Dutch through an interpreter. The King instead of resenting this insistence appreciated it as a natural thing for an Ambassador of a Dutch-speaking nation to do. Even so must they have pride in their mother tongue.

*Young India, 10-10-'29*

Whenever I have addressed student audiences, I have been surprised by the demand for English. You know, or ought to know, that I am a lover of the English language, But I do believe that the students of India, who are expected to throw in their lot with the teeming millions and to serve them, will be better qualified if they pay more attention to Hindi than to English. I do not say that you should not learn English; learn it by all means. But, so far as I can see, it cannot be the language of the millions of Indian homes. It will be confined to thousands or tens



of thousands, but it will not reach the millions. Therefore, I am delighted when the students ask me to speak in Hindi.

*Harijan, 17-11-'33*

A fear had been expressed, observed Gandhiji, that the propagation of Rashtrabhasha or the national tongue would prove inimical to the provincial languages. That fear was rooted in ignorance. Provincial tongues provided the sure foundation on which the edifice of the national tongue should rest. The two were intended to complement, not supplant each other.

He (Gandhiji) deprecated the suggestion that it would need a lot of research and preparation to enable them to impart technical education through the medium of the mother tongue. Those who argued like that, were unaware of the rich treasure of expressions and idioms that were buried in the dialects of our villages. In Gandhiji's opinion there was no need to go to Sanskrit or Persian in search of new terms. He had been in Champaran and he had found that the village folk there, could fully express themselves with ease and without the help of a single foreign expression or idiom. As an illustration of their resourcefulness, he mentioned the word *hava-gadi* which they had coined to denote a motor car. He challenged university scholars to coin a more poetic expression than that for a motor car.

One of the speakers had remarked that the reform would mean a saving of at least three years to the alumni of the college. But Gandhiji was of opinion that the saving in time and labour would be even greater. 'Moreover', he added, 'what they learnt through the mother tongue, they would easily be able to communicate to their mothers and sisters at home and thereby bring the latter into line with themselves. Woman had been described as man's better half. Today there was a hiatus between the thought world of men and women in India, thanks to the intrusion of the foreign medium. Our womenfolk were backward and ignorant with the result that India was today like a patient with paralysis of the better side. India could not realize her full stature unless that handicap was removed.'

*Harijan, 18-8-'46*



## HIGHER EDUCATION AND OUR POVERTY

There is too, for us, the inordinately expensive education. When it is difficult for millions even to make the two ends meet, when millions are dying of starvation, it is monstrous to think of giving our relatives a costly education. Expansion of the mind will come from hard experience, not necessarily in the college or the schoolroom. When some of us deny ourselves and ours the so-called higher education, we shall find the true means of giving and receiving a really high education. Is there not, may there not be, a way of each boy paying for his own education? There may be no such way. Whether there is or there is not such a way is irrelevant. But there is no doubt that when we deny ourselves the way of expensive education, seeing that aspiration after higher education is a laudable end, we shall find out a way of fulfilling it more in accord with our surroundings. The golden rule to apply in all such cases is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot. This ability to refuse will not descend upon us all of a sudden. The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to re-arrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality.

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

*Young India, 24-6-'26*

I had an occasion to visit the Economic Institute at Allahabad. As Prof. Jevons showed me over it and I was told that it had cost Rs. 30 lakhs (if my memory serves me right), I shuddered. You could not raise these palaces but by starving millions. Look at New Delhi which tells the same tale. Look at the grand improvements in first and second class carriages on railways. The whole trend is to think of the privileged few and to neglect the poor. If this is not Satanic, what is it? If I must tell the truth, I can say nothing less. I have no quarrel with those



who conceived the system. They could not do otherwise. How is an elephant to think for an ant? As Sir Leppel Griffen once put it in his speech as member of the South African Deputation, only the toad under the harrow knows where it pinches. The arrangement of our affairs is in their hands and with the best will in the world, the best of them could not order our affairs as well as we could. For theirs is a diametrically opposite conception to ours. They think in terms of the privileged few. We must think in terms of the teeming millions.

*Young India, 10-2-'27*

How can we understand the duty of students today? We have fallen so much from the ideal. The parents take the lead in giving the wrong direction. They feel that their children should be educated only in order that, they may earn wealth and position. Education and knowledge are thus being prostituted, and we look in vain for the peace, innocence and bliss that the life of a student ought to be. Our students are weighed down with cares and worries, when they should really be careful for nothing'. They have simply to receive and to assimilate. They should know only to discriminate between what should be received and what rejected. It is the duty of the teacher to teach his pupils discrimination. If we go on taking in indiscriminately we would be no better than machines. We are thinking, knowing beings and we must in this period distinguish truth from untruth, sweet from bitter language, clean from unclean things and so on. But the student's path today is strewn with more difficulties than the one of distinguishing the good from bad things. He has to fight the hostile atmosphere around him. Instead of the sacred surroundings of a *rishi gurus ashrama* and his paternal care, he has the atmosphere of a broken down home, and the artificial surroundings created by the modern system of education. The *rishis* taught their pupils without books. They only gave them a few *mantras* which the pupils treasured in their memories and translated in practical life. The present day student has to live in the midst of heaps of books, sufficient to choke him. In my own days Reynolds was much in vogue among students and I escaped him only because I was far from being a brilliant student and never cared to peep out of the school text-books. When I went to England, however, I saw that these novels



were tabooed in decent circles and that I had lost nothing by having never read them. Similarly there are many other things which a student might do worse than reject. One such thing is the craze for earning a career. Only the *grihastha* (householder) has to think of it, it is none of the *brahmachari* student's *dharma*. He has to acquaint himself with the condition of things in his own country, try to realize the magnitude of the crisis with which it is faced, and the work that it requires of him. I dare say many amongst you read newspapers. I do not think I can ask you to eschew them altogether. But I would ask you to eschew everything of ephemeral interest, and I can tell you that newspapers afford nothing of permanent interest. They offer nothing to help the formation of character. And yet I know the craze for newspapers. It is pitiable, terrible. I am talking in this strain as I have myself made some experiments in education. Out of those experiments I learnt the meaning of education, I discovered Satyagraha and Non-cooperation and launched on those new experiments. I assure you I have never regretted having tried these last, nor have I undertaken them simply with the object of winning political Swaraj.

*Young India, 29-1-'25*

Q. The problem of unemployment among the educated is assuming alarming proportions. You of course condemn higher education, but those of us who have been to the University realize that we do develop mentally there. Why should you discourage anyone from learning? Would not a better solution be for unemployed graduates to go in for mass education and let the villagers give them food in return? And could not Provincial Governments come to their aid and help them with some money and clothing?

A. I am not against higher education. But I am against only a few lakhs of boys and girls receiving it at the expense of the poor tax-payer. Moreover, I am against the type of higher education that is given. It is much cry and little wool. The whole system of higher education and for that matter all education needs radical overhauling. But your difficulty is about unemployment. In this you have my sympathy and co-operation. On the principle that every labourer is worthy of his hire, every graduate who goes to a village to serve it is entitled to be housed,



fed and clothed by the villagers. And they do it too. But they will not when the graduate lives like *saheb* and costs them ten times as much as they can afford. His life must accord as nearly as possible with that of the villagers and his mission must find appreciation among them.

*Harijan, 9-3-'40*

Q. A student has seriously posed this question: "What am I to do after finishing my studies?"

A. We are today a subject race and our educational system has been devised to serve the interests of our rulers. But even as the most selfish person is obliged to hold out some lure to those whom he is out to exploit, so a number of temptations for studying in their institutions have been brought into being by the rulers. Moreover, all members of Government are not alike. There are some liberal-minded among them who will consider the problem of education on merits. Therefore, there is no doubt some good even in the present system. But the prevailing education is willy-nilly put to wrong use, i.e. it is looked upon as a means of earning money and position.

The ancient aphorism, 'Education is that which liberates', is as true today as it was before. Education here does not mean mere spiritual knowledge nor does liberation signify only spiritual liberation after death. Knowledge includes all training that is useful for the service of mankind and liberation means freedom from all manner of servitude even in the present life. Servitude is of two kinds: slavery to domination from outside and to one's own artificial needs. The knowledge acquired in the pursuit of this ideal alone constitutes true study.

Realizing that a form of education devised by foreign rulers could only be calculated to subserve their interests, the Congress accepted in 1920, among other things, the principle of the boycott of all Governmental educational institutions. But that era seems to be over. The demand for entrance to Government institutions and those imparting education on similar lines is increasing faster than the number of such schools and colleges. The ranks of examinees are ever swelling. In spite of this hypnotic spell, however, I hold that true education is what I have defined.



A student who is superficially attracted by the educational ideal set forth by me and leaves his studies is liable to repent of his action later. I have, therefore, suggested a safer course. While continuing his studies in the institution which he has joined he should ever keep before him the ideal of service set forth by me and use his studies with a view to serve that ideal, never for making money. Moreover, he should try to make up the lack in the present education by application of his leisure hours to the ideal. He will, therefore, avail himself to the utmost of whatever opportunity offers for taking part in the constructive programme.

*Harijan, 10-3-'46*

The suggestion has often been made in these columns that in order to make education compulsory, or even available to every boy or girl wishing to receive education, our schools and colleges should become almost, if not wholly, self-supporting, not through donations or State aid or fees exacted from students, but through remunerative work done by the students themselves. This can only be done by making industrial training compulsory. Apart from the necessity which is daily being more and more recognized of students having an industrial training side by side with literary training, there is in this country the additional necessity of pursuing industrial training in order to make education directly self-supporting. This can only be done when our students begin to recognize the dignity of labour and when the convention is established of regarding ignorance of manual occupation a mark of disgrace. In America, which is the richest country in the world and where therefore perhaps there is the least need for making education self-supporting, it is the most usual thing for students to pay their way wholly or partially. Thus says the *Hindustani Student*, the official bulletin of the Hindustani Association of America, 500 Riverside Drive, New York City:

"Approximately 50 per cent of the American students use the summer vacation and part of their time during the academic year to earn money. 'Self-supporting students are respected/ writes the bulletin of the California University. With reasonable diligence a student can devote from 12 to 25 hours per week (during the academic year) to outside work without seriously interfering with college work of 12 to 16 units (credits) involving 36 to 48 hours a week....A student should have some sort of



practical knowledge of the following: carpentry, surveying, drafting, bricklaying, plastering, auto-driving, photography, machine-shop work, dyeing, field work, general farm work, instrumental music and so on. Such common work as waiting at table for two hours, etc. is available during the academic year, which relieves a student from expenses for board. A partially self-supporting student by working during the summer vacation may save up from 150 to 200 dollars. Kansas, N. Y. University, Pittsburg, Union University, Antioch College offer 'co-operative' courses in Industrial Engineering by which a student can earn one year's tuition fees working in industrial plants for which he also receives credit for his practical experience.

"The University of Michigan has under consideration the opening of similar co-operative courses in Civil and Electrical Engineering. One year more is required to graduate in engineering by pursuing co-operative courses."

If America has to model her schools and colleges so as to enable students to earn their scholastic expenses, how much more necessary it must be for our schools and colleges? Is it not far better that we find work for poor students than that we pauperize them by providing free studentships? It is impossible to exaggerate the harm we do to Indian youth by filling their minds with the false notion that it is ungentle-manly to labour with one's hands and feet for one's livelihood or schooling. The harm done is both moral and material, indeed much more moral than material. A free scholarship lies and should lie like a load upon a conscientious lad's mind throughout his whole life. No one likes to be reminded in after life that he had to depend upon charity for his education. Contrarily where is the person who will not recall with pride those days, if he had the good fortune to have had them, when he worked in a carpentry-shop or the like for the sake of educating himself-mind, body and soul?

*Young India, 2-8-'28*

A student asks:

"What should a matriculate or an undergraduate who is unfortunately father of two or three children do in order to procure a living wage."

He does not say what is his requirement. If he does not pitch it high because he is a matriculate and will put himself on a level with the ordinary labourer, he should have no difficulty in earning a livelihood. His intelligence should help his



hands and feet and enable him to do better than the labourer who has had no opportunity of developing his intelligence. This is not to say a labourer who has never learnt English is devoid of intelligence. Unfortunately labour has never been helped to develop the mind, and those who pass through schools do have their minds opened even though under a handicap not to be found in any other part of the world. Even this mental equipment is counterbalanced by false notions of dignity inculcated during school and college days. And so students think that they can earn their living only at the desk. The inquirer has therefore to realize the dignity of labour and seek the maintenance of himself and his family in that field.

And there is no reason why his wife should not add to the family income by utilizing her spare hours. Similarly if the children are at all able to do any work, they too should be inspanned for productive work. The utterly false idea that intelligence can be developed only through book-reading, should give place to the truth that the quickest development of the mind can be achieved by artisans work being learnt in a scientific manner. True development of the mind commences immediately the apprentice is taught at every step why a particular manipulation of the hand or a tool is required. The problem of the unemployment of students can be solved without difficulty, if they will rank themselves among the common labourers.

*Harijan, 9-1-'37*

"I am a student of M. A. (Ancient Indian History) in the University of Lucknow. I am about 21 years of age. I have a love for learning and want to do as much of it as possible in my lifetime. I am also inspired by your ideology of life. In about a month's time when the final M. A. Examinations come off I will have done with my education, and will have to enter life, as they say.

"Besides a wife, I have 4 brothers (all younger, one of them married), 2 sisters (both twelve years of age), and my parents to support. There is no capital to fall back upon. The landed property is very small.

"What should I do for the education of the sisters and brothers? Above all, where are the food and clothing to come from?



"My education has been ruinously academic, and theoretical. I sometimes think of spinning, your pet panacea, but then I do not know how to learn it and what to do with the spun yarn, etc."

The very difficulties the student raises, though serious in their setting, are of his own making. The very mention of them must show the falsity of his position and of the educational system in our country. It turns education into a purely commercial product to be converted into money. For me education has a much nobler purpose. Let the student count himself as one among the millions and he will discover that millions of young men and women of his age cannot fulfil the conditions which he will have his degree to do. Why should he make himself responsible for the maintenance of all the relatives he mentions? Why should the grown up ones if of sound body, not labour for their maintenance? It is wrong to have many drones to one busy bee—though a male.

The remedy lies in his unlearning many things. He must revise his ideas of education. His sisters ought not to repeat the expensive education that he had. They can develop their intelligence through learning some handicrafts in a scientific manner. The moment they do so they have development of the mind side by side with that of the body. And if they will learn to regard themselves as servants of humanity rather than its exploiters, they will have development of the heart, i.e., the soul as well. And they will become equal earners of bread with their brother.

It is pathetic to find the student so helpless as not to know how and where to have spinning lessons. Let him make a diligent search in Lucknow and he will find that there are young men enough to teach him. But he need not confine himself to spinning, though it is too fast becoming a full-time occupation able to give a village-minded man or woman his or her livelihood. I hope I have said here sufficient to enable him to dot the l's and cross the t's.

*Harijan, 17-4-'37*

"This year, my third son aged 21 years has passed his B. A. with honours at an enormous expense. He does not wish to enter Government service. He wants to take up national service only. My family consists of twelve members. I have still to



educate five boys. I had an estate, which has been sold to pay a debt of Rs. 2,000. In educating my three sons, I have, spent all my earnings, and all this in the hope, that my third son would secure the highest degree in the University and then try to retrieve the position I have almost lost. I had expected him to be able to take up the whole burden of my family. But now I am almost led to think that I must give my family up to ruin. There is a conflict of duties on the one hand and motives on the other. I seek your careful consideration and advice."

This is a typical letter. And it is the universality, almost, of the attitude, that set me against the present system of education years ago, and made me change the course of the education of all my boys and others with (in my opinion) excellent results. The hunt after position and status has ruined many a family, and has made many depart from the path of rectitude. Who does not know, what questionable things fathers of families in need of money for their children's education have considered it their duty to do? I am convinced that we are in for far worse times, unless we change the whole system of our education. We have only touched the fringe of an ocean of children. The vast mass of them remain without education, not for want of will but of ability and knowledge on the part of the parents. There is something radically wrong, especially for a nation so poor as ours, when parents have to support so many grown-up children, and give them a highly expensive education without the children making any immediate return. I can see nothing wrong in the children, from the very threshold of their education, paying for it in work. The simplest handicraft suitable for all, required for the whole of India, is undoubtedly spinning along with the previous processes. If we introduced this in our educational institutions, we should fulfil three purposes: make education self-supporting, train the bodies of the children as well as their minds, and pave the way for a complete boycott of foreign yarn and cloth. Moreover, the children thus equipped will become self-reliant and independent. I would suggest to the correspondent that he should invite all the members of his family to contribute to its upkeep by spinning or weaving. Under my scheme, no child is entitled to education, who does not spin a minimum quantity of yarn. Such families will acquire a prestige for self-respect and independence not hitherto dreamt of. This scheme does not exclude a liberal



education, but on the contrary brings it within the easy reach of every boy or girl, and restores literary training to its original dignity by making it primarily a means of mental and moral culture, and only secondarily and indirectly a means of livelihood.

*Young India*, 15-6-'21



## SECTION SEVEN: CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

24

### SOME FORMS OF CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

A Lahore correspondent writes a pathetic letter in scholarly Hindi. I give a free rendering of the main parts of the letter:

"Hindu-Muslim feuds and the feverish activity over the Council elections have thrown the non-co-operating students off their balance. They have sacrificed much for the country. Its service is their watchword. They are today without a helmsman. They cannot enthuse over Councils. They do not want to take part in the Hindu-Muslim feud- They are therefore drifting towards a life of aimlessness and worse. Must they be allowed thus to drift? Pray remember that ultimately you are responsible for this result. For, though nominally they obeyed the Congress call, in reality it was you they obeyed. Is it not up to you now to guide them?"

Man can make a trough, can he lead unwilling horses to it? I sympathize with these splendid young men but I am unable to blame myself for their drifting. If they obeyed my call, what is there to prevent them doing so now? I am speaking with no uncertain voice, to all who will listen, to take up the gospel of the Charkha. But the fact is that in 1920 they listened not to me (and that very properly) but to the Congress. What is perhaps more accurate, they listened to the inner voice. The Congress call was an echo of their own longings. They were ready for the negative part. The call of the Charkha which is the positive part of the Congress programme, for let it be remembered that it is still the Congress call, seems to make no appeal to them. If so, there is still another much-needed work which is also part of the positive programme of the Congress—the service of the 'untouchables'. Here too there is more than enough work for the students who are pining to do national service. Let them understand that all those who raise the moral tone of the community as a whole, all those who find occupation for the idle millions, are real builders of Swaraj. They will make easy even the purely political work. This positive work will evoke the best in the students. It is both post-graduate and pre-graduate work. It is the only real graduating.



But it may be that neither the Charkha work nor the untouchability work is exciting enough for them. Then let them know that I am useless as a physician. I have but a limited stock of prescriptions. I believe in unity of disease and therefore also of cure. But must a physician be blamed for his limitations, especially when he declares them from the house-top?

The students for whom the correspondent writes must be resourceful enough to find their own course in life. Self-reliance is Swaraj.

*Young India, 16-9-'26*

If you have real faith in God, you cannot but feel for the humblest of His creation. And whether it is the spinning wheel and Khadi, or untouchability, or total prohibition, or social reform in connection with child-widows and child-wives and many other similar things, you will find that all these activities are derived from the same source. I was therefore glad to find that you sympathize with and approve of the spinning movement, the struggle against untouchability and other things with which I am identified. I accept your assurance that henceforth you will do better in regard to Khadi.

It is really the easiest thing in the world for you to make your choice once for all and say to yourselves that you will use henceforth nothing but Khadi since it puts a few coppers into the pockets of those who need them most. In this one institution alone, I understand, you are more than 1,400. Just think what the 1,400 by giving only half an hour to spinning can add materially to the wealth of the country. Think also what 1,400 can do on behalf of the so-called untouchables, and if all the 1,400 young men were to make a solemn resolve, and they can do so, that they are not going to have anything whatever to do with child-wives, imagine what a great reform you will make in society around you. If the 1,400 amongst you, or a respectable number even devote your leisure hours or part of your Sundays to going amidst those who are given to drink and in the kindest manner possible steal into their hearts, imagine what service you will render to them and to the country. All these things you can do in spite of the existing faulty education. Nor do you require much effort for doing these things



except that you have got to change your heart, and to use a current expression in the political world, alter the angle of vision'.

*Young India, 8-9-'27*

The Congress has passed a resolution about self- government, and I have no doubt that the All India Congress Committee and the Muslim League will do their duty and come forward with some tangible suggestions. But I, for one, must frankly confess that I am not so much interested in what they will be able to produce, as I am interested in anything that the student world is going to produce or masses are going to produce. No paper contribution will ever give us self- government. No amount of speeches will ever make us fit for self- government. It is only our conduct that will fit us for it. (*Applause*). And how are we trying to govern ourselves? I want to think audibly this evening. I do not want to make a speech, and if you find me this evening speaking without reserve, pray, consider that you are only sharing the thoughts of a man who allows himself to think audibly, and if you think that I seem to transgress the limits that courtesy imposes upon me, pardon me for the liberty I may be taking. I visited the Vishwanath temple last evening and as I was walking through those lanes, these were the thoughts that touched me. If a stranger dropped from above on to this great temple and he had to consider what we as Hindus were, would he not be justified in condemning us? Is not this great temple a reflection of our own character? I speak feelingly as a Hindu. Is it right that the lanes of our sacred temple should be as dirty as they are? The houses round about are built anyhow. The lanes are tortuous and narrow. If even temples are not models of roominess and cleanliness, what can our self-government be? Shall our temples be abodes of holiness, cleanliness and peace as soon as the English have retired from India, either of their own pleasure or by compulsion, bag and baggage?

I entirely agree with the President of the Congress that before we think of self- government, we shall have to do the necessary plodding. In every city there are two divisions, the cantonment and the city proper. The city mostly is a stinking den. But we are a people unused to city life. But if we want city life, we cannot reproduce the easy-going hamlet life. It is not comforting to think that people



walk about the streets of Indian Bombay under the perpetual fear of dwellers in the storeyed buildings spitting upon them. I do a great deal of railway travelling. I observe the difficulty of third class passengers. But the Railway Administration is by no means to blame for all their hard lot. We do not know the elementary laws of cleanliness. We spit anywhere on the carriage floor, irrespective of the thought that it is often used as sleeping space. We do not trouble ourselves as to how we use it; the result is indescribable filth in the compartment. The so-called better class passengers overawe their less fortunate brethren. Among them I have seen the student world also. Sometimes they behave no better. They can speak English and they have worn Norfolk jackets and, therefore, claim the right to force their way in and command seating accommodation. I have turned the search-light all over, and as you have given me the privilege of speaking to you, I am laying my heart bare. Surely, we must set these things right in our progress towards self-government.

I now introduce you to another scene. His Highness the Maharaja, who presided yesterday over our deliberations, spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy? Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor; and I feel like saying to these noblemen, 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India.' (*Hear, Hear and Applause.*) I am sure it is not the desire of the King-Emperor or Lord Hardinge, that in order to show the truest loyalty to our King-Emperor, it is necessary for 'us to ransack our jewellery-boxes and to appear bedecked] from top to toe. I would undertake, at the peril of my life, to bring to you a message from King George himself that he expects nothing of the kind. Sir, whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great Chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say, 'Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists.' Over 75 percent of the population are agriculturists, and Mr Higginbotham told us last night in his own



felicitous language that they are the men who grow two blades of grass in the place of one. But there cannot be much spirit of self-government about us if we take away or allow others to take away from them almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

You will not have deserved the munificent donation of Raja Mahendra Pratap if you do not labour for your neighbours. Your education, if it is a vital thing, must shed its fragrance in your surroundings. You must devote a certain portion of your time daily to serving the people around in a practical manner. You must therefore be prepared to take the spade, the broomstick and the basket. You must become voluntary scavengers of this only place. That would be the richest part of your education, not learning by heart literary theses.

*Young India, 14-11-'29*

In his letter to a university student who expressed his keenness to serve during his spare time, without prejudice to his studies, Gandhiji gave him these elaborate suggestions: "You can serve the country

- 1) By spinning daily even and strong yarn for the sake of Daridranarayana; keeping a diary of the time for which you have spun, of the quantity spun, with its weight and count, and reporting the work to me every month; Yarn should be carefully collected and held at my disposal.
- 2) By daily selling some Khadi on behalf of the local certified Bhandar, and by keeping a record of your daily sales.
- 3) By saving at least one pice per day.
- 4) By holding the collection at my disposal. The implication of the adjective 'least' should be understood, namely, that if you are able to save more, you should pour more in the Daridranarayan's chest.
- 5) By visiting Harijan quarters in company with other students; and with your companions cleaning the quarters, befriending the children and giving them useful lessons in sanitation, hygiene etc.



Then if you can save some more time, you should learn some village industries for future service of villagers after finishing your studies. When you have been able to do these things and have still time and ambition for doing more, consistently with your studies, you can ask me. I shall send you more suggestions."

*Harijan, 19-10-'35*

Q. My father is an employee in the S. I. Railway. He has four children, all younger than I. He wants me to take an apprenticeship course. If I take part in the coming civil disobedience struggle, he may be dismissed and the family will starve. He says I can serve the nation by doing my share of constructive work. What is your advice?

A. Your father is right. If you are the only bread-winner, you cannot leave the family to its fate for the sake of taking part in civil disobedience. You will certainly serve the nation quite as effectively as civil resisters if you zealously carry out the constructive programme.

*Harijan, 6-4-'40*

Referring to their foreign fripperies and their extravagant ways of living, Gandhiji said, "As students of economics, you ought to know that the fees that you pay do not cover even a fraction of the amount that is spent on your education from the Public Exchequer. Has it ever occurred to you, my fine young men, as to where the rest of the money comes from? It comes from the pockets of the poor, the living skeletons of Orissa, who go about with lacklustre eyes and despair written on their faces and a gnawing hunger in their stomachs from year's end to year's end, eking out their existence on a handful of rotten rice and a pinch of dirty salt flung at them by the insulting munificence of the rich Gujaratis and Marwadis. What have you done for these brethren of yours? Instead of wearing home-spun Khadi prepared by the pure hands of your sisters that brings them a few additional coppers, you go in for foreign stuffs thereby helping to send 60 crores of rupees, out of the country annually and to snatch away the bread from the mouths of the poor of India. The result is that the country is ground to powder. Our commerce instead of enriching our country has become



an instrument of our exploitation and our commercial classes have been reduced to the position of commission agents for Lancashire and Manchester, getting hardly 5 per cent as their share of the profits of the trade, out of which is built all the seeming magnificence of our big cities." It was Lord Salisbury, he continued, who had observed on a historic occasion that since India had to be bled, the lancet must be applied to the congested parts. And if revenue had to be derived by the process of bleeding in Lord Salisbury's time, how much more so it must be now, when India had become poorer as a result of all these years of exploitation? They should not forget that it was out of this revenue which represented the lifeblood of the Indian masses that their education was financed. And again, did they realize that the education which they received was at the expense of the degradation of their countrymen since money spent on it was derived from the notorious liquor revenue? Before Gods judgement seat, therefore, they would have to answer the dread question, what hast thou done with thine brothers? What answer would they then make, he asked them.

*Young India, 14-2-'29*



## SPINNING AND KHADI

I can only think of national education in terms of Swaraj. Hence I would have even the collegiates devote their attention to perfecting themselves in the art of spinning and all it means. I would have them study the economics and implications of Khaddar. They should know how long it takes to establish a mill and the capital required. They should know the limitations on the possibility of an indefinite expansion of mills. They should know too the method of distribution of wealth through mills and that through hand-spinning and hand-weaving. They should know how hand-spinning and manufacture of Indian fabrics was destroyed. They should understand and be able to demonstrate the effect of the adoption of hand-spinning in the cottages of the millions of India's peasants. They should know how a full revival of this cottage industry will weave into an undivided whole the sundered Hindu and Mussalman hearts. But these ideas are either behind the time or in advance of it. It does not much matter whether they are behind or ahead of the time. This I know that some day or other the whole of educated India will adopt them.

*Young India, 11-12-'24*

I am not tired of preaching the message of the wheel on all occasions, at all hours, because it is such an innocent thing, and yet so potent of good. It may not be relishing, but no health-giving food has the relish of spicy foods so detrimental to health. And so the Gita in a memorable text asks all thinking people to take things of which the first taste is bitter, but which are ultimately conducive to immortality. Such a thing today is the spinning-wheel and its product. There is no *yajna* (sacrifice) greater than spinning, calculated to bring peace to the troubled spirit, to soothe the distracted student's mind, to spiritualize his life. I have today no better prescription for the country-not even the Gayatri-in this practical age which looks for immediate results. Gayatri, I would fain offer, but I cannot promise immediate result, whilst the thing I offer is such as you can take to with God's name on your lips, and expect immediate result. An English friend wrote saying his English common sense told him that



spinning was an excellent hobby. I said to him, "It may be a hobby for you, for us it is the Tree of Plenty."

I have pleasure therefore in placing the spinning-wheel before you, even as a hobby if you will, in order that your life may have zest and savour, in order that you may find peace and bliss. It will help you to lead a life of *brahmacharya*. Faith is a thing of great moment in the student-state. There are so many things which you have to take for granted. You accept them simply because you get them from your teacher. Some propositions in geometry, for instance, were very difficult of comprehension for me. I took them for granted and today I not only can understand them, but can lose myself in the study of geometry as easily as I can do in my present work. If you have faith, and ply the wheel, you take it from me that some day you will admit that what an old man once told you about it was literally true. No wonder that one learned in the lore applied the following text from the Gita (2.40) to the spinning-wheel:

"In this there is no waste of effort; neither is there any obstacle. Even a little practice of this *Dharma* saves a man from dire calamity."<sup>4</sup>

*Young India*, 29-1-'25

The spinning-wheel is essentially a thing for reasoning out. With it, in my opinion, is mixed up the wellbeing of the whole mass of Indian humanity. Pupils should therefore learn something about the deep poverty of the masses. They should have an ocular demonstration, of some villages that are crumbling down to pieces. They should know the population of India. They should know the vast extent of this peninsula and they should know what it is that all the many millions can do to add to their scanty resources. They should learn to identify themselves with the poor and the down-trodden in the land. They should be taught to deny themselves, so far as possible, things that the poorest cannot have. Then they will understand the virtue of spinning. It will then survive any shock including disillusionment about myself. The cause of the spinning-wheel is too great and too good to have to rest on mere hero-worship. It lends itself to scientific economic treatment.



I know that there is among us a great deal of blind hero-worship such as this correspondent has described, and I hope that the teachers of national schools will take note of the warning I have uttered and prevent their pupils from lazily basing their actions upon statements, without testing, of men reputed to be great.

*Young India, 24-6-'26*

Owing to the repeated requests of young friends under 18 years to become members of the All India Spinners' Association the Council has passed a resolution, at its last meeting, permitting boys and girls under 18 years who are habitual wearers of Khaddar to become members upon sending 1,000 yards per month of their own spinning. The idea is to encourage boys and girls to cultivate regularity, and to establish a moral bond between themselves and the poorest in the land. And this inestimable advantage is gained apart from the art of spinning being a training for the eye and fingers.

Youths who wish to become members will be expected to spin daily for at least half an hour and if they will set apart a particular half hour for the purpose, they will find that it will induce a regularity in all other studies and work that they may undertake. They will be expected to keep their wheels in perfect order, learn to repair them and learn also the art of carding and making their own slivers. All these processes take up very little time, that is, for those who love their work.

For schoolboys and girls, I recommend not the spinning-wheel but the *takli*. It has been ascertained that the *takli* enables one easily to spin 80 yards per hour. Spinning on the *takli* at the rate of half an hour daily gives one the required monthly subscription of 1,000 yards.

I hope, therefore, that many boys and girls will register themselves as members, subject to the permission of their parents or guardians. So far as schools are concerned, it will be saving of postage if schoolmasters will take charge of the yarn that may be spun, and make one parcel taking care to attach cards to the quantity spun by each boy or girl. The parcels should be addressed to the



Director, Technical Department of the All India Spinners' Association, Satyagrahashram, Sabarmati.

Juveniles or their guardians at the time of sending self-spun yarn should note the name, age, sex and address of the spinner, give also the number of yards and state that the spinner habitually wears hand-spun and hand-woven Khaddar.

*Young India, 4-3-'26*

The only loving tie of service that can bind the villagers to us is the spinning-wheel. Those who have not understood this basic truth are in this institution to no purpose. The education is not national' that takes no count of the starving millions of India and that devises no means for their relief. Government contact with the villages ends with the collection of revenue. Our contact with them begins with their service through the spinning-wheel, but it does not end there. The spinning-wheel is the centre of that service. If you spend your next vacation in some far-off village in the interior, you will see the truth of my remark. You will find the people cheerless and fear-stricken. You will find houses in ruins. You will look in vain for any sanitary or hygienic conditions. You will find the cattle in a miserable way, and yet you will see idleness stalking there. The people will tell you of the spinning-wheel having been in their homes long ago, but today they will entertain no talk of it or of any other cottage industry. They have no hope left in them. They live, for they cannot die at will. They will spin only if *you* spin. Even if a hundred out of a population of 300 in a village spin, you assure them of an additional income of Rs. 1,800 a year. You can lay the foundation of a solid reform on this income in every village. It is easy I know to say this, but difficult to do. Faith can make it easy. 'I am alone, how can I reach seven hundred thousand villages?'-This is the argument that pride whispers to us. Start with the faith that if you fix yourself up in one single village and succeed, the rest will follow. Progress is then assured.

*Young India, 17-6-'26*

It is because I see in the spinning-wheel the hand of God working, it is because I see in the spinning-wheel the satisfaction of the needs of the meanest of human beings, that in season and out of season, I think about it, work at it, pray about



it and speak about it. If there is any other thing which can bring you nearer to the famishing people of the earth,—let alone India for the time being,—that can put you at once on a level with the scavenger, I will withdraw the spinning-wheel and hug that other thing in a moment.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, p. 133*

I ask you to render just a slight return to the poor by doing a little *yajna* for them. For he who eats without doing his *yajna* steals his food, says the Gita. The *yajna*, that was required of the British civic population during the War was for each household to grow potatoes in its yard and for each household to do a little simple sewing. The *yajna* of our age and for us is the spinning-wheel.

*Young India, 20-1-27*

As cultural training and as the symbol of identification with the poorest among the poor, I know nothing so ennobling as hand-spinning. Simple as it is, it is easily learnt. When you combine with hand-spinning the idea that you are learning it, not for your own individual self, but for the poorest among the nation, it becomes an ennobling sacrament.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, p. 108*

I was distressed, my boys, to find that you were forgetting your simple habits, and were reluctant to part with your pocket-money for the sake of your brethren. I assure you that my father gave me no pocket-money, and in no other part of India boys of the middle class are treated like you. But the State does not house and feed and educate you in order that you may learn idleness and forget simplicity and self-help. You must learn to wash your own clothes, cook your own food, and do all your work yourselves. And may I tell you? As I look at you I feel as though you were all foreigners. Can you tell me why? The best amongst the students immediately answered: "Because we are wearing foreign cloth." That is very good. Now there is no reason why you should not be wearing Khadi, every one of you. I tell you I could give you for one-fourth the price much cleaner caps than you are wearing now. The circumstance that your superiors or your teachers do not wear Khadi need not deter you. You will not drink liquor, or eat beef or



carrion, because your parents or other Adi Karnatakas do so. You will on the contrary give up all these things, and insist on your superintendent providing you with Khadi clothes, telling him that in case they are dear you would gladly curtail part of your cloth rations. You must know that there are in the country millions of children who do not get the education that you get, who do not get not only the pocket-money you get, but not even enough food that your pocket-money could buy them. I want you for their sake to wear Khadi and to learn to spin.

*Young India, 14-7-'27*

I expect far more from you than from the ordinary man in the street. Don't be satisfied with having given the little you have done, and say, 'We have done what we could, let us now play tennis and billiards.' I tell you, in the billiard room and on the tennis court think of the big debt that is being piled against you from day to day.

Don't be afraid of wearing the cloth the poor women make for you, don't be afraid of your employers showing you the door if you wear Khadi. I would like you to be men, and stand up before the world firm in your convictions. Let your zeal for the dumb millions be not stifled in the search for wealth. I tell you, you can devise a far greater wireless instrument, which does not require external research, but internal,-and all research will be useless if it is not allied to internal research,-which can link your hearts with those of the millions. Unless all the discoveries that you make have the welfare of the poor as the end in view, all your workshops will be really no better than Satan's workshops.

*Young India, 21-7-'27*

A lip profession of faith in the Charkha and the throwing of a few rupees at me in a patronizing manner won't bring Swaraj and won't solve the problem of the ever- deepening poverty of the toiling and starving millions. I want to correct myself. I have said toiling millions. I wish that it was a true description. Unfortunately, as we have not revised our tastes about clothing, we have made it impossible for these starving millions to toil throughout the year. We have imposed upon them a vacation, which they do not need, for at least four months in the year. This is not a figment of my imagination, but it is a truth repeated



by many English administrators, if you reject the testimony of your own countrymen who have moved in the midst of these masses. So then if I take this purse away and distribute it amongst the starving sisters, it does not solve the question. On the contrary it will impoverish their soul. They will become beggars and get into the habit of living upon charity. Heaven help the man, the woman or the nation that learns to live on charity. What you and I want to do is to provide work for those sisters of ours, living protected in their own homes, and this is the only work that you can provide them with. It is dignified and honest work, and it is good enough work. One anna may mean nothing to you. You will throw it away in getting into a tram car and lazily passing your time instead of taking exercise for 2, 3, 4, or 5 miles as the case may be. But when it finds its way into the pockets of one poor sister it fructifies. She labours for it and she gives me beautiful yarn spun by her sacred hands, a yarn that has a history behind it. It is a thread worth weaving a garment out of for princes and potentates. A piece of calico from a mill has no such history behind it. I must not detain you over this one theme, great as it is for me, and though it engrosses practically the whole of my time. This purse of yours will not be a help but a hindrance to me if it is not an earnest of your determination henceforth, if you do not have it already, that you are not going to wear anything else but Khadi.

Let me not be deluded into the belief that you believe in this gospel of Khadi, because you give me the purse and because you applaud me. I want you to act up to your profession. I do not want it to be said of you,—the salt of India,—that you gave this money merely to bamboozle me, that you do not want to wear Khadi and that you have no belief in it. Do not fulfil the prophecy that had been made by a distinguished son of Tamil Nad and a friend of mine. He has said that when I die I will not need any other firewood to reduce my corpse to ashes than the wood that will be collected out of the spinning-wheels that I am now distributing. He has no faith in the Charkha and he thinks that those who utter the name of the Charkha do so merely out of respect for me. It is an honest opinion. It will be a great national tragedy if the Khadi movement turns out to be that, and you will have been direct contributors to the tragedy and participators in that crime. It will be a national suicide. If you have, no living



faith in the Charkha reject it. It would be a true demonstration of your love, you will open my eyes and I shall go about my way crying hoarse in the wilderness: "You have rejected the Charkha and thereby you have rejected Daridranarayana." But save me and save yourselves the pain, the degradation and the humiliation that await us if there is any delusion or camouflage about this.

*Young India, 15-9-'27*

Do not relegate the Charkha to an odd corner. The Charkha is the sun of the solar system of our activities.

I may be mistaken in this, but, so far as I am not convinced of the mistake, I shall treasure it. The Charkha at any rate is incapable of harming anybody and without it we, and if I may say so, even the world, will go to rack and ruin.

The world is weary of the after-effects of the war and even as the Charkha is India's comforter today, it may be the world's tomorrow, because it stands not for the greatest good of the greatest number but for the greatest good of all. Whenever I see an erring man, I say to myself I have also erred; when I see a lustful man I say to myself, so was I once; and in this way I feel kinship with every one in the world and feel that I cannot be happy without the humblest of us being happy. It is in this sense that I want you to make the Charkha the centre of your studies. Just as Prahlada saw Rama everywhere and Tulsidas could see nothing but Rama even in the image of Krishna, let all your learning be directed to realizing the implications of the Charkha. Our science, our carpentry, our economics should all be utilized for making the Charkha the prop and mainstay of our poorest.

*Young India, 10-2-'27*

As to Khadi I have pointed out often enough that it is cheap at any price, so long as it is sold at the cost price plus a small addition for the upkeep of the stock where it is sold. Let it be borne in mind that during the seven years of its career Khadi has cheapened itself by 50 per cent. If there was more patronage it would be cheaper still. And why will not poor boys be taught to help themselves rather



than that they should be taught to expect Khadi at cheaper than cost price and thus to expect people poorer than themselves to give a gratuity? Boys and girls should be taught to spin their own yarn during their idle hours. I have suggested at least half an hour per day. They can then even weave that yarn, or if that becomes difficult as it may well become so, send the yarn to an agent of the All India Spinners' Association and get Khadi of the same weight and containing yarn of the same count paying merely for the cost of weaving.

*Young India, 14-3-'29*

It cannot be too clearly stated nor enough stressed that knowledge of spinning, carding and the other processes alone does not constitute true Khadi learning. That may be termed its mechanics. To understand the inner meaning of Khadi one has to know why it has to be turned out by hand and not by power machinery. Why should innumerable hands be employed when a single person can manipulate an engine which can produce the same amount of cloth in far less time? If Khadi has to be produced by hand, why not by the *takli* only? And if the *takli*, why not the bamboo *takli*? And if we could get the necessary work by suspending yarn by means of a stone, why even a *takli*? Such questions are perfectly natural. To find proper answers to all such is a necessary part of Khadi research. I do not want to discuss these questions here. All I want to say is that true knowledge of Khadi goes far beyond the mechanical processes, and requires patient research. We have not the means of imparting such knowledge today. Therefore, Khadi instructors have to improve their knowledge even whilst they are teaching. And students have to acquire knowledge through their own diligence. In olden times when no scientific knowledge was available, students used to be their own teachers and became first rate scholars and experts. We are more or less in the same position today.

*Harijan, 1-3-'42*



## VILLAGE WORK

We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have, in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilization. Its defects are well known but not one of them is irremediable. To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilization seems to me an impossibility, unless we are prepared by some drastic means to reduce the population from three hundred million to three or say even thirty. I can therefore suggest remedies on the assumption that we must perpetuate the present rural civilization and endeavour to rid it of its acknowledged defects. This can only be done if the youth of the country will settle down to village life. And if they will do this, they must reconstruct their life and pass every day of their vacation in the village surrounding their colleges or high schools, and those who have finished their education or are not receiving any should think of settling down in villages. The All India Spinners' Association with all its multifarious branches and institutions that have sprung up under its protection affords an easy opportunity to the students to qualify themselves for service and to maintain themselves honourably if they will be satisfied with the simple life which obtains in the villages. It maintains nearly 1,500 young men of the country drawing anything between Rs. 15 to 150, and it can take in almost an unlimited number of earnest, honest, and industrious young men who will not be ashamed of manual work. Then there are national educational institutions affording a similar though limited scope, limited only because national education is not in fashion. I therefore commend to the attention of all earnest young men, who are dissatisfied with their existing surroundings and outlook, to study these two great national institutions which are doing silent but most effective constructive work, and which present the youth of the country with an opportunity both for service and for honourable maintenance. Whether however they avail themselves of these two great nation-building agencies or do not, let them penetrate the villages and find an unlimited scope for service, research and true knowledge. Professors would do well not to burden either their boys or



girls with literary studies during the vacation but prescribe to them educative outings in the villages.

*Young India*, 7-11-'29

During the U. P. tour I received the following letter from Allahabad students:

"With reference to your article in a recent issue of *Young India* on rural civilization we beg to say that we appreciate your suggestion of going back to villages after finishing our education. But this statement is not a sufficient guide for us. We want some definite outline clearly chalked out for us and what we are expected to do. We are tired of hearing indefinite and vague suggestions. We have a burning desire to do everything for our countrymen, but we do not know where to begin definitely, and what hopes we may entertain as to the probable results and benefits from our labours. What will be the sources of obtaining our income from Rs. 15 to 150 as suggested by you? We hope you will very kindly throw some light on these points in your address to the student gathering or in some issue of your esteemed paper."

Though I dealt with the matter in one of my addresses to students and though a definite programme has been placed before students in these pages, it is worth while reiterating, and perhaps more pointedly, the scheme adumbrated before.

The writers of the letter want to know what they may do after finishing their studies. I want to tell them that the grown up students, and therefore all college students, should begin village work even whilst they are studying. Here is a scheme for such part-time workers:

The students should devote the whole of their vacation to village service. To this end, instead of taking their walks along beaten paths, they should walk to the villages within easy reach of their institutions and study the condition of the village folk and befriend them. This habit will bring them in contact with the villagers who, when the students actually go to stay in their midst, will, by reason of the previous occasional contact; receive them as friends rather than as strangers to be looked upon with suspicion. During the long vacations the students will stay in the villages and offer to conduct classes for adults and to teach the rules of sanitation, to the villagers and to attend to the ordinary cases of illness. They will also introduce the spinning-wheel amongst them and teach



them the use of every spare minute. In order that this may be done students and teachers will have to revise their ideas of the uses of vacation. Often do thoughtless teachers prescribe lessons to be done during the vacation. This, in my opinion, is in any case a vicious habit. Vacation is just the period when students' minds should be free from the routine work and be left free for self-help and original development. The village work I have mentioned is easily the best form of recreation and light instruction. It is obviously the best preparation for dedication to exclusive village service after finishing the studies.

The scheme for full village service does not now need to be elaborately described. Whatever was done during the vacation has now to be put on a permanent footing. The villagers will also be prepared for a fuller response. The village life has to be touched at all points, the economic, hygienic, the social and the political. The immediate solution of the economic distress is undoubtedly the wheel in the vast majority of cases. It at once adds to the income of the villagers and keeps them from mischief. The hygienic includes insanitation and disease. Here the student is expected to work with his own body and labour to dig trenches for burying excreta and other refuse and turning them into manure, for cleaning wells and tanks, for building easy embankments, removing rubbish and generally to make the villages more habitable. The village worker has also to touch the social side and gently persuade the people to give up bad customs and bad habits, such as untouchability, infant marriage, unequal matches, drink and drug evil and many local superstitions. Lastly comes the political part. Here the worker will study the political grievances of the villagers and teach them the dignity of freedom, self-reliance and self-help in everything. This makes in my opinion complete adult education. But this does not complete the task of the village worker. He must take care and charge of the little ones and begin their instruction and carry on a night school for adults. This literary training is but part of a whole education course and only a means to the larger end described above.



I claim that the equipment for this service is a large heart and a character above suspicion. Given these two conditions every other needed qualification is bound to follow.

The last question is that of bread and butter. A labourer is worthy of his hire. The incoming President is organizing a national provincial service. The All India Spinners' Association is a growing and stable organization. It furnishes young men of character an illimitable field for service. A living wage is assured. Beyond that there is no money in it. You cannot serve both self and country. Service of self is strictly limited by that of the country and hence excludes a living beyond the means of this absolutely poor country. To serve our villagers is to establish Swaraj. Everything else is but an idle dream.

*Young India, 26-12-'29*

"We propose doing medical work there. How shall we go about our business, Mahatmaji? Could you give us some hints?"

Gandhiji said, "I have experience of this work since my early days in South Africa. Let me then begin with a warning. By taking a little medical aid to them, you do not really help them. You must teach them sanitation and hygiene, which alone can prevent malaria. Quinine does seem to subdue malaria, but will not root it out. What is essential is the preventive treatment and the aftercare of patients. They do not know that careless diet often prepares the breeding ground for malaria germs. They eat anything and everything. But a malaria patient must eschew starch, too much protein, and live mainly on milk during convalescence. That is what we have to tell them. Teach them how to prevent disease. I will not congratulate you if you tell me that you have distributed a thousand quinine pills. Give them practical lessons in sanitation, if you can.

Go there with spades and shovels, fill up stagnant pools, see to the drainage, see that their wells are properly dredged and that their tank is not contaminated. The late Principal Rudra, under whose hospitable roof I have had the privilege of living, used to tell me how Delhi had fought a successful battle against the swamps and mosquito-breeding pools around Delhi. We have now to teach the



people to do what the Municipality or the Local Boards may not do, for want of funds or any other reason.

"Above all, teach them to rid their village of filth and dirt. It is the most difficult part of your work, unless you would be willing scavengers. For days you must sweep the streets and teach them to preserve health and conserve their golden manure at one and the same time. Poores *Rural Hygiene* used to be a precious little book on this subject. You have to teach them to bury their night-soil in nine-inch deep pits and cover it up with earth, the principle being that such earth is full of life and that the sun's rays penetrate that depth. In a little while the whole will be converted into rich manure, and you can grow the finest vegetable on this ground.

"I had better tell you about internal hygiene too. You must study the problem of food from the point of view of health, know the foods charged with vitamins and persuade them to eat hand-husked, unpolished rice, whole wheatmeal, whole sugar, greens grown on their patch of ground, and oil, fresh-pressed in the village oil-press. Every doctor nowadays insists on prescribing a few green leaves to be eaten raw. Every peasant could grow all kinds of *bhaji* for nothing and eat it raw as part of his normal diet. It was discovered during the War that compressed and dried vegetables were harmful and that, not lime-juice, but the juice pressed out of fresh limes, was the preventive of scurvy."

"We are very thankful. Could you tell us what we should teach in a little Harijan school we are running?"

"All that I have told you. Let me assure you that education in three R's is as nothing compared to a sound grounding in the elements of hygiene and sanitation. I happened to see a number of Harijan girls learning in a Daryaganj school. As soon as I saw them, my eyes caught sight of their dirty nails, dirtier noses and dirt-accumulating little trinkets on their noses and their ears. This thing had apparently never struck the good woman who was in charge of them. Teach them first the lessons of cleanliness. Literary training by itself is not of much account. Take care of the essentials I have told you: Remember that unlettered persons have found no difficulty in ruling over large States. President



Kruger could hardly sign his own name. Teach them the three R's by all means, but don't make a fetish of them."

"One more question," said the students, greedier for having got more than they had bargained for. "We have a little Cold Weather Fund. How are we to find the most deserving folk for this?"

"Well, hand it over to me or to the Harijan Sevak Sangha."

"No, we would administer it ourselves."

"Well, then, go to the slums of the city, seek out the poorest and give them."

"To the slums?"

"Certainly. Surely not to the Viceregal quarters, for you will find the stables there warmer and cleaner and more comfortable than our hovels. No, you need not go very far. You will find people around you wanting the things which you can spare and they most need. Mirabehn, for instance, noticed that the chowkidar here was shivering in the cold. She gave him her blanket, as Dr. Ansari had given her his shawl in England."

"But, Sir, sometimes these people pretend to be poor when they are not. How are we to find out the *bona fide* cases?"

"So you must be God! Pray don't think you have a monopoly of honesty."

"Concentrate on one village - Wazirabad," said Gandhiji to them, as they were leaving, "make it a model village and then ask me to come and inspect your work. Take my blessing and come to me later on for my certificate."

*Harijan, 8-2-'35*

We want ideal labourers in the country's cause. They will not bother about what food they get, or what comforts they are assured by the villagers whom they serve. They will trust to God for whatever they need, and will exult in the trials and tribulations they might have to undergo. This is inevitable in our country where we have 7,00,000 villages to think of. We cannot afford to have a salaried staff of workers who have an eye to regular increments, provident funds and pensions. Faithful service of the villagers is its own satisfaction.



Some of you will be tempted to ask if this is also the standard for the villagers. Not by any means. These prospects are for us servants and not for the village-folk our masters. We have sat on their backs all these years, and we want to accept voluntary and increasing poverty in order that our masters' lot may be much better than it is today. We have to enable them to earn more than they are earning today. That is the aim of the Village Industries Association. It cannot prosper unless it has an ever-increasing number of servants such as I have described. May you be such servants.

*Harijan, 23-5-'36*

A Poona correspondent writes:

"Students are now going on long leave for their summer vacation. Most of them will leave the cities and go to their native places. Looking to the urgent exigencies in the country due to the war situation, and its consequent responsibilities on the people of India, will it not be useful if a message is sent to the student world reminding them of their responsibility and duty at this critical juncture? May I therefore request you to kindly issue an appeal at the earliest to the students calling them for some action during the vacation and after? My humble suggestions are as follows:

1. Reading out the news to the villagers about the War and the Indian political situation and special articles from the *Harijan*.
2. Explaining to them the present emergency and possible events.
3. Organizing *Nagarika Samrakshana Dais*.
4. Propagating and organizing the idea of self-sufficiency in villages, so far as food and clothing is concerned.
5. A persistent campaign against untouchability. It is possible that the students, some of whom are under the fanatic influence of communal organizations, might harm rather than help the cause in view. But we have to take chances with the students as they are, and hence I have deliberately dropped, out of the above list, items of communal unity and Congress ideology and mentioned only such items as would give least scope for either communal or ideological differences."



I have no difficulty in endorsing the suggestions made by the correspondent.

Self-sufficiency is a big word. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has adopted that and self-reliance as slogans in his U. P. speeches. They should prove catching at this juncture. Villages will be swept away, if they are not self-sufficient as to their primary wants and self-reliant as to their protection against internal disruption by dissensions and disease and external danger from thieves and dacoits. Self-sufficiency, therefore, means all the cotton processes and growing of seasonal food crops and fodder for cattle. Unless this is done there will be starvation. And self-reliance means corporate organization ensuring adjustment of internal differences through arbitration by the wise men of villages and cleanliness by corporate attention to sanitation and common diseases. No mere individual effort is going to suffice. And above all villagers must be taught to feel their own strength by combined effort to make their villages proof against thieves and dacoits. This is best done by corporate non-violence. But if the way to non-violence does not seem clear to workers, they will not hesitate to organize corporate defence through violence. I am not having in mind Congressmen who have adopted non-violence as their final creed and so have no choice in the matter.

Thus the students, if they will, can have a strenuous vacation. Who knows that the vacation may not prove even indefinite? But if it is not, two months are good enough time for laying down a good foundation for self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

My correspondent is timid. There is no cause to fear communal strife. Students who take up village reorganization cannot afford to be communal.

Communalism is an urban product fated to flourish only on urban soil. In rural areas the people are too poor and too interdependent to find time for communal quarrels. Be that as it may, student workers are assumed, for this note, to be free from the virus.

*Harijan, 5-4-'42*



## ANTI-UNTOUCHABILITY

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

"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 the Harijans will continue to receive leavings of caste dinners etc. What is now to be done? And at the same time that you answer this question, I would like you also to say how best we can use our vacation which will presently be upon us."

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 both of Harijans and of caste-Hindus. The students need not worry about what happened 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 Dehradun 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. 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 leaving on their plates, they would find that they would effect a saving in their expenses, in spite of setting apart a 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. As to the use of the vacation by students, if they will approach the work with zeal, they can undoubtedly do many things. I enumerate a few of them:

1. Conduct night and day schools with just a short course, well-conceived, to last for the period of the vacation.
2. Visit Harijan quarters and clean them, taking the assistance of the Harijans if they would give it.
3. Taking Harijan children for excursions, showing them sights near their villages and teaching them how to study Nature, and generally interesting them in their surroundings, giving them by the way a working knowledge of geography and history.
4. Reading to them simple stories from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.
5. Teaching them simple *bhajans*.
6. Cleaning the Harijan boys of all the dirt that they would find about their persons and giving both the grown ups and the children simple lessons in hygiene.
7. Taking a detailed census in selected areas of the condition of Harijans.
8. Taking medical aid to the ailing Harijans.

This is but a sample of what is possible to do among the Harijans. It is a list hurriedly made, but a thoughtful student will, I have no doubt, add many other items.

I have so far confined my attention to the service of Harijans, but there is a service no less necessary to be rendered to caste-Hindus. The students can often in the gentlest manner possible carry the message of anti-untouchability to them



in spite of themselves. There is so much ignorance which can be easily dispelled by a judicious distribution of clean authentic literature. The students can make a survey of those who are for abolishing untouchability and those] who are against and, whilst they are making this survey, they may take note of wells, schools, ponds and temples open to Harijans and of those closed to them.

If they will do all these things in a methodical j and persistent manner, they will find the results to be startling. Every student should keep a log-book in which he should enter the details of his work, and at the end of the vacation a comprehensive but brief report of the results of their labours could be prepared and sent by them to the Servants of the Untouchables Society of their province. Whether other students accept all or any of the suggestions made here, I shall expect my correspondent to give me a report of what he and his associates have done.

*Harijan, 1-4-'33*

I have said more than once that, if untouchability is removed in its fullness from the Hindu heart, it will have far reaching consequences, inasmuch as it touches millions of human beings. As I said last night to the great meeting in Nagpur, if untouchability is really removed from the Hindu heart, that is, if the high-caste Hindus purge themselves of this terrible taint, we shall soon discover that we are all one and not different peoples, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, whatever we may call ourselves. We shall feel the unity, once the barrier of untouchability is removed. As I have often said, untouchability is a hydra-headed monster, appearing in many shapes. Some of them are very subtle. If I have jealousy for any human being, that also is a species of untouchability. I do not know if my dream about the removal of untouchability will be fully realized while I am living. All those who are religiously inclined, those who believe not in formal religion but in the essence of religion, cannot but believe in the removal of a subtle type of untouchability that affects the lives of, a vast mass of humanity. If Hindu hearts can be purged of this evil, our eyes of understanding will be more and more opened. It is not possible to estimate the gain to humanity



when untouchability is really removed. You can now have no difficulty in understanding why I have staked my life for this one thing.

If you, the students who have assembled here, have followed me so far and understood the implications of this mission of mine you will soon extend the help I want from you. Many students have written to me asking what part they can take in helping this movement. It is a surprise to me that students are obliged to ask this question. The field is so vast and near you that you need not ask the question as to what you may do and what you may not. It is not a political question. It may become one, but for I you and me, for the time being, it is not connected with politics. My life is governed by religion. I have said that even my politics are derived from my religion. I never lost sight of the principle that governs my life when I began dabbling in politics. As this is a humanitarian campaign, students must devote a part of their spare time, if not the whole, to the service of the thousands of Harijans. By giving me this magnificent purse you have certainly equalled the brightest records of students' meetings which have addressed in my many peregrinations throughout the length and breadth of India. But I want much more from you. I have found that, if I get many helpers who can give their spare time, much work can be done. This work cannot be done by hired labour. With hired labour we cannot go to Harijan quarters and sweep their roads, enter their houses and wash their children. I have described in the columns of the *Harijan* what students can do. Harijan teacher has shown what a Herculean task it is for him to tackle. Even wild children are better than: Harijan children. Wild children are not sunk in utter degradation, as the Harijan children are, nor do they live in such filthy surroundings. This problem cannot be tackled by hired labour. No amount of money can enable me to do this. It must be your prerogative. It is an acid test of the education received by you in schools and colleges. Your worth will not be measured by your ability to make faultless English speeches. Your worth will be measured by the service you render to the poor and not by Government posts worth Rs. 60 or Rs. 600 that you may have got. I wish you would do this work in the spirit I suggest. I have not met a single student who has said that he cannot spare one hour per day. If you write your diary from day to day, you will find that you waste many a precious hour in the



365 days of the year. If you want to turn your education to good account you will turn your attention to this work while this hurricane campaign lasts. Erstwhile students are serving Harijans within a radius of 5 miles round about Wardha. They are doing good silent work; therefore, you do not know them. I invite you to see their work. It is hard but pleasurable. It will give you joy, greater than your cricket or tennis. I have repeatedly said that money will come if I have real, intelligent, honest workers. As a boy of 18 I began my education in begging. I have seen that money can be found easily if we have the right kind of workers. Money alone will never satisfy me. I would ask you to pledge yourselves to devote a definite number of spare hours to Harijan service. As you, Mr President, have said, I am a dreamer. I am indeed a practical dreamer. My dreams are not airy nothings. I want to convert my dreams into realities as far as possible.

*Harijan, 17-11-'33*

Gandhiji's acquaintance with the students of Madras is as old as 1896 and they have ever maintained their relations with him. However much men of the older generation may hesitate to abolish this curse, the students, he said, should show their readiness to work for the reform and to serve the Harijans in a concrete manner. Gandhiji asked them to take the broom and the bucket and clean out all the dirty Harijan quarters of Madras and to serve the Harijans in a variety of ways. "If you want," he said, "to convince Hindu society that untouchability cannot be part of religion, and that it is a hideous error, you have to develop character and to show in your lives that to believe in some people being touchables and some untouchables is not religion but the reverse. If you have no character to lose, people will have no faith in you. You will have to move among the masses; you will have to bring about a change in their hearts. The so-called orthodox do not represent the masses, nor do they represent the correct interpretation of the scriptures. They can react on the masses. But character alone will have effect on the masses. Masses will not argue. They will simply want to know who are the men who go to them. If those men have credentials the masses will listen to them; if they have no credentials the masses will not listen," He then described to them how they could serve the Harijans, and said,



"It is in the midst of these people that you have to go and bring a ray of light and hope. You will have to bend your backs and work in their midst and assure them that you have gone to them not with any mental reservation, nor with any base motives, but with the pure motive of serving them and taking the message of love and peace in their midst. If you will do that you will find a ready response from them."

*Harijan, 29-12-'33*

My message is exceedingly simple. It is no new truth that has dawned upon me today. I have to the best of my ability striven to live up to it for the past fifty years. And the more I have succeeded in living up to it, the greater has been my inward joy. Nor is it for the first time that I am delivering this message to India. But because of some incidents in the recent past, it comes to the people as a new thing. My message is simply this that *savarna* Hindus, who have been considering themselves superior to those whom they have called untouchables, unapproachables, invisibles, or *avarna* Hindus, should realize that this arrogation of superiority has no sanction whatsoever in the Shastras. If I discovered that those scriptures, which are known as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, the Smritis, etc., clearly showed that they claimed divine authority for untouchability as I have described it to you then nothing on this earth would hold me to Hinduism. I should throw it overboard as I should throw overboard a rotten apple. My reason is offended and my heart is wounded at the very thought that God Himself, who has created both *savarna* Hindus and *avarna* Hindus, should impose this bar sinister between His children. The very thought that the *Rishis* who gave the Vedas and the Upanishads and who in every *mantra* that they pronounced taught the unity of God, could ever conceive of any such thing as untouchability as it is practised today in Hinduism must be repugnant to every intelligent person. But prejudice and superstitions die hard. They cloud the reason, befog the intellect and harden the heart. And so you find learned men defending this untouchability.

But you, students, should know that behind this message there lurks also a much greater message. This monster of untouchability has invaded every form of



society in India; and the idea behind this message is that there should be not only no untouchability as between Hindus and Hindus, but there should be no untouchability whatsoever between Hindus, Christians, Mussalmans, Parsis and the rest. I am convinced that, if this great change of heart can be brought about among millions of *savarna* Hindus and if their hearts can be purified, -as certainly they will be purified-we should live in India as one people trusting each other and without any mutual distrust or suspicion. It is untouchability with all its subtle forms that separates us from one another and makes life itself unlovely and difficult to live.

You can now, therefore, understand why I am, drawing upon the sympathy of all Indians, to whatever faith they may belong. Indeed, I have not hesitated to ask the support of the whole world not by way of pecuniary offering, but by their sympathy, their prayers and their study of the question with all its implications. I want their heart sympathy, which is infinitely greater than any pecuniary offering. I do not stretch out my hand before them for money, because they are not debtors to Harijans. It is for *savarna* Hindus to discharge this debt.

To conclude, this prayerful support and sympathy can only be given by non-Hindus, if they have no distrust of this movement and if they are satisfied that this is a movement of inward purification and deeply religious. Remember that I have not idly given this message which has come straight from the heart. I have gladly taken your purse which is a spontaneous offering from you. But I have accepted it as a bond between you and myself as a token of your determination to give me the fullest support you are capable of giving. And since I am a good accountant, I shall ask an account from you and shall want to know from time to time what part you have played in this movement.

*Harijan, 26-1-'34*

My blessings will be of no use if you will not fulfil your trust. Your responsibility is enhanced by the fact that you will go out as representatives of Harijans and you will have to reflect in your life there, the life you have lived here. Your contribution to the destruction of untouchability will be in proportion to the cleanness and purity of the life you live and the service you will render to your



community. Hinduism, you will remember, cannot live if untouchability remains, and you will have to make yourselves volunteer workers in the sacred cause.

*Harijan, 5-8-'39*

I want the Harijan girls here to show such a degree of culture that everybody should feel ashamed to regard them as untouchables. That is the goal of the Harijan Sevak Sanghs activities. This institution should demonstrate to the whole world the heights to which Harijans can rise, if they are freed from the incubus of untouchability, and conversely, the sacrilege and inhumanity of the institution of untouchability itself.

*Harijan, 5-5-'46*



## HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

Q. What is the utility of trying to keep a number of pseudo-nationalist Muslims within the Congress fold by allowing them illegitimate and illogical concessions which are only increasing their insatiable hunger?

A. If the Muslim nationalists are pseudo-nationalists' we too are pseudo-nationalists'. Let us therefore eradicate that word from our dictionary. I do not know what an 'illogical concession' means, but you will never find me supporting an illegitimate concession. That is common ground between us.

Q. Is not the Congress Party responsible for the embitterment of the communal relations when it brought the Khilafat question on the Congress platform?

A. It is historically not true that the participation of the Congress in the Khilafat movement is responsible for the embitterment of the communal relations. The fact is just the other way about, and I shall always maintain that the Congress did well in standing by our Mussalman compatriots in their fight for the Khilafat.

*Amrit Bazaar Patrika, 3-8—34*

Q. I am a Hindu student. I have been great friends with a Muslim, but we have fallen out over the question of idol worship. I find solace in idol worship, but I cannot give an answer to my Muslim friend in terms of what may be called convincing. Will you say something on idol worship in the *Harijan*?

A. My sympathies are both with you and your Muslim friend. I suggest your reading my writings on the question in *Young India* and, if you feel at all satisfied, let your Muslim friend read them too. If your friend has real love for you, he will conquer his prejudice against idol worship. A friendship which exacts oneness of opinion and conduct is not worth much. Friends have to tolerate one another's ways of life and thought even though they may be different, except where the difference is fundamental. May be your friend has come to think that it is sinful to associate with you as you are an idolator. Idolatry is bad, not so idol worship. An idolator makes a fetish of his idol An Idol worshipper sees God even in a stone and therefore takes the help of an idol to establish his union



with God. Every Hindu child knows that the stone in the famous temple in Banaras is not Kashi Vishwanath. But he believes that the Lord of the Universe does reside specially in that stone. This play of the imagination is permissible and healthy. Every edition of the Gita on a book-stall has not that sanctity which I ascribe to my own copy. Logic tells me there is no more sanctity in my copy than in any another. The sanctity is in my imagination. But that imagination brings about marvellous concrete results. It changes men's lives. I am of opinion that whether we admit it or not, we are all idol worshippers or idolaters, if the distinction I have drawn is not allowed. A book, a building, a picture, a carving are surely all images in which God does reside, but they are not God. He who says they are errs.

*Harijan, 9-3-'40*

I have two typical letters about flags in schools and colleges. Some boys hoist the Congress flag, therefore others hoist the League flag. Both are wrong. My correspondents report that the mischief commenced by the hoisting of the Congress flag. Probably nothing would have happened for the time being, if both the flags had been tolerated. The right thing was and is that boys must not take the initiative in such cases. The buildings belong to the authorities and they must decide whether or not to fly, which, if any, flag over their buildings. If boys take the law into their own hands, the result must be chaos and confusion plus breaking of heads. This would be sheer vulgarity and do no good to anybody. Schools and colleges should be institutions for healing communal breaches, not for promoting differences. If boys and girls do not learn discipline in their school days, money and time spent on their education is so much national loss.

*Harijan, 17-2-'46*

One student asked, "What can students do to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity?" It was a question after Gandhiji's heart. "The way is simple," he replied. "Even if all the Hindus turn rowdies and abuse you, you may not cease to regard them as your blood-brothers and *vice versa*. Is it impossible? No, rather the contrary. And what is possible for the individual is possible for the mass.



"Today the whole atmosphere is poisoned. All kinds of wild rumours are circulated by the Press and are indiscriminately swallowed by the people. Panic results and both Hindus and Mussalmans forget their humanity and behave towards one another like wild brutes. It behoves man to act decently, irrespective of what the other party might or might not do. If one returns decency for decency, it is a bargain. Even thieves and dacoits do that. There is no merit in it. Humanity disdains to calculate profits and losses. It enjoins on one a unilateral obligation to put up decent behaviour. If all the Hindus listened to my advice, or in the alternative, the Muslims listened to me, there would be peace in India which neither daggers nor lathis would be able to shatter. The mischief-maker will soon be weary of the sorry business of stabbing, when there is no retaliation or counter provocation. An Unseen Power will arrest his uplifted arm and it will refuse to obey his wicked will. You may throw dust at the sun, it won't dim his lustre. All it needs is to hold one's soul in faith and patience. God is good and does not allow wickedness to proceed beyond a certain length.

*Harijan, 28-4-'46*



## CAPITAL AND LABOUR

Q. Do you think co-operation between the exploited and the exploiters is at all possible to attain the ideals you stand for? Do you not think that time has come when Congress should take a definite stand for the rights of the masses irrespective of the interests of the capitalists and the landlords? Do you not think that it is not possible to organize the masses effectively on a nationalistic programme and workers have no need or no other alternative but to array themselves against the capitalists and landlords for the exploited tenants and labour? Do you not think that a class war is inevitable and interested classes must perish for the sake of a greater humanity?

A. I never said that there should be co-operation between the exploiter and the exploited so long as exploitation and the will to exploit persist. Only I do not believe that the capitalists and landlords are all exploiters by an inherent necessity or that there is a basic or irreconcilable antagonism between their interests and those of the masses. All exploitation is based on the co-operation, willing or forced, of the exploited. However much we may detest admitting it, the fact remains that there would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiter. But self comes in and we hug the chains that bind us. This must cease. What is needed is not the extinction of the landlords and the capitalists but transformation of the existing relationships between them and the masses into something healthier and purer. You ask whether the time has not come when the Congress should stand for the rights of the masses as opposed to the interests of the capitalists and the landlords.' My reply is that ever since the Congress has come on the scene it has done nothing else whether it was dominated by the Moderates or the Extremists. From its very inception under A. O. Hume it has sought to represent the masses. That indeed was its origin, and a study of its history of nearly half a century would prove to the hilt that the Congress has been all through progressively representative of the masses.

Do I not think that time has come when Congress should take a definite stand for the rights of the masses irrespective of the interests of the capitalists and the



landlords? No. We, the so-called friends of the masses, will only dig our and their graves if we took that stand. I would like to use the landlords and capitalists for the service of the masses as the late Sir Surendranath used to do. We must not sacrifice the interests of the masses to the capitalists. We must not play their game. We must trust them to the measure of their ability to surrender their gains for the service of the masses. Do you think that the so-called privileged classes are altogether devoid of nationalistic sentiments? If you think so, you will be doing grave injustice to them and disservice to the cause of the masses. Are not they too exploited by the Rulers? They are not insusceptible to the higher appeal. It has been my invariable experience that a kind word uttered does go home to them? If we win their confidence and put them at their ease we shall find that they are not averse to progressively sharing their riches with the masses. Moreover let us ask ourselves with the masses, have we bridged the gulf between the surging millions and us? Let us who live in glass houses not throw stones. To what extent do you share the life of the masses? I confess that with me it is still an aspiration. We ourselves have not completely shed the habits of living that we say the capitalists are notorious for. The idea of class war does not appeal to me. In India class war is not only not inevitable but it is avoidable if we have understood the message of non-violence. Those who talk about class war as being inevitable have not understood the implications of non-violence or have understood them only skindeep.

Q. How can the rich help the poor without the rich being poor themselves? Richness or capitalism is a system which tries to perpetuate the colossal difference between capital and labour in order to maintain its position and status. Is it therefore possible to effect any compromise between them without greatly injuring the interests of either?

A. The rich can help the poor by using their riches not for selfish pleasure, but so as to subserve the interests of the poor. If they do so there will not be that unbridgeable gulf that today exists between the "haves" and the "have-nots". Class divisions there will be, but they will then be horizontal, not vertical. Let us not be obsessed with catchwords and seductive slogans imported from the



West. Have we not our own distinct Eastern traditions? Are we not capable of finding our own solution to the question of capital and labour? What is the system of *Varnashrama* but a means of harmonizing the difference between high and low, as well as between capital and labour? All that comes from the West on this subject is tarred with the brush of violence. I object to it because I have seen the wreckage that lies at the end of this road. The more thinking set even in the West today stand aghast at the abyss for which their system is heading. And I owe whatever influence I have in the West to my ceaseless endeavour to find a solution which promises an escape from the vicious circle of violence and exploitation. I have been a sympathetic student of the Western social order and I have discovered that underlying the fever that fills the souls of the West, there is a restless search for Truth. I value that spirit. Let us study our Eastern institutions in that spirit of scientific inquiry and we shall evolve a truer socialism and a truer communism than the world has yet dreamed of. It is surely wrong to presume that Western socialism or communism is the last word on the question of mass poverty.

*Amrit Bazar Patrika, 3-8-'34*



## SOCIAL REFORM

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

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

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

In pursuance of this decision quite a large number of students, including some children of tender age, fasted on the day on which the dinner was given and took upon themselves the wrath of their so-called elders. Nor was the step free from the dangers of serious pecuniary consequences to the students. The elders' threatened to stop the allowances of their boys and even to withdraw any



financial aid that they were giving to local institutions, but the boys stood firm. As many as two hundred and eighty five students thus refused to take part in the caste dinner, and most of them fasted.

I tender my congratulations to these boys and hope that everywhere students will take a prominent part in effecting social reform. They hold in their pocket, as it were, the key to social reform and the protection of their religion, just as they have in their possession the key to Swaraj—though they may not be aware of it owing to their negligence or carelessness. But I hope that the example set by the students of Dharmaj will awaken them to a sense of their power.

In my opinion the true *shraddha* of the deceased lady was performed by these young men fasting on that day, while those who gave the dinner wasted good money and set a bad example to the poor. The rich, moneyed class ought to use their God-given wealth for philanthropic purposes. They should understand that the poor cannot afford to give caste dinners on wedding or on funeral ceremonies. These bad practices have proved to be the ruin of many a poor man. If the money that was spent in Dharmaj on the caste dinner had been used for helping poor students, or poor widows, or for Khadi or cow-protection, or the amelioration of the 'untouchables', it would have borne fruit and brought peace to the departed soul. But as it is, the dinner has already been forgotten, it has profited nobody and it has caused pain to the students and the sensible section of the Dharmaj public.

Let no one imagine that the Satyagraha has gone in vain, because it did not succeed in preventing the dinner in question from taking place. The students themselves knew that there was little possibility of their Satyagraha producing any immediate tangible result. But we may safely take it that if they do not let their vigilance go to sleep, no *shethia* will again dare to give a post-mortem dinner. A chronic and longstanding social evil cannot be swept away at a stroke, it always requires patience and perseverance.

When will the elders' of our society learn to recognize the signs of the time? How long will they be slaves to custom instead of using it as a means for the amelioration of society and the country? How long will they keep their children



divorced from a practical application of the knowledge which they are helping them to acquire? When will they rescue their sense of right and wrong from its present state of trance and wake up and be *mahajans* in the true sense of the word?

*Young India, 1-3-'28*

Q. Is it yet time for the youths of India to force a social re-ordering? Should it follow or precede any further political effort towards Swaraj?

A. The two things-the social re-ordering and the fight for political Swaraj-must go hand in hand. There can be no question of precedence or division into watertight compartments here. But a new social order cannot be 'forced'; that would be a remedy worse than the disease. I am an impatient reformer. I am all for thorough-going, radical social re-ordering; but it must be an organic growth, not a violent super-imposition.

*Amrit Bazar Patrika, 3-8-'34*

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

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



*Harijan, 8-6-'40*

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

*Young India, 25-10-'28*



## SECTION EIGHT: FOR GIRL STUDENTS

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### NEED FOR PUBLIC WORK

If this institution presents India with some heroines, some genuine workers, who will not be lost to the society but who will dedicate themselves to its service, I should be delighted. If after receiving this costly education you give me the slip and straightway marry away and disappear from the horizon, you will have deceived the country. Not that you may not marry. But whether you are married or unmarried, don't be slaves, but do what the country demands of you. You should be the incarnation of mercy and bravery, and go about in the world with the sure shield of purity ever protecting you, ever above temptation and without fear.

*Young India, 11-8-'27*

Your parents do not send you to school to become dolls. On the contrary you are expected to become Sisters of Mercy. Do not make the mistake of thinking that only those may be called Sisters of Mercy who wear a particular dress. She becomes a Sister of Mercy immediately she thinks less of herself, and more of those who are poorer and more unfortunate than herself; and you have done the work of Sisters of Mercy in giving your mite to the purse that has been presented to me, because that purse has been presented for those who are unfortunately poorer than yourselves.

To give a little bit of money is easy enough; to do a little thing oneself is more difficult. If you really feel for the people for whom you are giving money, you must go a step further and wear Khadi that these people manufacture. If, when Khadi is brought before you, you say "Khadi is a bit coarse, we cannot wear it," then I know you have not the spirit of self-sacrifice in you.

It is such a very nice thing that here there is no distinction between high class and low class, touchables and untouchables; and if your hearts are also working in that direction, and you do not consider yourselves superior to some other girls, it is a very good thing indeed.



May God bless you!

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, pp. 145-46*

Religious instruction you have, and very properly in this institution. You have got also a beautiful temple. I see from your time-table that you begin the day by offering worship, all of which is good and elevating; but it may easily amount to a beautiful ceremonial and nothing else, if that worship is not translated day after day into some practical work. So I say, in order to follow out that act of worship, take up the spinning-wheel, sit at it for half an hour, and think of these millions that I have described to you and say in the name of God, "I spin for the sake of them." If you do it with your heart, with the knowledge that you are the humbler and the richer for that real act of devotion, if you will dress not for show, but for covering your limbs, you will certainly not have any hesitation in wearing Khadi and establish that bond between yourselves and the millions.

I saw in your magazines mention made with some degree of pardonable pride of what some of the old school girls had been doing. I saw notices after this style. So and so married so and so—4 or 5 notices. There is, I know, nothing wrong in a girl who has come of age, about 25 or even 22 years old, getting married. But I miss in these notices a single mention of a girl who had dedicated herself to service only. So, I propose to tell you what I told the girls of H. H. the Maharajas College for girls in Bangalore, that we get a poor return for the great efforts that are being made by educationalists and by lavish charities, if you all become mere dolls and disappear from life, as soon as you are discharged from such institutions.

A vast majority of girls disappear from public life as soon as they are discharged from schools and colleges. You of this institution have no such business. You have the example of Miss Emery and the examples of others who have been superintending, and who have been, if I am not speaking incorrectly, maidens.

Every girl, every Indian girl, is not born to marry. I can show many girls who are today dedicating themselves to service instead of serving one man. It is high time that Hindu girls produce or reproduce an edition, and if possible a glorified edition, of Parvati and Sita.



You claim to be Shaivites. You know what Parvati did. She did not spend money for a husband, nor would she allow herself to be bought, and she today adorns the Hindu firmament by being classed with one of the Seven *Satis*—not because of the degree in an educational institution that she received, but because of her unheard of *tapasya* (penance).

Here, I understand that there is the hateful system of dowry, whereby it becomes most difficult for young women to get suitable matches. The grown up girls—some of you are grown up—are expected to resist all such temptations. If you will resist these evil customs, you will, some of you, have to begin by remaining maidens either for life, or at least for a number of years. Then, when it is time for you to marry, and you feel that you must have a partner in life, you will not be in thirst of one who has money, or fame, or beauty of person, but you will be in search of one—even as Parvati was—who has got all the matchless qualities which go to make good character. You know how Naradjee described Shiva to Parvati—a mere pauper smeared with ashes, no handsomeness about him and a *brahmachari*; and Parvati said, 'Yes, he will be my husband/ You won't have several editions of Shiva unless some of you will be content to offer *tapasya*, not for thousands of years, as Parvati did. We, frail human beings, cannot afford to do it, but you can do so at least during your lifetime.

If you will accept these conditions, you will refuse to disappear into the kingdom of dolls, but will aspire to be *Satis* like Parvati, Damayanti, Sita and Savitri. Then and not till then, in my humble opinion, will you have deserved an institution of this character.

May God fire you with this ambition, and if you are inspired, may He help you to realize this ambition.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, pp. 147-49*



### MOLESTATION FROM BOYS

There is a most pathetic letter from a college girl in the Punjab lying in my file for nearly two months. Want of time was but an excuse for shirking the answer to the girls question. Somehow or other I was avoiding the task, though I knew the answer. Meanwhile I received another letter from a sister of great experience, and I felt that I could no longer evade the duty of dealing with the college girls very real difficulty. Her letter is written in chaste Hindustani. I must try to do as much justice as I can to the letter, which gives me a perfect picture of her deep feeling. Here is my rendering of a portion of the letter:

"To girls and grown-up women there come times, in spite of their wish to the contrary, when they have to venture out alone, whether they are going from one place to another in the same city, or from one town to another. And when they are thus found alone, evil-minded people pester them. They use improper or even indecent language whilst they are passing by. And if fear does not check them, they do not hesitate to take further liberty. I should like to know what part non-violence can play on such occasions. The use of violence is of course there. If the girl or the woman has sufficient courage, she will use what resources she has and teach miscreants a lesson. They can at least kick up a row that would draw the attention of the people around, resulting in the miscreants being horsewhipped. But I know that the result of such treatment would be merely to postpone the agony, not a permanent cure. Where you know the people who misbehave, I feel sure that they will listen to reason, to the gesture of love and humility. But what about a fellow cycling by, using foul language on seeing a girl or a woman unaccompanied by a male companion? You have no opportunity of reasoning with him. There is no likelihood of your meeting him again. You may not even recognize him. You do not know his address. What is a poor girl or a woman to do in such cases? By way of example I want to give you my own experience of last night (26th October). I was going with a girl companion of mine on a very special errand at about 7-30 p.m. It was impossible to secure a male companion at the time and the errand could not be put off. On the way a Sikh young man passed by on his cycle and continued to murmur something till we were within hearing distance. We knew that it was aimed at us. We felt hurt and uneasy. There was no crowd on the road. Before we had gone a few paces the cyclist returned. We recognized him at once whilst he was still at a respectful



distance. He wheeled towards us, heaven knows whether he had intended to get down or merely pass by us. We felt that we were in danger. We had no faith in our physical prowess. I myself am weaker than the average girl. But in my hands I had a big book. Somehow or other courage came to me all of a sudden, I hurled the heavy book at the cycle and roared out, 'Dare you repeat your pranks?' He could with difficulty keep his balance, put on speed and fled from us. Now, if I had not flung the book at the cycle, he might have harassed us by his filthy language to the end of our journey. This was an ordinary, perhaps insignificant, occurrence, but I wish you could come to Lahore and listen to the difficulties of us unfortunate girls. You would surely discover a proper solution. First of all, tell me how, in the circumstances mentioned above, can girls apply the principle of *ahimsa* and save themselves. Secondly, what is the remedy for curing youth of the abominable habit of insulting womenfolk? You would not suggest that we should wait and suffer till a new generation, taught from childhood to be polite to their womenfolk comes into being. The Government is either unwilling or unable to deal with this social evil. The big leaders have no time for such questions. Some, when they hear of a girl bravely castigating ill-behaved youth, say, 'Well done. That is the way all girls should behave.' Sometimes a leader is found eloquently lecturing against such misbehaviour of students. But no one applies himself continuously to the solution of this serious problem. You will be painfully surprised to know that during Diwali and such other holidays newspapers come out with notices warning women from venturing outdoors even to see the illuminations. This one fact should enable you to know to what straits we are reduced in this part of the world! Neither the writers nor the readers of such warnings have any sense of shame that they should have to be issued."

Another Punjabi girl to whom I gave the letter to read supports the narrative from her own experiences of her college days and tells me that what my correspondent has related is the common experience of most girls.

The other letter from an experienced woman relates the experiences of her girl friends in Lucknow. They are molested in cinema theatres by boys sitting in the row behind them using all kinds of language which I can only call indecent. They are stated to resort even to practical jokes which have been described by my correspondent but which I must not reproduce here.

If the immediate personal relief was all that was needed, no doubt the remedy that the girl who describes herself to be physically weak adopted, i.e., of flinging



her book at the cyclist, was quite correct. It is an age-long remedy. And I have said in these columns that when a person wants to become violent, physical weakness does not come in the way of its effective use, even against a physically powerful opponent. And we know that in the present age there have been invented so many methods of using physical force that even a little girl with sufficient intelligence can deal death and destruction. The fashion nowadays is growing of training girls to defend themselves in situations such as the one described by my correspondent. But she is wise enough to know that even though she was able to make effective use for the moment of the book she had in her hand as a weapon of defence, it was no remedy for the growing evil. In the cases of rude remarks, there need be no perturbation but there should be no indifference. All such cases should be published in the papers. Names of the offenders should be published when they are traced. There should be no false modesty about exposing the evil. There is nothing like public opinion for castigating public misconduct. There is no doubt that, as the correspondent says, there is great public apathy about such matters. But it is not the public alone that are to blame. They must have before them examples of rudeness. Even as stealing cannot be dealt with unless cases of thieving are published and followed up, so also is it impossible to deal with cases of rude behaviour if they are suppressed. Crime and vice generally require darkness for prowling. They disappear when light plays upon them.

But I have a fear that the modern girl loves to be Juliet to half a dozen Romeos. She loves adventure. My correspondent seems to represent the unusual type. The modern girl dresses not to protect herself from wind, rain and sun but to attract attention. She improves upon nature by painting herself and looking extraordinary. The non-violent way is not for such girls. I have often remarked in these columns that definite rules govern the development of the non-violent spirit in us. It is a strenuous effort. It marks a revolution in the way of thinking and living. If my correspondent and the girls of her way of thinking will revolutionize their life in the prescribed manner, they will soon find that young men, who at all come in contact with them, will learn to respect them and to put on their best behaviour in their presence. But if perchance they find, as they



may, that their very chastity is in danger of being violated, they must develop courage enough to die rather than yield to the brute in man. It has been suggested that a girl who is gagged or bound so as to make her powerless even for struggling cannot die as easily as I seem to think. I venture to assert that a girl who has the will to resist can burst all the bonds that may have been used to render her powerless. The resolute will gives her the strength to die.

But this heroism is possible only for those who have trained themselves for it. Those who have not a living faith in non-violence will learn the art of ordinary self-defence and protect themselves from indecent behavior of unchivalrous youth.

The great question, however, is why should young men be devoid of elementary good manners so as to make decent girls be in perpetual fear of molestation from them? I should be sorry to discover that the majority of young men have lost all sense of chivalry. But they should, as a class, be jealous of their reputation and deal with every case of impropriety occurring among their mates. They must learn to hold the honour of every woman as dear as that of their own sisters and mothers. All the education they receive will be in vain if they do not learn good manners.

And is it not as much the concern of professors and schoolmasters to ensure gentlemanliness among their pupils as to prepare them for the subjects prescribed for the classroom?

*Harijan, 31-12-'38*

I have received a letter written on behalf of eleven girls whose names and addresses have been sent to me. I give it below with changes that make it more readable without in any way altering the meaning:

"The modern girl, it seems, has provoked you to the extent that you have disposed of her finally as one playing Juliet to half a dozen Romeos. This remark which betrays your idea about women in general is not very inspiring.

In these days when women are coming out of closed doors to help men and take an equal share of the burden of life, it is indeed strange that they are still blamed even when they are maltreated by men. It cannot be denied that instances can be cited



where the fault is equally divided. There may be a few girls playing Juliets to half a dozen Romeos. But such cases presuppose the existence of half a dozen Romeos, moving about the streets in quest of a Juliet. And it cannot or should never be taken that modern girls are categorically all Juliets or modern youths all Romeos. You yourself have come in contact with quite a number of modern girls and may have been struck by their resolution, sacrifice and other sterling womanly virtues.

As for forming public opinion against such mis-demeanours as pointed out by your correspondent, it is not for girls to do it, not so much out of false shame as from its ineffectiveness.

But a statement like this from one revered all over the world seems to hold a brief once more for that worn out and unbecoming saying, 'Woman is the gate of Hell'.

From the foregoing remarks, however, please do not conclude that modern girls have no respect for you. They hold you in as much respect as every young man does. To be hated or pitied is what they resent much. They are ready to mend their ways if they are really guilty. Their guilt, if any, must be conclusively proved before they are anathemized. In this respect they would neither desire to take shelter under the covering of 'ladies, please', nor would they silently stand and allow the judge to condemn them in his own way. Truth must be faced; the modern girl or 'Juliet', as you have called her, has courage enough to face it."

My correspondents do not perhaps know that I began service of India's women in South Africa more than forty years ago when perhaps none of them was born. I hold myself to be incapable of writing anything derogatory to womanhood. My regard for the fair sex is too great to permit me to think ill of them. She is, what she has been described to be in English, the better half of mankind. And my article was written to expose students' shame, not to advertise the frailties of girls. But in giving the diagnosis of the disease, I was bound, if I was to prescribe the right remedy, to mention all the factors which induced the disease.

The modern girl has a special meaning. Therefore there was no question of my restricting the scope of my remark to some. But all the girls who receive English education are not modern girls. I know many who are not at all touched by the 'modern girl' spirit. But there are some who have become modern girls. My remark was meant to warn India's girl students against copying the modern girl and complicating a problem that has become a serious menace. For, at the time I



received the letter referred to, I received also a letter from an Andhra girl student bitterly complaining of the behaviour of Andhra students which from the description given is worse than what was described by the Lahore girl. This daughter of Andhra tells me, the simple dress of her girl friends gives them no protection, but they lack the courage to expose the barbarism of the boys who are a disgrace to the institution they belong to. I commend this complaint to the authorities of the Andhra University.

The eleven girls I invite to initiate a crusade against the rude behaviour of students. God helps only those who help themselves. The girls must learn the art of protecting themselves against the ruffianly behaviour of men.

*Harijan, 4-2-'39*

I attach far more importance to the cultural aspect of education than to the literary. Culture is the foundation, the primary thing which the girls ought to get from here. It should show in the smallest detail of your conduct and personal behaviour, how you sit, how you walk, how you dress etc., so that anybody might be able to see at a glance that you are products of this institution. Inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests, and behave towards one another and your teachers and elders.

I was pleased too that you walked all the distance to and from Bhangi Nivas, when you came to see me. But if you came only to please me, your trudging had no merit. It will do you no good. You must make it a rule to prefer walking to using a conveyance. Motor car is not for the millions. You will therefore shun it. Millions cannot afford even train journey. Their world is their village. It is a very small thing but if you faithfully adhere to this rule it will transform your entire life and fill it with a sweetness that natural simplicity carries with it.

*Harijan, 5-5-'46*



## SECTION NINE: MARRIAGE AND BIRTH CONTROL

33

### THE DOWRY EVIL

A correspondent sends me a newspaper cutting showing that recently in Hyderabad, Sindh, the demand for bridegrooms has been increasing at an alarming rate, an employee of the Imperial Telegraph Engineering Service having exacted Rs. 20,000 as cash dowry during betrothal, and promises of heavy payments on the wedding day and on special occasions thereafter. Any young man who makes dowry a condition of marriage discredits his education and his country and dishonours womanhood. There are many youth movements in the country. I wish that these movements would deal with questions of this character. Such associations often become self-adulation societies, instead of becoming, as they should be, bodies representing solid reform from within. Good as the work of these bodies is at times in helping public movements, it should be remembered that the youth of the country have their reward in the public appreciation they get. Such work, if it is not backed by internal reform, is likely to demoralize the youth by creating in them a sense of unwarranted self-satisfaction. A strong public opinion should be created in condemnation of the degrading practice of dowry, and young men who soil their fingers with such ill-gotten gold should be excommunicated from society. Parents of girls should cease to be dazzled by English degrees and should not hesitate to travel outside their little castes and provinces to secure true, gallant young men for their daughters.

*Young India, 21-6-'28*

The Secretary, Shri Mirchandani, asks me for suggestions. The only suggestion that I can think of just now is that this organization should create a public opinion against *deti-leti* that would become irresistible. Young educated Amils are able to squeeze the poor parents of marriageable girls only because there is no active public opinion against the custom. There should be work done in the schools and colleges and amongst the parents of girls. The parents should so educate their daughters that they would refuse to marry a young man who wanted a price for



marrying, and would rather remain spinsters than be party to the degrading terms. The only honourable terms in marriage are mutual love and mutual consent.

*Young India, 27-12-'28*

What had they to say with regard to the scandalous custom of *deti-leti*? Instead of making their wives the queens of their homes and of their hearts, they had converted them into chattels to be bought and sold! Was this the lesson that they had imbibed from the reading of English literature? Woman had been described as the *ardhangana* or the better half of man. But they had reduced her to the position of a slave and the result was the state of paralysis in which they found their country. "Swaraj is not meant for cowards," he concluded, "but for those who would mount smilingly to the gallows and refuse even to allow their eyes to be bandaged. Promise that you will wipe off the stain of *deti-leti*, that you will die to restore your sisters and wives to their full dignity and freedom. Then I shall understand that you are ready for the freedom of your country." Addressing next the girl students who were present there he said, "As for you young girls, to you I will only say, that if I had a girl under my charge I would rather keep her a maiden all her life than give her away to one who expected a single pice for taking her for his wife."

*Young India, 14-2-'29*

The *Statesman* has carried on a crusade against the custom (of dowry) in general. There is no doubt that the custom is heartless. But so far as I am aware it does not touch the millions. The custom is confined to the middle class who are but a drop in the ocean of Indian humanity. Whenever we talk of customs, we usually think of the middle class. The millions living in the villages have their customs and woes of which we have as yet but little knowledge.

This however does not mean that one may ignore the dowry evil because it is confined to a comparatively small number of the people of this country. The system has to go. Marriage must cease to be a matter of arrangement made by parents for money. The system is intimately connected with caste. So long as the choice is restricted to a few hundred young men or young women of a



particular caste, the system will persist no matter what is said against it. The girls or boys or their parents will have to break the bonds of caste if the evil is to be eradicated.

Then the age for marrying has also to be raised and the girls have to dare to remain spinsters, if need be, i.e. if they do not get a suitable match. All this means education of a character that will revolutionize the mentality of the youth of the nation. Unfortunately the system of education has no connection with our surroundings which therefore remain practically untouched by the education received by a microscopic minority of the boys and girls of the nation. Whilst therefore whatever can be done to abate the evil must be done, it is clear to me that this evil and many others which can be named, can only be tackled, if there is education which responds to the-rapidly changing conditions of the country. How is it that so many boys and girls who have even passed through colleges are found unable or unwilling to resist the manifestly evil custom which affects their future so intimately as marriage does? Why should educated girls be found to commit suicide because they are not suited? Of what value is their education if it does not enable them to defy a custom which is wholly indefensible and repugnant to one's moral sense? The answer is clear. There is something radically wrong in the system of education that fails to arm girls and boys to fight against social or other evils. That education alone is of value which draws out the faculties of a student so as to enable him or her to solve correctly the problems of life in every department.

*Harijan, 23-5-'36*

From a correspondents long letter of wail I take the following:

"I am a schoolmaster (aged 67) with lifelong service (46 years) in the educational line, born of a poor but highly respectable Kayastha family in Bengal which knew better days but is now reduced to poverty. I am blessed (?)<sup>5</sup> with 7 daughters and two sons; the eldest son aged 20 died in October last leaving behind him his miserable and helpless parents to mourn his loss! He was a promising youth—the only hope of my life. Of my daughters five have already been given in marriage. My sixth and seventh daughters (aged 18 and 16) are yet unmarried. My younger son is a minor aged 11 years. My pay is Rs 60/- . It hardly allows me to make the two ends



meet. I have no savings. I have less than nothing, being in debt. The match of my sixth daughter has been settled. The cost of the marriage will be not less than Rs. 900/- in ornaments and dowry (Rs. 300/-). I have a life policy in the Sun Life Assurance of Canada for Rs. 2,000/-. The policy was issued in 1914. The Company has agreed to give me a loan of Rs. 400/- only. It is only half the amount required. I am absolutely helpless in respect of the other half. Could you not help this poor father with the other half?"

This letter is one out of many such. The majority of letters are written in Hindi. But we know that English education has made things no better for parents of daughters. In some cases they have become worse in that the market price of possible young men who would suit an English educated daughter of an English educated father suffers an appreciable increase.

In a case like the Bengali father's the best help that can be rendered is not a loan or a gift of the required sum, but it should consist in persuading and strengthening the parent to refuse to purchase a match for his daughter but choose or let the daughter choose one who would marry her for love, not for money. This means a voluntary extension of the field of choice. There must be a breach in the double wall of caste and province. If India is one and indivisible, surely there should be no artificial divisions creating innumerable little groups which would neither inter-dine nor intermarry. There is no religion in this cruel custom. It would not do to plead that individuals cannot make the commencement and that they must wait till the whole society is ripe for the change. No reform has ever been brought about except through intrepid individuals breaking down inhuman customs or usages. And after all, what hardships can the schoolmaster suffer if he and his daughters refused to treat marriage as a marketable transaction instead of a status or a sacrament which it undoubtedly is. I would, therefore, advise my correspondent courageously to give up the idea of borrowing or begging and to save the four hundred rupees he can get on his life policy by choosing in consultation with his daughter a suitable husband no matter to what caste or province he belongs.

*Harijan, 25-7-'36*



"Why should parents insist on marrying their daughters and for that reason undergo nameless difficulties? If parents were to educate their daughters as they educate their sons, so as to enable them to learn an independent living they won't have to worry themselves over the selection of husbands for their daughters. My own experience is that when girls have had the opportunity of developing their minds fairly and are able to support themselves in a dignified manner, they have no difficulty, when they are desirous of marrying, in being suitably matched. I must not be understood to be advocating what is called higher education for girls. I know it is not possible for thousands of girls. What I plead for is a training of girls in useful knowledge and some calling that would make them fully confident about their ability to face the world and not to feel dependent upon parents or their future husbands. Indeed I know some girls who, having been deserted by their husbands are today living a dignified life with their husbands, because during the period of their desertion they had the good fortune to become self-dependent and to receive a general training. I wish you could emphasize this aspect of the question in considering the difficulties of parents having on their hands daughters of marriageable age."

I heartily endorse the sentiments expressed by my correspondent. Only I had to deal with the case of a parent who had made himself miserable not because he had an incompetent daughter, but because he and perhaps even his daughter wanted to restrict themselves, in the choice of a husband, to their own little caste. The accomplishment' of the girl was itself a hindrance in this case. If the girl was illiterate, she could have accommodated herself to any young man. But being an accomplished girl, naturally she would need an equally 'accomplished' husband. It is our misfortune that the sordidness of exacting a price for marrying a girl is not regarded as a decided disqualification. An altogether artificial value is put upon English collegiate education. It covers a multitude of sins. If the definition of accomplishment' was more sensible than it has become among the classes whose educated young men exact a price for accepting marriage proposals on behalf of girls, the difficulty of selecting suitable matches for girls would be much lessened, if not entirely removed. Whilst therefore I commend the proposal of my fair correspondent to the attention of parents, I must insist on the necessity of breaking down the highly injurious caste barriers. Breaking



down the barriers will widen the range of choice and thus in a great measure prevent exactions.

*Harijan, 5-9-'36*

As for marriage against ones will all I can say is that students should develop sufficient strength of purpose to resist any marriage that is sought to be forced on them. Students should learn the art of standing alone and resisting in every legitimate manner any attempt to force them to do anything against their will, much more so to marry against their will.

*Harijan, 9-1-'37*

5. The interrogation is the correspondents.



### EXPENDITURE ON MARRIAGE

Surely marriage, you ought to know, is a sacrament and ought not to carry any expenditure with it. If those who have money will not curb the desire to spend it on feasting and revelry, the poor people will want to copy them and incur debts in doing so. You will, if you are brave, rise in revolt against any extravagant expenditure when you are ready to be married.

*Young India, 19-9-'29*

I might as well discuss here his sisters' marriage to which reference has been made in the letter. I do not know what is meant by marriage taking place sooner rather than later.' In no case need it take place before they are 20 years old. It is no use thinking so many years in advance. And if he will revise the whole scheme of life, he will have the sisters to choose their partners, and the ceremony need never cost more than five rupees each if that. I have been present at several such ceremonies. And the husbands or their elders have been graduates in fair circumstances.

*Harijan, 17-4-'37*



## CHILD MARRIAGE

You must be able surely to control your lust to this extent, that you are not going to marry a girl that is under 16 years of age. If I could do so I would lay down 20 as the minimum. Twenty years is early enough even in India. It is we who are responsible for the precocity of girls, not even the Indian climate, because I know girls of the age of 20 who are pure and undefiled and able to stand the storm that may rage round. Let us not hug that precocity to ourselves. Some Brahmin students tell me that they cannot follow this principle, that they cannot get Brahmin girls sixteen years old, very few Brahmins keep their daughters unmarried till that age, the Brahmin girls are married mostly before 10, 12 and 13 years. Then I say to the Brahmin youth, "Cease to be a Brahmin, if you cannot possibly control yourself.

Choose a grown up girl of 16 who became a widow when she was a child. If you cannot get a Brahmin widow who has reached that age, then go and take any girl you like. And I tell you that the God of the Hindus will pardon that boy who has preferred to marry out of his caste rather than ravish a girl of twelve. When your heart is not pure and you cannot master your passions, you cease to be an educated man. You have called your institution a premier institution. I want you to live up to the name of the premier institution which must produce boys who will occupy the front rank in character. And what is education without character and what is character without elementary personal purity? Brahmanism I adore. I have defended Varnashrama Dharma. But Brahmanism that can tolerate untouchability, virgin widowhood, spoliation of virgins, stinks in my nostrils. It is a parody of Brahmanism. There is no knowledge of Brahma therein. There is no true interpretation of the scriptures. It is undiluted animalism. Brahmanism is made of sterner stuff. I want these few remarks of mine to go deep down into your hearts.

*Young India, 15-9-'27*



### WIDOW RE-MARRIAGE

A learned Tamilian has written to me to address students on child-widows. He has said that the hardships of child-widows in this Presidency are far greater than those of child-widows in other parts of India. I have not been able to test the truth of this statement. You should know that better than I do. But what I would like you, young men around me, to do is that you should have a touch of chivalry about you. If you have that, I have a great suggestion to offer. I hope the majority of you are unmarried, and a fair number of you are also *brahmacharis*. I have to say a fair number 'because I know students; a student who casts his lustful eyes upon his sister is not a *brahmachari*. I want you to make this sacred resolve that you are not going to marry a girl who is not a widow, you will seek out a widow-girl and if you cannot get a widow-girl, you are not going to marry at all. Make that determination, announce it to the world, announce it to your parents if you have them or to your sisters. I call them widow-girls by way of correction because I believe that a child ten or fifteen years old, who was no consenting party to the so-called marriage, who having married, having never lived with the so-called husband, is suddenly declared to be a widow, is not a widow. It is an abuse of the term, abuse of language and a sacrilege. The word 'widow' in Hinduism has a sacred odour about it. I am a worshipper of a true widow like the late Mrs. Ramabai Ranade who knew what it was to be a widow. But a child 9 years old knows nothing of what a husband should be. If it is not true that there are such child-widows in the Presidency, then my case falls to the ground. But if there are such child-widows, it becomes your sacred duty to make the determination to marry a girl-widow if you want to rid ourselves of this curse. I am superstitious enough to believe that all such sins that a nation commits react upon it physically.

I believe that all these sins of ours have accumulated together to reduce us to a state of slavery. You may get the finest constitution that is conceivable dropping upon you from the House of Commons. It will be worthless if there are not men and women fit enough to work that constitution. Do you suppose that we can



possibly call ourselves men worthy of ruling ourselves or others, or shaping the destiny of a nation containing 30 crores, so long as there is one single widow who wishes to fulfil her fundamental wants but is violently prevented from doing so? It is not religion, but irreligion. I say that, saturated as I am with the spirit of Hinduism. Do not make the mistake that it is the Western spirit in me that is speaking. I claim to be full to overflowing with the spirit of India undefiled. I have assimilated many things from the West but not this. There is no warrant for this kind of widowhood in Hinduism.

*Young India*, 15-9-'27

The headmaster of a Bengali school writes:

"Your advice and utterances to students at Madras, asking them to marry widowed girls only, have horrified us, and I send forth my humble but indignant protest.

"This kind of advice will tend to destroy the tendency of the widows to observe lifelong *brahmacharya* which has given Indian womanhood the greatest or rather the highest place in the world and destroy their chances of attaining salvation through *brahmacharya* in a single birth, throwing them on the filthy path of worldly happiness. Thus this kind of keen sympathy for widows will do a great disservice to them and an injustice to the maidens whose marriage problem has become at present one of complexity and difficulty. Your theory of marriage will overturn the Hindu theory of transmigration, rebirth and even *mukti*, and will bring down Hindu society on the same level with other societies which we do not like. Our society has been demoralized no doubt, but we must have our eyes open to Hindu ideals and try to go up as far as we can and not be influenced by the examples of other societies and ideals. Examples of Ahalyabai, Rani Bhavani, Behula, Sita, Savitri, Damayanti will guide the Hindu society and we must direct it according to their ideals. I beg most humbly, therefore, that you will refrain from giving your opinions on these knotty questions and allow the society to do what it thinks best."

This indignant protest leaves me unconverted and unrepentant. My advice will not wean from her purpose a single widow who has a will of her own and who knows *brahmacharya* and is bent upon observing it. But if the advice is followed, it will certainly bring great relief to those girls of tender age who knew not the meaning of marriage when they were put through the ceremony. The use of the term 'widow' in their connection is a violent abuse of a name with sacred



associations. It is precisely for the very object that my correspondent has in view that I advise the youth of the country to marry these so-called widows or not at all. The sacredness of the institution can be preserved only when it is purged of the curse of child widowhood.

The statement that the widows attain *moksha* if they observe *brahmacharya* has no foundation whatsoever in experience. More things are necessary than mere *brahmacharya* for the attainment of the final bliss. And *brahmacharya* that is superimposed carries no merit with it, and often gives rise to secret vice that saps the morals of the society in which that vice exists. Let the correspondent know that I am writing from personal observation.

I should be glad indeed if my advice results in elementary justice being done to the maiden widows, and if for that reason the other maidens instead of being prematurely sold to man's lust are given an opportunity of waiting for maturity in age and wisdom.

I have no theory of marriage that is inconsistent with a belief in transmigration, rebirth and *mukti*. The reader should know that millions of Hindus whom we arrogantly describe as belonging to the lower order have no ban on widow remarriage. And I do not see how if remarriage of old widowers does not interfere with that belief, real marriage of girls wrongly described as widows can interfere with that grand belief. I may mention for the edification of the correspondent that transmigration and rebirth are not mere theories with me but facts as patent as the daily rise of the sun. *Mukti* is a fact to realize which I am striving with all my might. And it is the contemplation of *mukti* which has given me a vivid consciousness of the wrong that is being done to these maiden widows. Let us not in our emasculation mention in the same breath as these modern injured maiden widows the immortal names of Sita and others referred to by the correspondent.

Lastly, whilst there is, and very properly, glorification of real widowhood in Hinduism, there is, so far as I am aware, no warrant for the belief that in the Vedic times there was any absolute ban upon remarriage of widows. But my crusade is not against real widowhood. It is against its atrocious caricature. The



better way is not to regard as widows at all the girls I have in view and whom every Hindu who has a spark of chivalry in him is bound to relieve from their intolerable yoke. I therefore humbly but emphatically repeat the advice to every young Hindu to refuse to marry any but these maidens miscalled widows.

*Young India, 6-10-'27*



## BIRTH CONTROL

It is drilled into one's ears that gratification of the sex urge is a solemn obligation like the obligation of discharging debts lawfully incurred, and that not to do so would involve the penalty of intellectual decay. This sex urge has been isolated from the desire for progeny, and it is said by the protagonists of the use of contraceptives that conception is an accident to be prevented except when the parties desire to have children. I venture to suggest that this is a most dangerous doctrine to preach anywhere; much more so in a country like India where the middle class male population has become imbecile through abuse of the creative function. If satisfaction of the sex urge is a duty, the unnatural vice of which I wrote some time ago, and several other ways of gratification would be commendable. The reader should know that even persons of note have been known to approve of what is commonly known as sexual perversion. He may be shocked at the statement. But if it somehow or other gains the stamp of respectability, it will be the rage among boys and girls to satisfy their urge among members of their own sex. For me the use of contraceptives is not far removed from the means to which persons have hitherto resorted for the gratification of their sexual desire with the results that very few know. I know what havoc secret vice has played among school boys and school girls. The introduction of contraceptives under the name of science and the *imprimatur* of known leaders of society has intensified the complication and made the task of reformers who work for purity of social life wellnigh impossible for the moment. I betray no confidence when I inform the reader that there are unmarried girls of impressionable age studying in schools and colleges who study birth control literature and magazines with avidity and even possess contraceptives. It is impossible to confine their use to married women. Marriage loses its sanctity when its purpose and highest use is conceived to be the satisfaction of the animal passion without contemplating the natural result of such satisfaction.



I have no doubt that those learned men and women who are carrying on propaganda with missionary zeal in favour of the use of contraceptives, are doing irreparable harm to the youth of the country under the false belief that they will be saving thereby the poor women who may be obliged to bear children against their will. Those who need to limit their children will not be easily reached by them. Our poor women have not the knowledge or the training that the women of the West have. Surely the propaganda is not being carried on behalf of the middle class women, for they do not need the knowledge, at any rate so much as the poor classes do.

The greatest harm, however, done by the propaganda lies in its rejection of the old ideal and substitution in its place of one which, if carried out, must spell the moral and physical extinction of the race. The horror with which ancient literature has regarded the fruitless use of the vital fluid was not a superstition born of ignorance. What shall we say of a husbandman who will sow the finest seed in his possession on stony ground or of the owner of a field who will receive in his field rich with fine soil, good seed under conditions that will make it impossible for it to grow? God has blessed man with seed that has the highest potency and woman with a field richer than the richest earth to be found anywhere on this globe. Surely it is criminal folly for man to allow his most precious possession to run to waste. He must guard it with a care greater than he will bestow upon the richest pearls in his possession. And so is the woman guilty of criminal folly who will receive the seed in her life-producing field with the deliberate intention of letting it run to waste. Both he and she will be judged guilty of misuse of the talents given to them and they will be dispossessed of what they have been given. Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity. Contraceptives of a kind there were before and there will be hereafter, but the use of them was formerly regarded as sinful. It was reserved for our generation to glorify vice by calling it virtue.

The greatest disservice protagonists of contraceptives are rendering to the youth of India is to fill their minds with what appears to me to be wrong ideology. Let



the young men and women of India who hold her destiny in their hands beware of this false god and guard the treasure with which God has blessed them and use it, if they wish, for the purpose for which it is intended.

*Harijan, 28-3-'36*

"From your writing I doubt if you understand the young mind. What has been possible for you is not possible for all young men. I happen to be married. I can restrain myself. My wife cannot. She does not want children but she does want to enjoy herself. What am I to do? Is it not my duty to satisfy her? I am not generous enough to look upon her satisfying her desire through other channels. I read from the papers that you are not averse to promoting marriages and blessing them. Surely you know or ought to know that they are not contracted with the high purpose that you have mentioned."

The correspondent is right. The fact that I bless so many marriages when they satisfy the tests that I have set as to age, economy, etc., perhaps shows somewhat that I know the youth of the country to an extent that would justify my guiding them when they seek my guidance.

My correspondent's case is typical. He deserves sympathy. That the sole purpose of sexual connection is procreation is in the nature of a new discovery for me. Though I had known the rule, I had never before given it the weight it deserved. I must have till recently regarded it as a mere pious wish. I now regard it as a fundamental law of married state which is easy of observance if its paramount importance is duly recognized. My object will be fulfilled when the law is given its due place in society. To me it is a living law. We break it always and pay heavily for its breach. If my correspondent realizes its inestimable value and if he has love for her and has faith in himself, he will convert his wife to his view. Is he sincere, when he says he can restrain himself? Has the animal passion become transmuted in his case into a higher passion, say for service of fellow beings? Does he naturally refrain from doing anything to excite the passion in his wife? Let him know that Hindu science denotes eight kinds of unions which include sexual suggestions made even by signs. Is the correspondent free from these? If he is not and if he is sincerely desirous that his wife should be weaned from the sexual desire, let him surround her with the purest love, let him explain



the law to her, let him explain the physical effects of union without the desire for procreation, let him tell her what the vital fluid means. Let him further engage his wife in healthy pursuits and strive to regulate her diet, exercise etc., so as to still the passion in her. Above all, if he is a man of religion, he will try to transmit to his companion his own living faith. For I must confess that the observance of the law of continence is impossible without a living faith in God which is living Truth.

*Harijan, 25-4-'36*

If mutual consent makes a sexual act moral whether within marriage or without, and by parity of reasoning even between members of the same sex, the whole basis of sexual morality is gone and nothing but misery and defeat' awaits the youth of the country. Marry young men and women are to be found in India who would be glad to be free from the craving for mutual intercourse in whose grip they find themselves. This craving is stronger than the strongest intoxicant which has ever enslaved man. It is futile to hope that the use of contraceptives will be restricted to the mere regulation of progeny. There is hope for a decent life only so long as the sexual act is definitely related to the conception of precious life. This rules out of court perverted sexuality and to a lesser degree promiscuity. Divorce of the sexual act from its natural consequence must lead to hideous promiscuity and condonation, if not endorsement of unnatural vice.

Since my own experiences are relevant to the consideration of the sex problem, let me just warn the reader who has not read my autobiographical chapters against drawing the conclusion that my correspondent has drawn about my sins of indulgence. Whatever overindulgence there was with me was strictly restricted to my wife. And I was living in a big joint family where there was hardly any privacy except for a few hours at night. I awoke to the folly of indulgence for the sake of it even when I was twenty-three years old, and decided upon total *brahmacharya* in 1899, i.e., when I was thirty years old. It is wrong to call me an ascetic. The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well-considered, and taken with the greatest



deliberation. Both my continence and non-violence were derived from personal experience and became necessary in response to the calls of public duty. The isolated life I had to lead in South Africa whether as a householder, legal practitioner, social reformer or politician, required, for the due fulfilment of these duties, the strictest regulation of sexual life and a rigid practice of non-violence and truth in human relations, whether with my own countrymen or with the Europeans. I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability. Nor can I claim any special merit for such non-violence or continence as I have been able to reach with laborious research. I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith. Work without faith is like an attempt to reach the bottom of a bottomless pit.

*Harijan, 3-10-'36*

I suggest that it is cowardly to refuse to face the consequences of one's acts. Persons who use contraceptives will never learn the virtue of self-restraint. They will not need it. Self-indulgence with contraceptives may prevent the coming of children but will sap the vitality of both men and women—perhaps more of men than of women. It is unmanly to refuse battle with the devil. Let my correspondent resolve upon self-restraint as the only sure and honourable method of avoiding unwanted children. What though he and his fail in the effort a hundred times? Joy is in the battle. The result comes by the grace of God.

*Harijan, 17-4-'37*

We cannot afford to blindly imitate the West. In the West, if they do certain things they have antidotes for them too; we have not. Take the instance of birth control. It may seem to work well there, but if we took to the practice of birth control as it is being advocated in the West, in ten years there will be a race of eunuchs in India.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika, 3-8-'34*



### A STUDENTS PERPLEXITY

Here is an extract from a pupils letter to his teacher who sends it to me for comment:

"Two things completely possess me: my nationalism and my overbearing carnal passions. These always create seeming contradictions in my behaviour, and inconsistency in my decisions. I want to be the first servant of my country and at the same time enjoy the physical pleasures of the world. I must confess, I do not believe in God although I am sometimes terribly afraid of Him. All existence seems to me to be an enigma. I do not know what awaits me at the end. I have seen dead bodies burning: my mother's was the last, and the scene influenced me terribly. I cannot bear to think that such shall be my fate. I feel sick at the sight of a wound; and to think that my body shall burn one day. I know, there is no escape. To me, there does not seem to be any life beyond. That is why I am afraid.

"There are only two courses open to me: either to brood over it and pine away, or to enjoy the physical pleasures of the world, be lost in them and forget the end. I confess, (I have confessed to you things which I have never confessed to anybody else) that I have chosen the latter course.

"This world is the only reality; its joys are worth having for anything. Feeling for my wife who died recently, was genuine feeling; but that feeling was not because she was dead but because I was left alone. For the dead there are no problems; for the living there are all. I do not believe in any pure love; the so-called love is nothing but sex. If there were anything like pure love, I should have felt more attachment for my parents than for my wife; but the reverse was the case. I have been a loyal husband but I could not have assured my wife that I would feel for her even after her death. My feeling would perhaps arise from the inconvenience that her passing might cause me. You might call this cynicism but there it is....Please write to me and guide me."

This extract covers three things: (1) Conflict between carnal desire and nationalism, (2) God and future life, and (3) Undeclared love and sex.

The first is well stated. Carnal desire was the reality, nationalism was the fashion of the day. Nationalism in the sense of power politics is quite consistent with satisfaction of carnal desire. Instances from life can be multiplied. I have in mind



nationalism in the sense of a burning love for the nation including 'this last'. It must burn as it always has burnt carnal desire and the like. Thus there is no conflict but always victory of the latter over the former. All-embracing love of the nation leaves not a minute for any occupation that interferes with that ruling pursuit. He is lost who is possessed by carnal desire.

Uncertain faith in God and the future springs from the lust for life. This lust unhinges a man or a woman. Indecision consumes him or her. Faith in God will live when the animal passion dies. The two cannot co-exist.

The third enigma is a mere restatement of the first. Undeclared love between husband and wife takes one nearer God than any other love. When sex is mixed with undeclared love, it takes one away from one's Maker. Hence, if there be no sex consciousness and sexual contact, it is a question whether there is any occasion for marriage. The pupil truly says that there was no unselfish love felt for his wife. Had it been unselfish, death of life's partner would have enriched life, for the memory of the disembodied partner would have resulted in greater dedication to the service of down-trodden humanity.

*Harijan, 19-10-'47*



## SECTION TEN: MISCELLANEOUS

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### DUTY TO PARENTS

During my Bengal tour I heard the astounding statement that the inmates of a public institution claimed to prefer the maintenance of their institution to that of their parents. This was said to command my approval. If anything I have written in these pages has given any such impression, I apologize to the readers. I am not conscious of any such guilt. I owe all I am to my parents. I felt towards them as Shrivana is said to have done towards his parents. So when I heard the statement it was with the greatest difficulty that I could curb the anger that was rising in me. The young man who took up the position was hardly serious about it. But nowadays it has become the fashion with some young men to adopt the superior attitude and pose as paragons of perfection. In my opinion the maintenance of one's aged and infirm parents is a first charge upon grown-up sons. They may not marry if they are not in a position to support their parents. They may not take up public work till this primary condition is fulfilled. They must starve so that their parents may be fed and clothed. What, however, young men are not expected to do is to comply with the demand of thoughtless or ignorant parents. Parents have been known to demand money for things not required for sustenance but for false show or for uncalled for marriage expenses of daughters. In my opinion it is the duty of the public workers respectfully to refuse to meet such demands.

*Young India, 25-6-25*



## DRINKING AND SMOKING

He then proceeded to exhort them to stamp out the liquor habit from their midst. They might think that moderate drinking might be allowed since it seemed to do them no harm. But as the Gita said, one had to shape one's conduct not merely according to one's own requirements but also with an eye to the effect that it would have on others. And if they saw the terrible havoc that this fell habit was causing among the working classes of India they would take a solemn vow not to touch liquor.

*Young India, 28-2-'29*

In response to the request of a Calicut professor I shall now proceed to say something about cigarette smoking and coffee and tea drinking. These are not necessities of life. There are some who manage to take ten cups of coffee a day. Is it necessary for their healthy development and for keeping them awake for the performance of their duties? If it is necessary to take coffee or tea to keep them awake, let them not drink coffee or tea but go to sleep. We must not become slaves to these things. But the majority of the people who drink coffee or tea are slaves to them. Cigars and cigarettes, whether foreign or indigenous, must be avoided. Cigarette smoking is like an opiate and the cigars that you smoke have a touch of opium about them. They get to your nerves and you cannot leave them afterwards. How can a single student foul his mouth by converting it into a chimney? If you give up these habits of smoking cigars and cigarettes and drinking coffee and tea you will find out for yourselves how much you are able to save. A drunkard in Tolstoy's story is hesitating to execute his design of murder so long as he has not smoked his cigar. But he puffs it, and then gets up smiling and saying, 'What a coward am I!' takes the dagger and does the deed. Tolstoy spoke from experience. He has written nothing without having had personal experience of it. And he is much more against cigars and cigarettes than against drink. But do not make the mistake that between drink and tobacco, drink is a lesser evil. No. If cigarette is Beelzebub, then drink is Satan.

*Young India, 15-9-'27*



If any of you are smoking, you will henceforth give up that bad habit. Smoking fouls one's breath. It is a disgusting habit. When he is in a railway carriage, the smoker never cares whether there are ladies or men sitting about him who never smoke, and that the stench that comes out from his mouth may be disgusting to them.

The cigarette might be a small thing from a distance, but when the cigarette smoke goes into one's mouth and then comes out, it is poison. Smokers do not care where they spit.

Smoking clouds one's intellect, and it is a bad habit. If you ask doctors, and they happen to be good doctors, they will tell you that smoke has been the cause of cancer in many cases, or at least that smoke is at the bottom of it.

Why smoke, when there is no necessity for it? It is no food. There is no enjoyment in it except in the first instance through suggestion from outside.

You, boys, if you are good boys, if you are obedient to your teachers and parents, omit smoking, and whatever you save out of this, please send on to me for the famishing millions of India.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, pp. 76-77*



## ATHLETICS

I am glad indeed that you are giving due attention to athletics and I congratulate you upon acquitting yourselves with distinction in games. I do not know whether you had any indigenous games or not. I should, however, be exceedingly surprised and even painfully surprised, if I were told that before cricket and football descended upon your sacred soil, your boys were devoid of all games. If you have national games, I would urge upon you that yours is an institution that should lead in reviving old games. I know that we have in India many noble indigenous games just as interesting and exciting as cricket or football, also as much attended with risks as football is, but with the added advantage that they are inexpensive, because the cost is practically next to nothing.

*With Gandhiji in Ceylon, p. 107*



## GOING ABROAD

An Indian doctor went to America in order to learn Neuro-surgery, so that he might return and serve his people here. He has with difficulty secured a seat in the Columbia University and is working as a house surgeon.

He writes to ask me to influence students not to go abroad for the following reasons:

- "(a) The amount our poor country spends on sending and training ten students abroad could be better utilized by securing the services of a first-rate professor who could train 40 students as well as equip a laboratory.
- "(b) Students who come here acquire basic knowledge in research but do not know how to equip a laboratory on their return home.
- "(c) They have no chance of continued work.
- "(d) If we have experts brought out, our laboratories will also get perfected."

I have never been an advocate of our students going abroad. My experience tells me that such, on return, find themselves to be square pegs in round holes. That experience is the richest and contributes most to growth which springs from the soil. But today the craze for going abroad has gripped students. May the extract quoted serve as a warning!

*Harijan, 8-9-'46*



### TO SUM UP

1. Students must not take part in party politics. They are students, searchers, not politicians.
2. They may not resort to political strikes. They must have their heroes, but their devotion to them is to be shown by copying the best in their heroes, not by going on strikes, if the heroes are imprisoned or die or are even sent to the gallows. If their grief is unbearable and if all the students feel equally, schools or colleges may be closed on such occasions, with the consent of their Principals. If the Principals will not listen, it is open to the students to leave their institutions in a becoming manner till the managers repent and recall them. On no account may they use coercion against dissentients or against the authorities. They must have the confidence that, if they are united and dignified in their conduct, they are sure to win.
3. They must all do sacrificial spinning in a scientific manner. Their tools shall be always neat, clean and in good order and condition. If possible, they will learn to make them themselves. Their yarn will naturally be of the highest quality. They will study the literature about spinning with all its economic, social, moral and political implications.
4. They will be Khadi-users all through and use village products to the exclusion of all analogous things, foreign or machine-made.
5. They may not impose *Vande Mataram* or the National Flag on others. They may wear National Flag buttons on their own persons but not force others to do the same.
6. They can enforce the message of the tri-colour flag in their own persons and harbour neither communalism nor untouchability in their hearts. They will cultivate real friendship with students of other faiths and with Harijans as if they were their own kith and kin.



7. They will make it a point to give first aid to their injured neighbours and do scavenging and cleaning in the neighbouring villages and instruct village children and adults.
8. They will learn the national language, Hindustani, in its present double dress, two forms of speech and two scripts, so that they may feel at home whether Hindi or Urdu is spoken and Nagari or Urdu script is written.
9. They will translate into their own mother tongue everything new they may learn, and transmit it in their weekly rounds to the surrounding villages.
10. They will do nothing in secret, they will be above board in all their dealings, they will lead a pure life of self-restraint, shed all fear and be always ready to protect their weak fellow-students, and be ready to quell riots by non-violent conduct at the risk of their lives. And when the final heat of the struggle comes they will leave their institutions and, if need be, sacrifice themselves for the freedom of their country.
11. They will be scrupulously correct and chivalrous in their behaviour towards their girl fellow-students.

For working out the programme I have sketched for them, the students must find time. I know that they waste a great deal of time in idleness. By strict economy, they can save many hours. But I do not want to put an undue strain upon any student. I would, therefore, advise patriotic students to lose one year, not at a stretch, but spread it over their whole study. They will find that one year so given will not be a waste of time. The effort will add to their equipment, mental, moral and physical.

*Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place*<sup>6</sup>

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