



RULES FOR SELF-CONTROL

1. Remember, if you are married, that your wife is your friend, companion and co-worker, not an instrument for sexual enjoyment.
2. Self-Control is the law of your being. Therefore the sexual act can be performed only when both desire it.
3. If you are unmarried, you owe it to yourself, to society and to future partner to keep yourself pure.
4. Think always of that Unseen Power which, though we may never see, we all feel within us as watching and noting every impure thought, and you will find that Power ever helping you.
5. You will regulate your society, your reading, your haunts of recreation and your food.
6. When your passions threaten to get the better of you, go down on your knees and cry out to God for help. As an extraneous aid, take a hip-bath.
7. Take brisk walking exercise in the open air early in the morning, and at night before going to bed.
8. 'Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise,' is a sound proverb. Go to bed on an empty stomach.
9. Remember that man is a representative of God to serve all that lives, and thus to express God's dignity and love. Let service be your sole joy, and you will need no other enjoyment in life.

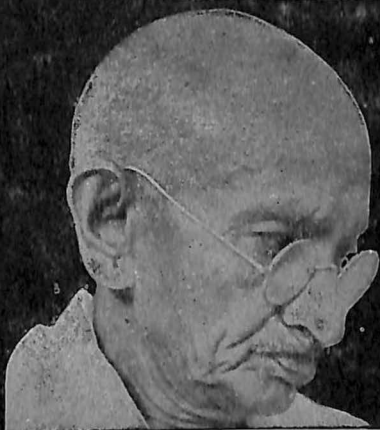
—M. K. GANDHI



POCKET GANDHI SERIES



THROUGH SELF-CONTROL



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Self-control is no doubt difficult.
It is not seriously to dispute its efficacy
in the use of contraceptives."

M.K. Gandhi

• BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY - 7 •

THROUGH SELF-CONTROL—M. K. GANDHI

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SEX URGE

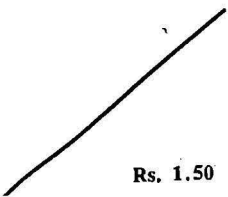
"Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity.

"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 only purpose for which it is intended."

—M. K. *GANDHI*



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I like Mr. King's idea of collecting my writings under suitable heads. The reader will not fail to appreciate the labour he has given to securing attractive printing & binding.

mk Gandhi

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THROUGH SELF-CONTROL

"Pocket Gandhi Series" No. 8

THROUGH SELF-CONTROL

BY
M. K. GANDHI



EDITED & PUBLISHED
BY
ANAND T. HINGORANI



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PREFACE

THIS is a companion volume to the previous title, viz., *The Law of Continence or Brahmacharya*. In this, Gandhiji tells us that life is not a bundle of "enjoyments and privileges," but a bundle of "duties and services"; that a man, being born in the image of God, must always strive to think and act in a godly way; and that, therefore, he must live a life of self-restraint rather than that of self-indulgence. This life of self-restraint, he further tells us, can accrue to one who has the courage to break away from the modern, highly materialistic mode of living which panders to our low instincts and desires. He deeply deplotes the fact that "our food, our literature, our amusements, our business hours are all regulated so as to excite or feed our animal passions."

Stressing the sanctity of the marriage bond, he says: "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." In an ideal marriage, he says, man and woman should unite only for progeny and not for pleasure. But if the union takes place solely for pleasure, then the couple must be ready to pay the inexorable penalty for their indulgence and gladly accept the responsibilities flowing from it. To refuse to face the consequences of one's acts, he regards as sheer cowardice.

Gandhiji, however, agrees that the regulation of birth is a good and necessary thing, but it must be accomplished, according to him, by good and moral means and not by resort to artificial and unlawful methods which lead to the "degradation of marriage and unbridled sexual enjoyment." He, therefore, recommends self-control as "the surest and only method of regulating birth-rate" and characterises birth control by contraceptives as a race-suicide. By "suicide" he does not neces-

sarily mean the physical extinction of the race, but he means thereby that these methods bring about man's moral downfall and reduce him to a level even lower than that of the brute. In his view the contraceptives are not only immoral, but they are definitely an insult to womanhood. He holds woman in the highest esteem and strongly deprecates the tendency to look upon her as an object of lust. "Man must understand that woman is his companion and helpmate in life, and not a means of satisfying his carnal desire." And, to the woman he says that "she should realize her majesty and train herself to say 'NO' when she means it." He has no doubt whatever that the cultivation of this art of resistance on the part of women to the unwelcome approaches of their husbands will make for healthier and more harmonious relations between the two sexes and lead to their moral advancement.

Finally, Gandhiji warns us against the "strong wine of libertinism that the intoxicated West sends us under the guise of new truth and so-called human freedom." While being painfully conscious of the fact that self-control is not easily attainable, he nevertheless exhorts us not to be impatient and get ruffled by its slowness. If we sincerely follow the lessons of restraint that our forefathers and the greatest teachers among mankind have handed to us, Gandhiji believes that all will be well with us.

**7, Edmonstone Road,
Allahabad (India).**

ANAND T. HINGORANI

March 18, 1964

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I. NECESSITY OF BIRTH CONTROL

THERE can be no two opinions about the necessity of birth control. But the only method handed down from ages past is self-control or *Brahmacharya*. It is an infallible sovereign remedy doing good to those who practise it. And medical men will earn the gratitude of mankind if, instead of devising artificial means of birth control, they will find out the means of self-control. The union is meant not for pleasure, but for bringing forth progeny. And union is a crime when the desire for progeny is absent.

Artificial methods are like putting a premium upon vice. They make man and woman reckless. And respectability that is being given to the methods must hasten the dissolution of the restraints that public opinion puts upon one. Adoption of artificial methods must result in imbecility and nervous prostration. The remedy will be found to be worse than the disease. It is wrong and immoral to seek to escape the consequences of one's acts. It is good for a person who overeats to have an ache and a fast. It is bad for him to indulge his appetite and then escape the consequence by taking tonics or other medicine. It is still worse for a person to indulge in his animal passions and escape the consequences of his acts. Nature is relentless and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws. Moral results can only be produced by moral restraints. All other restraints defeat the very purpose for which they are intended.

Is Indulgence a Necessity of Life?

The reasoning underlying the use of artificial methods is that indulgence is a necessity of life. Nothing can be more fallacious. Let those, who are eager to see the births regulated, explore the lawful means devised by the ancients and try to find out how they can be revived. An enormous amount of spade-work lies in front of them. Early marriages are a fruitful source of adding to the population. The present mode of life has also a great deal to do with the evil of unchecked procreation. If these causes are investigated and dealt with, society will be morally elevated. If they are ignored by impatient zealots and if artificial methods become the order of the day, nothing but moral degradation can be the result. A society that has already become enervated through a variety of causes, will become still further enervated by the adoption of artificial methods.

Those men, therefore, who are light-heartedly advocating artificial methods cannot do better than study the subject afresh, stay their injurious activity and popularize *Brahmacharya* both for the married and the unmarried. That is the only noble and straight method of birth control.

—*Young India*: March 12, 1925.

2. SELF-CONTROL

I VENTURE to claim that by judicious treatment it is possible to observe self-control without much difficulty. Indeed, it is a claim put forth not merely

by me, but German and other Nature cure practitioners. The latter teach that water treatment or earth compresses and a non-heating and chiefly fruitarian diet soothes the nervous system and brings animal passions under easy subjection, whilst it, at the same time, invigorates the system. The same result is claimed by *Raja Yogis* for scientifically regulated *Pranayama* without reference to the higher practices. Neither the Western nor the ancient Indian treatment is intended for the *Sanyasi*, but essentially for the householder. If it is contended that birth control is necessary for the nation because of over-population, I dispute the proposition. It has never been proved. In my opinion, by a proper land system, better agriculture and a supplementary industry this country is capable of supporting twice as many people as there are in it to-day.

Need of a Systematic Propaganda

I do suggest that men must cease to indulge their animal passions after the need for progeny has ceased. The remedy of self-control can be made popular and effective. It has never had a trial with the educated class. That class has not yet, thanks to the joint family system, felt the pressure. Those that have, have not given a thought to the moral issues involved in the question. Save for stray lectures on *Brahmacharya*, no systematic propaganda has been carried on for advocating self-control for the definite purpose of limiting progeny. On the contrary, the superstition of a large

family being an auspicious thing and, therefore, desirable, still persists. Religious teachers do not generally teach that restriction of progeny, in given circumstances, is as much a religious obligation as procreation may be under certain other circumstances.

Insult to the Fair Sex

I am afraid that advocates of birth control take it for granted that indulgence in animal passion is a necessity of life and in itself a desirable thing. The solicitude shown for the fair sex is most pathetic. In my opinion, it is an insult to the fair sex to put up her case in support of birth control by artificial methods. As it is, man has sufficiently degraded her for his lust, and artificial methods, no matter how well-meaning the advocates may be, will still further degrade her. I know that there are modern women who advocate these methods. But I have little doubt that the vast majority of women will reject them as inconsistent with their dignity. If man means well by her, let him exercise control over himself. It is not she who tempts. In reality, man being the aggressor is the real culprit and the tempter.

Evil Consequences

I urge the advocates of artificial methods to consider the consequences. Any large use of the methods is likely to result in the dissolution of the marriage bond and in free love. If a man may indulge in animal passion for the sake of it, what is he to do whilst he is,

say, away from his home for any length of time, or when he is engaged as a soldier in a protracted war, or when he is widowed, or when his wife is too ill to permit him the indulgence without injury to her health, notwithstanding the use of artificial methods?

Self-Restraint—The Law of Life

I hope I have given enough illustrations to show that self-restraint and not indulgence must be regarded as the Law of Life, if we are to accept and retain the sanctity of the marriage tie. I do contend that artificial methods, however proper they may be, are harmful. They are harmful not perhaps in themselves, but because they increase the appetite which grows with every feed. The mind, that is so tuned as to regard indulgence not only lawful but even desirable, will simply feed itself on the indulgence and will, at last, become so weak as to lose all strength of will. I do maintain that every act of indulgence means loss of precious vitality so needful to keep a man or woman strong in body, mind and soul.

Plea for Complete Restraint

The tuition that is needed for much married and enervated India is not that of indulgence with artificial means, but complete restraint, if only for the sake of regaining lost vitality. Let the immoral medicines, whose advertisements disfigure our Press, be a warning to the advocates of birth control. It is not prudery or false modesty which restrains me from discussing

the subject. The restraining force is the certain knowledge that the devitalized and enervated youth of the country fall an easy prey to the specious arguments advanced in favour of indulgence.

Repugnant to the Moral Sense

I may be wholly wrong. My conclusions may be based on false data. But the advocates of artificial methods have need to be patient. They have no data at all except the modern examples. Surely, it is too early to predict anything with any degree of certainty of a system of control which, on the face of it, seems to be repugnant to the moral sense of mankind. It is easy enough to trifle with youthful nature. It will be difficult to undo the evil effects of such trifling.

—*Young India*: April 2, 1925.

3. TALKS ON BIRTH CONTROL

MALKANI: Last time, Bapu, you made two statements—one that ‘those who advocate birth control methods think that sexual indulgence is a physical necessity;’ and secondly that ‘the consequences of sexual union without birth control methods are not so serious as those of sexual union with birth control methods.’”

Gandhiji: Exactly.

Malkani: Now, I shall try and put my case before you. The use of contraceptives is the use of a power, and the use of a power as such has nothing

ethical about it. But the motive behind their use makes their use ethical or otherwise. It is true that sexual indulgence may be a motive for their use. But it is not the only motive. I can easily imagine a different motive or a mixed motive. For instance, there may be the economic, medical, educational, domestic or any other motive. There may even be a mixed motive. As a matter of fact, contraceptives were accepted by the educated and upper classes of society with whom sexual gratification could not be the only or chief consideration.

Gandhiji: If gratification was not the sole motive, why need there be any at all? But what do you mean by an economic motive?

Economic Motive

Malkani: That the man and woman find it difficult to support themselves and children in their standard of life with their wage.

Gandhiji: That is to say that they would rather indulge their passion than control themselves for their economic well-being. You may not use the word 'indulge' but substitute the word 'gratify' or 'moderately gratify', but the fact remains that they would rather moderately gratify their passion than control themselves from any economic, educational or any other motive.

Malkani: Yes, they may legitimately do so as the lesser evil.

Gandhiji: You must understand me. Don't you see that to be influenced by the economic motive they must be all engrossed by it, and then no other consideration but that should guide their conduct? Now if they were really influenced by the economic motive, it should be enough to induce self-restraint. That it does not, proves that they believe sexual indulgence to be a physical necessity.

Highly Impracticable?

Malkani: Well, logically that is so. But take my own case. I have now very few children. But suppose I got more. I would find it difficult to join any national or other movement. Would it not be better for me to use contraceptives and do some public service than leave the growth of my family to mere chance? What you advise is practically impossible to do. According to your method of argument, a man and woman may unite twice or thrice in a whole life, have two or three children, and then abstain completely. That may be logical, but is highly impracticable.

Gandhiji: I certainly do not consider it is impracticable. Think of those whom we call 'savages'. Look at their self-control. Why, they are not even aware of it. Some of them come into contact with modern conditions and deteriorate. But the real savage unites only for progeny, and not for pleasure. It is probable that like animals a single act of union results in a conception. But after that he abstains. You see our modern conditions of life have changed, and

we consider such an abstinence as a great act of virtue. The savage is virtuous without knowing it. Did not Wallace say that, if there was real difference between the savage and the civilized man, it was in favour of the savage? Birth controllers turn vice into virtue. When sexual indulgence is regarded a virtue, it will be the undoing of man.

Total Abstinence

Malkani: Yes, logically that is so, and total abstinence is the highest ideal. But it is after all an ideal. Taking human nature for what it is, how many can aspire to or attain that ideal? And after all I cannot understand how the consequences of the use of contraceptives will be more serious than the consequences of the present thoughtless sexual gratification. You are aware of the terrible evils of infanticide, abortion, the misery of mothers, the tyranny of husbands, and the neglect of children which is due to the present system of haphazard multiplication. I cannot believe the results of contraceptives will be more terrible than that.

Gandhiji: You are wrong there. The use of contraceptives will bring more terrible results than you imagine. Errors of thought are often more mischievous than erroneous acts involuntarily done. People are not wanting who suggest that Krishna was able to enjoy his hundreds of Gopies because he was able to control his emissions, and that he had the greatest moral elevation after each physical union.

Malkani: Yes, Bapu, in Europe they write of a social union called 'Karezza' where there is union without emission indulged in by those having the greatest control over themselves.

Gandhiji: Well, well, such a Krishna would stink in my nostrils. He would be a horrible person, whom I would reject with abhorrence.

Not a Necessity of Life

Malkani: But weak as we are, don't we require some sort of buttress in life? I confess my weakness; I even agree that sexual gratification is not a necessity of life. But the weak must be helped to become strong. After all, you seem to be thinking of that one man only who will aspire to and attain the ideal. But why ignore the millions of ordinary human beings who cannot think, much less realize, the ideal? Your *Charkha* movement is meant for the uplift of masses, not individuals or classes.

Gandhiji: The *Charkha* is itself an ideal. It is not a compromise. But even if millions of years pass before the ideal of self-control is realized, I would wait. I have great patience. I am in no hurry to transform the world. But the advertisement of vice as virtue is intolerable. Some people tell me that, if my ideal were attainable, the world would be depopulated. So much the better. Men would then be translated to a better world. I am not scared by the bogey of depopulation.

Letters from Young Men

Malkani: You say that the use of contraceptives will lead to sexual indulgence. I cannot see how that will happen.

Gandhiji: Then, I may tell you that I have been receiving letters from hundreds of young men asking advice about their sexual life. Most of them have committed excesses and are now paying the penalty for their indulgence. These men are anxious to exercise some sort of self-control. Now you tell them that a man may indulge his sexual passion without the fear of consequences, and that such indulgence is natural and necessary. How can you then expect any moral regeneration of the persons whom sexual indulgence has ruined?

Malkani: Bapu, there are few young men free from the sin of sexual excess. But within marriage this lasts for a short time, may be during the first few years. Then the impulse becomes regulated, and later the period of sexual call becomes longer. Those who succumb to the impulse too long, have to pay a terrible penalty, until they learn some self-control. But my fear from the use of contraceptives is different. It is that there may be sexual irregularities outside marriage. Formerly, the consequences of such acts were dreaded and acted as deterrent. That may not be possible now. But I do not understand how the use of contraceptives will further encourage such moral wrecks in sexual indulgence. One may advise the ad-

option of self-control to the indulgent and yet suggest the adoption of contraceptives.

Story of Vyasa

Gandhiji: Well then, I shall put the matter in this way. You have read the story of Vyasa in the *Mahabharata*?

Malkani: I do not know which story you mean.

Gandhiji: The story of Vyasa approaching the two wives of Vichitravirya with that dreadful appearance for the purpose of procreating progeny.

Malkani: Yes, Babu, I know that story.

Gandhiji: That is the ideal for us—that progeny alone is the justification for any sexual gratification. The story may be true or false, but the theory behind it is perfect. You may question the possibility of any individual approaching a woman without any sensation of pleasure. Personally, I do not ever remember to have approached my wife without the desire for pleasure. But here is the ideal—that in every sexual gratification, progeny and not pleasure should be the sole consideration. Every other gratification is immoral. Now those who suggest the use of artificial methods cannot help also suggesting that sexual indulgence in itself is natural, and that gratification without its consequences may be an end of the sexual act. This is bound to weaken the desire for self-control and justify more sexual desire and its gratification. Please understand that I have recalled the

above illustration not to justify *Niyoga* which I dislike. I have cited it merely to show that Vyasa's act is described as free from the slightest taint of sexual passion.

Influence of Mental Outlook

Malkani: I do not yet see the necessary connection between the two. Those who suggest the use of contraceptives do so in the interests of wise parenthood. Such men can never believe that any sexual indulgence will lead to wise parenthood. In fact, those who commit sexual excess know that it is harmful, and have to pay a heavy penalty for it. The use of contraceptives has no direct connection with the encouragement of sexual indulgence.

Gandhiji: But don't you see the influence of the mental outlook of a man on his actions? Here is a man who gratifies his sexual passion knowing that consequences may follow; and here is another man who gratifies it knowing that none need follow. The latter will act recklessly. Then again, the one knows indulgence to be reprehensible; the other sees no harm in it and may even consider it a virtue. Take my own case. If I had acted with greater restraint, I would have suffered less. My body has suffered much, and that is because of my weaknesses and lapses. It is true that I recover soon, but that is because of subsequent self-control. Now you know that I apply remedies, be they water cure and the like, to avoid the consequences of my errors. I know that this is a weak-

ness, but then I want to live. Had I exercised self-control from the commencement, my capacity for serving the masses would have been much greater.

All can exercise Self-Control

Malkani: But, Bapu, we are comparing an ordinary person who has sexual gratification with the fear of consequences with another ordinary person without such fear. You are thinking of what an ideal person should do. Your own case is a special case and not an ordinary one.

Gandhiji: No, my case is that of an ordinary person. What I have done, any other person can do by exercising self-control.

Malkani: But should we not try and mitigate the misery of man and avoid the terrible consequences of thoughtless sexual gratification? You say that the consequence of artificial birth control will be sexual indulgence. Is there not sexual indulgence even now? Do you think that the consequences of thoughtless sexual gratification are less serious than those of deliberate gratification with a view to wise parenthood?

Gandhiji: You have just said the thing. I mean that exactly—that the consequences of sexual gratification in spite of oneself are less serious than those of deliberate gratification. Take this case. Scores of women come to me, praying for a child. I tell them that I have no power to grant such boons. But some of them are miserable and would not leave

me until I muttered some blessing. I know of one very special case. One woman could bear no children, for the doctors pronounced that her womb was misplaced. She was so miserable without a child that I advised her to go in for a surgical operation to set it right. It was done, and now she bears children and lives happily.

Malkani: But what does this prove, but that the instinct for motherhood is too deep-seated to be uprooted by the propagation of any birth control methods? Such methods are suggested only to mothers who don't desire troops of children.

—*Incidents of Gandhiji's Life: Pp. 152-58.*

4. THE MARRIAGE BOND

Q. We don't understand how you can recommend to married people to deny themselves to each other without mutual agreement, for such an interference with the rights given by marriage can drive a man to crimes. You ought to advise divorce in those cases.

A. The marriage bond involves seeing each other only by mutual agreement. But surely abstention requires no consent. Married life would be intolerable, as it does become, when one partner breaks through all bonds of restraint. Marriage confirms the right of union between two partners, to the exclusion of all the others, when in their joint opinion they consider such union to be desirable; but it confers no right upon one partner to demand obedience of the other to one's wish for union. What should be done when one part-

ner, on moral or other grounds, cannot conform to the wishes of the other, is a separate question. Personally, if divorce was the only alternative I should not hesitate to accept it, rather than interrupt my moral progress,—assuming that I want to restrain myself on purely moral grounds.

—*Young India*: Oct. 8, 1925.

Mating

Either partner at any time has the right to abstain. Mating must be an absolutely voluntary act. When, therefore, either party definitely desires to abstain for life, the other is free to seek another partner, if he or she cannot restrain the carnal appetite. But this happens only when marriage is not a matter of real love, *i.e.*, has never been a marriage in its true sense. Marriage is a permanent friendship between persons of opposite sexes and, therefore, though it allows physical connections between them, it has an ever increasing tendency to subjugate their animal passions. When there is such friendship, there is no breaking of the knot when voluntary physical satisfaction is unobtainable. There is no question of superiority or inferiority. What is lawful for one is not always so for all. But this I know that a man of God has no time for satisfying animal passions and thus loses all taste for them. In this sense, celibacy is a superior state.

—*Harijan*: Dec. 12, 1948.

A Natural Thing

Marriage is a natural thing in life, and to consider it derogatory in any sense is wholly wrong. When one imagines any act a fall it is difficult, however hard one tries, to raise oneself. The ideal is to look upon marriage as a sacrament and, therefore, to lead a life of self-restraint in the married state. Marriage, in Hinduism, is one of the four *Ashramas*. In fact, the other three are based on it. But, in modern times, marriage has unfortunately come to be regarded purely as a physical union. The other three *Ashramas* are all non-existent.

—*Harijan*: March 22, 1942.

A Sacrament

Where marriage is a sacrament, the union is not the union of bodies but the union of souls, indissoluble even by the death of either party.¹ Where there is a true union of souls, the remarriage of a widow or widower is unthinkable, improper and wrong. Marriages, where the true law of marriage is ignored, do not deserve the name. If we have very few true marriages

¹ "True marriage means not merely union of bodies. It connotes the union of the souls, too. If marriage meant no more than a physical relationship, the bereaved wife should be satisfied with a portrait or a waxen image of her husband. . . . The ideal that marriage aims at is that of spiritual union through the physical. The human love that it incarnates is intended to serve as a stepping stone to the Divine or Universal Love. That is why immortal Mira sang: 'God alone is my husband—none else'."

—*Young India*: May 21, 1921.

nowadays, it is not the institution of marriage that is to blame, but the prevailing form of it, which should be reformed.

—*Young India*: June 3, 1926.

Divorce

I believe that divorce should be granted within well-defined limits, but would never think of carrying on propaganda in favour of it. We are generally such bond-slaves of our predilections that our mental state to-day cannot be guaranteed to last till to-morrow. Therefore, marriage, contracted voluntarily, should not be dissolved except for very strong reasons. Just imagine our plight if I had dissolved marriage with Ba¹, because she would not readily accept my views on untouchability. Would we have been happy as we are now? Where would Ba be to-day? And what sort of second wife might I have married? But I was influenced by the traditional view of the indissolubility of the marriage tie; so that crisis blew over and is now a mere memory.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 172.

5. ABOLISH MARRIAGE!

I SUBMIT that marriage is a fence that protects religion. If the fence were to be destroyed, religion would go to pieces. The foundation of religion is restraint, and marriage is nothing but restraint. The man who knows no restraint, has no hope of self-real-

1. Kasturba Gandhi.

ABOLISH MARRIAGE !

zation. I confess it may be difficult to prove the necessity of restraint to an atheist or a materialist. But he who knows the perishable nature of flesh from the imperishable nature of the spirit, instinctively knows that self-realization is impossible without self-discipline and self-restraint. The body may either be a playground of passion, or a temple of self-realization. If it is the latter, there is no room there for libertinism. The spirit needs must curb the flesh every moment.

Woman will be the apple of discord where the marriage bond is loose, where there is no observance of the Law of Restraint. If men were as unrestrained as the brutes, they would straightway take the road to destruction. I am firmly of opinion that all the evils can be eradicated not by abolishing marriage, but by a systematic understanding and observance of the Law of Marriage.

The Ideal of Monogamy

I agree that whereas amongst some communities marriage is permitted amongst very near relations, it is prohibited among other communities; that whereas some communities forbid polygamy, some permit it. Whilst one would wish that there was a uniform Moral Law accepted by all communities, the diversity does not point to the necessity of abolishing all restraint. As we grow wise in experience, our morality will gain in uniformity. Even to-day, the moral sense of the world holds up monogamy as the highest ideal, and no religion makes polygamy obligatory. The ideal re-

mains unaffected by the relaxation of practice according to time and place.

6. WHAT IS NATURAL?

NO word seems to be more abused to-day than the word 'natural'. For instance, a correspondent writes: "As eating and drinking are natural to man, even so is anger." Another seems to argue: "The sexual function is as natural as the other functions of the body. Were it not so, God would not have endowed it to man...."

Indeed, if we were to put man in the same category as the brute, many things could be proved to come under the description 'natural'. But if they belong to two different species, not everything that is natural to the brute is natural to man. 'Progress is man's distinction, man's alone, not beast's.' Man has discrimination and reason. Man does not live by bread alone as the brute does.

Of course, I will not carry conviction to one who makes no distinction between man and the brute. To him virtue and vice are convertible terms. While to the man whose end and aim is realization of God, even the functions of eating and drinking can be natural only within certain limits. For, having knowledge of God as his end, he will not eat or drink for the sake of enjoyment, but solely for sustaining the body.

—*Young India*: June 24, 1926.

What Distinguishes Man from Beast

One of the things that sharply distinguishes man from beast is that man from his earliest age has recognized the sanctity of the marriage bond, and regulated his life in connection with woman by way of self-restraint which he has more and more imposed upon himself.

Life is not a bundle of enjoyments and privileges, but a bundle of duties and services.

That which separates man from the beast is essentially man's recognition of the necessity of putting a series of restraints on worldly enjoyment.

What chiefly distinguishes man from the beast is that man from his age of discretion begins to practise a life of continual self-restraint. God has enabled man to distinguish between his sister, his mother, his daughter and his wife. Do not for one moment imagine that you are absolved from having to observe these necessary distinctions and restrictions.

—*With Gandhiji in Ceylon* Pp. 68, 71, 84.

7. RENUNCIATION OF SEXUAL DESIRE

A MEDICAL correspondent, referring to the article 'What is Natural?' writes:

"....Eating, drinking, and sexual gratification are absolutely natural to man. There are limits, of course; but they are perfectly physiological, and partly conventional. How can you preach this doctrine of complete renunciation of sexual de-

sire? Don't you think that we cannot possibly attain complete renunciation of the desire except through an exhaustive fulfilment of it?"

The correspondent puts sexual gratification on a level with eating and drinking. If he had read my article carefully he would have avoided the confusion of thought that one traces in the thing quoted by him. What I have said and repeat is that eating for pleasure, for the gratification of the palate, is not natural to man. But eating to live is natural. And so is the sexual act, but not gratification, for the sake of perpetuation of the species, natural to man.

Renunciation Leads to Self-Realization

I fear, I shall preach to the end of my day complete renunciation of sexual desire. And this correspondent is the first medical man to tell me that such renunciation is not possible except through 'our exhaustive fulfilment of the sexual desire.' On the contrary, medical authorities tell me that 'an exhaustive fulfilment' leads not to renunciation, but to ruinous imbecility. Complete renunciation of the desire no doubt requires an effort, but is it not worth the prize? If a lifetime may be devoted to the exploration of the properties of Sound or Light and Heat, which after all only show us the phenomenal world to advantage, is it too much to expect an equal effort to attain complete renunciation which leads to self-realization, or, in other words, to a certain knowledge of God? Res-

THE VITAL FLUID

traint and renunciation will, therefore, always be his watchwords even in respect of these functions.

Man's Duty

And if it is man's nature to know and find God, sexual indulgence should be contrary to his nature, and complete renunciation of it will accord best with his mission. For, realization of God is impossible without complete renunciation of the sexual desire. It is not man's duty to develop *all* his faculties to perfection; his duty is to develop all his Godward faculties to perfection and to suppress completely those of a contrary tendency.

—*Young India*: July 8, 1926.

8. THE VITAL FLUID

ABILITY to retain and assimilate the vital fluid is a matter of long training. It must be so, as it gives a strength to body and mind such as no other process does with equal effect. Drugs and mechanical contrivances may keep the body in a tolerable condition, but they sap the mind and make it too weak to resist the play of a multitude of passions which, like so many deadly foes, surround every human being.

Common Mode of Life

Too often do we expect results in spite of practices which are calculated to retard, if not to defeat them. The common mode of life is shaped to minister to our passions. Our food, our literature, our amusements, our

business hours are all regulated so as to excite and feed our animal passions. The vast majority of us want to marry, to have children and generally to enjoy ourselves, be it ever so moderately. It will be so, more or less, to the end of time.

'In the World, But Not of It'

But there are, as there always have been, exceptions wholly dedicated to the service of humanity which is the same thing as saying 'to God.' They will not divide their time between the rearing of a special family and tending of the general human family. Necessarily, such men and women cannot afford to live the general life which is designed to promote the special, individual interest. Those who will be celibates for the sake of God, need to renounce the laxities of life and find their enjoyment in its austere rigours. They may be 'in the world' but not 'of it.' Their food, their business, their hours of business, their recreations, their literature, their outlook upon life must, therefore, be different from general.

Directions for Believers in Self-Restraint

1. Eat moderately, always leaving the dining room with a feeling of pleasant hunger.
2. Highly spiced and fatty vegetarian foods must be avoided. Separate fat is wholly unnecessary when an adequate supply of milk is available. Little food suffices when there is little vital waste.

3. Both the body and the mind must be constantly occupied in clean pursuits.
4. Early to bed and early to rise is a necessary.
5. Above all, a life of restraint presupposes an intense living desire for reunion with God. When there is heart perception of this central fact, there will be continuous increasing reliance upon God to keep His instrument pure and in order. The *Gita* says: 'Passions return again and again in spite of fasting, but even the desire ceases when the Divine is seen.' This is literally true.

Asanas and Pranayama

Asanas and *Pranayama*, I believe, have an important place in the practice of restraint. But my own experiences in this direction, I am sorry to say, are not worth recording. There is, to my knowledge, little literature on the subject that is based on present experience. But it is a field worthy of exploration. I would, however, warn the inexperienced reader from trying it or accepting the directions of the next *Hatha Yogi* he may meet with. Let him be sure that an abstemious and godly life is wholly sufficient to achieve the much-to-be-desired restraint.

—*Young India*: Sept. 2, 1926.

9. INFLUENCE OF ATTITUDES

I HAVE been very interested in your articles on the subject of birth control. I expect you have

read J. A. Hadfield's book *Psychology and Morals*. I want to draw you attention to this passage from it:

"We, therefore, speak of sexual pleasure when the expression of this instinct is alien to our moral sense, and we speak of sexual joy when the expression of this instinct is in conformity with the sentiment of love. Such expressions of sex feelings, far from destroying, actually deepen the love of husband and wife; whereas free sexual indulgence on the one hand, and on the other hand *sexual abstinence practised under the false idea that the instinct is but a low pleasure, often produce irritability and the weakening of love;*" i.e., he holds that the act of sexual union has a sacramental value in deepening the love between a man and a woman, quite apart from the production of children. If he is right in this—and I am inclined to think he is, for, apart from the fact that he is an eminent psychologist, I have myself known of cases in which married life has been distorted and spoiled by attempts to repress the natural desire for physical expression of love,—then I wonder how you would justify your doctrine that the only justifiable act of union is that intended for the production of children. For, consider this case. A young man and young woman love each other. It is beautiful and part of God's plan that they should do so. But they haven't enough money to support and educate a child. And I suppose you would agree that to bring a child into the world without being able to do these things is sinful; or, if you like, say that it is bad for the woman's health to have one, or that she has had too many—anything like that. Now, according to you, a couple has two alternatives—either they must marry and yet live separately, in which case, if Hadfield is right, their love will tend to be spoiled, because of the irritability produced by repressed desires, or they must remain unmarried, in which case too their love will be spoiled, for Nature gloriously ignores our human institutions. They might, of course, go right away from each other: but even in separation their minds would be active, and so able to develop complexes. And even if you change society so that it is possible for all people to have as many children as come, there is still the danger to the race of over-breeding and to the individual woman of excessive child-birth. For, a man might control himself tremendously and still have a child a year. You must either advocate chastity or birth control, for occasional indulgence may lead—as it has sometimes done amongst Eng-

lish clergymen—to the death of the mother bringing each year into the world the children her husband is pleased to say God sends her.

“What you call self-control is quite as much an interference with Nature as contraceptives—more, in fact. Men may over-indulge their passions through birth control methods,—but then they do this without them in all conscience,—and at least if they don't produce children by their sin, they alone will suffer for it and not others.”

So writes a correspondent. The letter to me is a study in mental attitudes and their influence. Mind takes a rope to be a snake, and the man with that mentality turns pale and runs away, or takes up a stick to belabour the fancied snake. Another mistakes a sister for wife and has animal passion rising in his breast. The passion subsides the moment he discovers his mistake. And so in the case quoted by the correspondent. No doubt, whilst ‘abstinence is practised under the false idea that the instinct is but a low pleasure,’ it is likely ‘to produce irritability and the weakening of love.’ But if abstinence is practised with the desire to strengthen the bond of love, to purify it and to conserve the vital energy for a better purpose, instead of promoting irritability it will promote equanimity, and instead of loosening the bond of affection strengthen it. Love based upon indulgence of animal passion is at best a selfish affair and likely to snap under the slightest strain. And why should the sexual act be a sacrament in the human species, if it is not that among the lower animals? Why should we not look at it as what it is in reality, *i.e.* a simple act of procreation to which we are helplessly drawn

for the perpetuation of the species? Only a man, having been gifted with a free will to a limited extent, exercises the human prerogative of self-denial for the sake of the nobler purpose to which he is born than his brother animals. It is the force of habit which makes us think the sexual act to be necessary and desirable for the promotion of love, apart from procreation, in spite of innumerable experiences to the contrary that it does not deepen love, that it is in no way necessary for its retention or enrichment. Indeed, instances can be quoted in which that bond has grown stronger with abstinence. No doubt abstinence must be a voluntary act undertaken for mutual moral advancement.

Physical Union for Procreation

Human society is a ceaseless growth, an unfolding in terms of spirituality. If so, it must be based on ever increasing restraint upon the demands of the flesh. Thus marriage must be considered to be a sacrament imposing discipline upon the partners, restricting them to the physical union only among themselves and for the purpose only of procreation when both the partners desire and are prepared for it. Then in either case supposed by the correspondent, there would be no question of sexual act outside the desire for procreation.

Complete Abstinence is Possible

There is an end to all argument if we start, as my correspondent has started, with the premise that

sexual act is a necessity outside of the purpose of procreation. The premise is vitiated in the presence of authentic instances that can be cited of complete abstinence having been practised by some of the highest among mankind in all climes. It is an argument against the possibility or desirability of abstinence to say that it is difficult for the vast majority of mankind. What was not possible for the majority a hundred years ago, has been found possible to-day. And what is a hundred years in the cycle of time open to us for making infinite progress? If scientists are right, it was but yesterday that we found ourselves endowed with the human body. Who knows, who dare prescribe, its limitation? Indeed, every day we are discovering the infiniteness of its capacity for good as well as evil.

'Must Not Eat the Cake and Have It Too'

If the possibility and desirability of abstinence be admitted, we must find out and devise the means of attaining it. And, as I have said in a previous article, life must be remodelled, if we are to live under restraint and discipline. We may not, as the vulgar saying goes, eat the cake and have it too. If we would impose restraint upon the organs of procreation, we must impose it upon all the others. If the eye and the ear and the nose and the tongue, the hands and the feet are let loose, it is impossible to keep the primary organ under check. Most cases of irritability, hysteria, and even insanity which are wrongly ascribed to attempts

THROUGH SELF-CONTROL

at continence will, in truth, be found traceable to the incontinence of the other senses. No sin, no breach of Nature's laws, goes unpunished.

Birth Control by Contraceptives

I must not quarrel about words. If self-control be an interference with Nature precisely in the same sense as contraceptives, be it so. I would still maintain that the one interference is lawful and desirable because it promotes the well-being of the individuals as well as society, whereas the other degrades both and is, therefore, unlawful. Self-control is the surest and the only method of regulating the birth-rate. Birth control by contraceptives is race suicide.

I am painfully conscious of the fact that self-control is not easily attainable. But its slowness need not ruffle us. Haste is waste. Impatience will not end the evil of excessive birth-rate among the proletariat. Workers among the proletariat have a tremendous task before them. Let them not rule out of their lives the lessons of restraint that the greatest teachers among mankind have handed to us out of the rich stores of their experiences. The fundamental truths they have given us were tested by them in a better laboratory than any equipped under the most up-to-date conditions. The necessity of self-control is the common teaching of them all.

—*Young India*: Sept. 16, 1926.

10. VIRTUE OF SELF-RESTRAINT

MADAME Clara Burger-von Dubu, who signs herself as 'daughter and widow of a German University professor, whose husband fell in the war 1916, mother of two sons, two daughters, for some time here (Italy) in a Dutch friend's house', writes as follows from Italy:—

"Will you allow a mother to add some words to your article *Influence of Attitudes?* I perfectly agree with you that 'birth control by contraceptives is race suicide,' but also with the citation of the correspondent, that 'sexual abstinence practised under the false idea that the instinct is but a low pleasure often produces irritability and weakening of love.'

"Instinct is a gift of God as well as reason. The one without the other would ruin us. Just as instinct is directed on the perpetuation of the species, so reason is directed on the perpetuation of spiritual life. The person who is only following the instinct, will helplessly be drawn for the perpetuation of the species. The reasonable human being, born for the sake of the nobler purpose than his brother animals, visualizes the consequences of his actions. (The suicide by contraceptives is against both instinct and reason). If it was but yesterday that we found ourselves endowed with the human body, is it not time to-day to be endowed with the human spirit—full of responsibility for the vital energy lent us by God? Can we conserve the vital energy for a better purpose? Is not life's goal—as also demonstrated by all teachers of mankind—the evolution of the human being which is first entrusted through procreation to the parents? No action has so deep an influence and far reaching in consequences as this terribly abused act destined to create 'Images of God.' In it, we ought to conceive the Mystery of Incarnation in love, not in animal instinct as a consecration of spirit, soul and body.

"Thus, marriage becomes a sacrament, the highest religion, in which the greatest contrasts are blended: crossing and crucifixion,—life and death!"

—*Young India*: Nov. 7, 1929.

11. 'STARTLING CONCLUSIONS'

WILLIAM R. Thurstone, according to the publisher's preface, was a Major in the United States Army, which he served for nearly ten years. And, during these years, he had varied experience in several parts of the world, including China. During his travels, he studied the effects of marriage laws and customs, as a result of which he felt the call to write a book on marriage. This book, which is called *Thurston's Philosophy of Marriage*, contains only 32 pages of bold type, and can be read inside of an hour. The author has not entered into an elaborate argument, but has simply set forth his conclusions with just a dash of argument to support his conclusions which the publisher truly describes as 'startling.' In his foreword, the author claims to have based his conclusions on "personal observation, data obtained from physicians, statistics of social hygiene and medical statistics," compiled during the War. His conclusions are:

1. "That Nature never intended a woman to be bound to a man for life, and to be compelled to occupy the same bed or habitation with him, night after night, in pregnancy and out, in order to earn her board and lodging, and to exercise her natural right to bear children.
2. "That the daily and nightly juxtaposition of the male and female, which is a result of present marriage laws and customs, leads to unrestrained sexual intercourse, which perverts the natural instincts of both male and female, and makes partial prostitutes of 90% of all married women. This condition arises from the fact that married women have been led to believe that such prostitution of themselves is right and natural because it is legal, and that it is necessary in order to retain the affections of their husbands."

The author then goes on to describe the effects of ‘continual, unrestrained sexual intercourse’ which I epitomize as follows:

- (a) “It causes the woman to become highly nervous, prematurely aged, diseased, irritable, restless, discontented, and incapable of properly caring for her children.”
- (b) “Among the poorer classes it leads to the propagation of many children who are not wanted.”
- (c) “Among the higher classes, unrestrained sexual intercourse leads to the practice of contraception and abortion.” *“If contraceptive methods, under the name of ‘birth control’ or any other name, are taught to the majority of the women of the masses, the race will become generally diseased, demoralized, depraved and will eventually perish.”* (The italics are the author’s)
- (d) “Excessive sexual intercourse drains the male of the vitality necessary for earning a good living.”
- (e) “The excessive sexual intercourse, incident to the present married state, develops in the minds of both male and female a sense of futility.”
- (f) “Most serious of all, from the stand-point of the future of the human race, is sexual intercourse during pregnancy.”

Then follows an indictment of China and India into which I need not go. This brings us to half of this booklet. The next half is devoted to the remedy.

No Common Room and Common Bed

The central fact of the remedy is that husband and wife must always live in separate rooms; therefore, necessarily sleep in separate beds, and meet only when both desire progeny, but especially the wife. I do not intend to give the changes suggested in the marriage laws. The one thing common to all marriages throughout the world is a common room

and a common bed, and this the author condemns in unmeasured terms, I venture to think, rightly. There is no doubt that much of the sensuality of our nature, whether male or female, is due to the superstition bearing a religious sanction that married people are bound to share the same bed and the same room. It has produced a mentality, the disastrous effect of which it is difficult for us, living in the atmosphere generated by that superstition, properly to estimate.

The author is equally opposed, as we have already seen, to contraceptive methods.

Many of the other remedies suggested by the author are, in my opinion, not of practical use to us, and in any case require legislative sanction. But every husband and wife can make a fixed resolution from to-day never to share the same room or the same bed at night and to avoid sexual contact, except for the one supreme purpose for which it is intended for both man and beast. The beast observes the law invariably. Man, having got the choice, has grievously erred in making the wrong choice.

No Contraception

Every woman can decline to have anything to do with contraception. Both man and woman should know that abstention from satisfaction of the sexual appetite results not in disease, but in health and vigour, provided that mind co-operates with the body. The author believes that the present condition of marriage laws 'is responsible for the greater part of

all the ills of the world to-day.' One need not share this sweeping belief with the author to come to the two final decisions I have suggested. But there can be no doubt that a large part of the miseries of to-day can be avoided, if we look at the relations between the sexes in a healthy and pure light and regard ourselves as trustees for the moral welfare of the future generations.

—*Young India*: Sept. 27, 1928.

12. THE CONQUEST OF LUST

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. 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.

All great religions have rightly regarded '*Kama*' (lust) as the arch-enemy 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.

To-day 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, save the unwary from falling into the mire of sexuality and rescue those who might be already engulfed in it.

13. SELF-CONTROL AND LONGEVITY

MAN'S span of life may be a hundred and even more. But no matter how long he lives, his life is hardly one millionth part of a drop in the ocean that is Eternity. All attachment for it and all calculations about it hardly make sense. Our calculations are bound to be uncertain. We can only make a guess at the maximum years a man may live. For the rest, we see even healthy children succumb to death.

And we cannot assert that a man given to the pleasures of life will not live long. All we can say is that a man who lives a life of simplicity and chastity will probably live long. But to exercise self-control in order to live long, is like a mountain in labour bringing forth a mouse. The passions must be subdued in order that we may attain self-realization. If, in the course of that discipline, we find that life is being shortened instead of being lengthened, we need not bother about it. Health and longevity are a very insignificant fruit of self-control.

14. CONSEQUENCES OF BIRTH CONTROL

I CAN understand the necessity of artificial methods of birth control, if it were man's duty to satisfy the sexual urge whenever it arises. But if it is a sin—as I think it is to gratify the sexual instinct when the desire for progeny is absent—birth control through artificial means would be tantamount to shirking the payment of the wages of sin. As a man sows, so should he be ready to reap. If he gratifies his instinct, let him bear the burden of children.

Degradation of Marriage

Birth control, as practised in the West, has led to the degradation of marriage and unbridled sensual enjoyment. Men, supposed to be good thinkers in Europe, call marriage a superstition, and would not mind a man misbehaving with his sister, if he felt so inclined. This is not merely going to the other extreme, but a direct consequence of the train of thought underlying birth control. It may be that marriage, which is supposed to be good for man, may really be bad. But I cannot go beyond the bare admission of such a possibility for the sake of argument. Such ideas based on so-called ethics and science fill me with horror. They arise from false pity, impatience and the passing experience of individuals, but I wish we were not contaminated by them.

Birth Control has no Place in India

Again, birth control has no place in India, situated as we are. Millions are physically and mentally enfeebled, and if sex is given a loose rein, it would constitute an impassable bar to progress. Some who resort to artificial birth control are really as good as impotent. Just have a look at newspaper advertisements. Our young men must imbibe the lesson of self-control even at the cost of doing violence to themselves. Girls, too, are in a curious condition. What a strange thing it is that a fifteen-year-old weakly girl like....born and bred in the *Ashram*, expresses a desire to marry. Why should such young people be troubled by rising passion? But the whole atmosphere in our country is corrupt. Ideas of sensuality are thrust upon boys and girls from their very childhood. I would be the last person to teach them the "duty" of yielding to their animal instincts.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 173.

15. THE USE OF CONTRACEPTIVES

THE use of contraceptives in India is, in my opinion, unwarranted by any single condition that can be named. Do middle class parents suffer from too many children? Individual instances will not suffice to make out a case for excessive birth-rate among the middle classes. The cases in India where I have observed the advocacy of these methods are those of widows and young wives. Thus, in the one

case it is illegitimate birth that is to be avoided, not the secret intercourse. In the other, it is again pregnancy that is to be feared, and not the rape of a girl of tender age. Then, there remains the class of diseased, weak, effeminate young men who would indulge in excesses with their own wives or others' wives, and would avoid the consequences of acts which they know to be sinful. The cases of men or women in full vigour of life desiring intercourse and yet wishing to avoid the burden of children are, I make bold to say, rare in this ocean of Indian humanity. Let them not parade their cases to justify and advocate a practice that in India, if it became general, is bound to ruin the youth of the country.

What We Need to be Taught

A highly artificial education has robbed the nation's youth of physical and mental vigour. We are offspring, in many cases, of child marriages. Our disregard of the laws of health and sanitation has undermined our bodies. Our wrong and deficient dietary composed of corroding spices has produced a collapse of the digestive apparatus. We need, not lessons in the use of contraceptives and helps to our being able to satisfy our animal appetite, but continuous lessons to restrain that appetite, in many cases even to the extent of absolute continence. We need to be taught by precept and example that continence is perfectly possible and imperatively necessary, if we are not to remain mentally and physically weak. We need to be

told from the housetop that if we will not be a nation of manikins, we must conserve and add to the limited vital energy we are daily dissipating. Our young widows need to be told not to sin secretly but come out boldly and openly to demand marriage, which is their right as much as that of young widowers. We need to cultivate public opinion that shall make child marriages impossible. The vacillation and the disinclination to do hard and sustained work, the physical inability to perform strenuous labours, collapses of enterprises brilliantly begun, the want of originality, one notices so often, are due largely to excessive indulgence. I hope young men do not deceive themselves into the belief that when there is no procreation, the mere indulgence does not matter, does not weaken. Indeed, the sexual act, with the unnatural safeguard against procreation, is likely to be far more exhausting than such act performed with a full sense of the responsibility attached to it.

*"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."*

If we begin to believe that indulgence in animal passion is necessary, harmless and sinless, we shall want to give reins to it and shall be powerless to resist it. Whereas if we educate ourselves to believe that such indulgence is harmful, sinful, unnecessary, and can be controlled, we shall discover that self-restraint is perfectly possible. Let us beware of the strong wine of libertinism that the intoxicated West sends us under the guise of new truth and so-called human freedom.

Let us, on the contrary, listen to the sober voice from the West, that through the rich experience of its wise men at times percolates to us, if indeed we have outgrown the ancient wisdom of our forefathers.

—*Self-Restraint v. Self-Indulgence*: P. 43.

16. A FALSE CLAIM

I CANNOT see my way to agree to the necessity of birth control in any case whatever. It is possible that ancient traditions exercise an influence over me without my being conscious of it, but the reasons which inspire my opposition to this practice are still valid. We can see with our own eyes the harm done by artificial methods. Those who practise them will lose what little vitality they have at present.

The whole train of thought which underlies birth-control is erroneous and dangerous. Its supporters claim that a man has not only the right, but it is his duty to satisfy the animal instinct, and that his development would be arrested if he did not discharge this duty. I think this claim is false. It is idle to expect self-respect from one who takes to artificial methods. In fact, birth control is advocated on the ground that restraint of animal passion is an impossibility. To say that such restraint is impossible or unnecessary or harmful, is the negation of all religions. For, the whole superstructure of religion rests on the foundations of self-control.

There are many straightforward, simple and harmless ways in which the birth of feeble progeny

can be prevented. Why reject all of them and resort to such a dangerous thing as birth-control? That it is a risky thing is admitted by almost all parties. I am, therefore, inclined to think that artificial methods are worthy of condemnation.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai*: P. 252.

17. CONTRACEPTIVE METHODS

MRS. NAIR: On discussing very freely the question of birth control with many a married woman, I find in many cases, specially in the case of those with large families, that motherhood is often thrust upon them. Woman has no freedom in the real sense of the word, if she has no right over her body. So, for the sake of the mother whose health is drained away by the bringing forth of too many children, and for the sake of children themselves who should be a joy to us, but who now come forth unwanted in such large numbers, may not birth control through contraceptives be resorted to as the next best thing to self-control, which is too high an ideal for the ordinary man or woman?

Gandhiji: Do you think that the freedom of the body is obtained by resorting to contraceptives? Women should learn to resist their husbands.¹ If con-

1. "Contraceptives are an insult to womanhood. The difference between a prostitute and a woman using contraceptives is only this that the former sells her body to several men, the latter sells it to one man. Man has no right to touch his wife so long as she does not wish to have a child, and the woman should have the will-power to resist even her own husband."

—*Harijan*: May 5, 1946.

traceptives are resorted to as in the West, frightful results would follow. Men and women will be living for sex alone. They will become soft-brained, unhinged, in fact, mental and moral wrecks, if not also physical. Then, while I believe man to be the worse sinner, woman is not very far behind him. Both sin, on the whole. Woman is not always the victim. She should realize her majesty and train herself to say "No" when she means it.

Mrs. Nair: But is there not too much of sex indulgence even now, and is the introduction of contraceptives going to make so much difference in the sex life of the individual?

Gandhiji: Undoubtedly, there is already much of sex indulgence and even sex perversion. But contraceptives would be putting the cap on them. They will give a status to intemperate connection, which it does not enjoy now.

Exceptional Cases

Mrs. Nair: Even in exceptional cases where a woman is too weak for child bearing or where either of the parents is diseased, cannot this method be resorted to?

Gandhiji: No. One exception will lead to another till it finally becomes general. In the cases stated above, it is better that the husband and the wife live apart. Contraceptives which are being tried in the West are leading to hideous immorality and, I am sure, after

a few years, the Westerners themselves will realize their mistake. Do you not know that Mussolini in Italy is giving donations to parents with large families?

Cannon-Fodder

Mrs. Nair: Perhaps, Mussolini wants more fodder for cannon.

Gandhiji: What about the English and the Dutch among whom contraceptives are popular? Are they against war?

Mrs. Nair: Can poor country like India afford to have its present vast population, which seems to increase at a tremendously rapid pace?

Gandhiji: Nature will solve the problem for us, if we allow Nature to have free play. Contraceptives are an unnatural interference with her laws. If people want to multiply like rabbits, they will have also to die like rabbits. If we become licentious, there will undoubtedly be Nature's punishment descending upon us. It will be a blessing in disguise.

Is Self-Control Possible ?

Mrs. Nair: But is self-control possible for the ordinary man and woman?

Gandhiji: Yes, under well-regulated conditions. Contraceptives are really for the educated people, who are the "Sick" of humanity. I call them "Sick" because their food and drink and the exceedingly artificial life

that they are leading have made them weak-willed and slaves to their passions.

Mrs. Nair: Do you then suggest, Mahatmaji, as a practical remedy for the over-indulgence in sex to-day, the releasing of the creative energy in man, through channels other than sex by concentrating on matters like art, science, literature, etc.?

Gandhiji: That is true so far as it goes. You have to be very careful in the choice of your food and drink and to keep both mind and body clean. Just as it is important to know what goes to the mind, it is equally necessary to know what goes into the body. These are simple things, which will help you a great deal in the matter of self-control.

Sterilizing the Unfit

Mrs. Nair: You know that in India there is no bar for physically unfit people to marry and bring forth children. Moreover, Hindu religion enjoins that none could get salvation without there being some male member to perform *Shraddha* ceremony. This, in normal circumstances, is resulting in degeneration of the Hindu race. Are you, under these conditions, in favour of sterilization as is being done in Germany under Hitler?

Gandhiji: There are crores of Hindus, specially untouchables, who do not perform the *Shraddha* ceremony. As regards sterilization, I consider it inhuman to impose it as a law on the people. But in the case

of individuals with chronic diseases, it is desirable to have them sterilized if they are agreeable to it. Sterilization is a sort of contraceptive, and though I am against the use of contraceptives in the case of women, I do not mind voluntary sterilization in the case of man, since he is the aggressor.

Legal Difficulties

Mrs. Nair: Mahatmaji, you say that a woman should not allow motherhood to be thrust upon herself, but that she should be able to assert herself and definitely say "No" to her husband. Have you considered the fact that a Hindu woman specially has no economic status, and her defying her "Lord and Master" may result in disastrous consequences for her, and, according to law, she may be denied even maintenance, not to speak of a second home?

Gandhiji: If you study statistics, you will find that what you say about the economic condition of a Hindu woman holds good only in the case of a microscopic minority. Do you not know that in Indian houses it is the woman that is generally the real master?

Mrs. Nair: May I know how far your experiments in self-control in the Sabarmati *Ashram* have been successful.

Gandhiji: It is very difficult to say. We have had individual cases of terrible tragedy, but those who visited the *Ashram* were much impressed by the gene-

ral atmosphere of freedom, without sex consciousness, that prevailed there.

—*Press Report*: Jan. 12, 1935.

18. A BIRTH CONTROL ENTHUSIAST

MRS. HOW-MARTYN, the birth control enthusiast from England, who had brought her gospel for the relief of the poor in India and who came to convert Gandhiji or be converted, talked of her experience of the British slums and put in a strong plea for the "poor woman" who had to submit to the strong man. On her very first premise, Gandhiji joined issue.

Gandhiji: There is no *poor* woman. Poor woman is mightier than man, and I am quite prepared to demonstrate it to you if you come to the villages of India. Any woman there would tell you that, if she did not want it, there was no man born of woman who could compel her. I can say this from my own experience in relation to my wife, and mine is no solitary instance. If the will to die rather than to yield is there, no monster can make the woman yield. No, it is a mutual affair. Men and women both are a mixture of the brute and the divine, and if we can subdue the brute, it is well and good.

What is the Woman to Do ?

Mrs. How-Martyn: But what is the woman to do, if the man for the sake of having not more children goes to another woman?

Gandhiji: So, now you are shifting your own ground. If you misconceive your premises, you are bound to come to wrong conclusions. Don't assume things and try to unman man and unwoman woman. Let me understand the basis of your gospel. When I said your birth control propaganda was sufficient introduction, there was some seriousness behind the joke, for I know that there are some men and women who think that in birth control lies our salvation. Let me, therefore, understand the basis from you.

Basis of Birth Control

Mrs. How-Martyn: I do not see in it the salvation of the world, but what I say is that without some form of birth control there is no salvation. You would do it in one way, I would do it in another. I advocate your method as well, but not in all cases. You seem to regard a beautiful function as something objectionable. Two animals are nearest to the Divine when they are going to create new life. There is something very beautiful in the act.

Gandhiji: Here again you are labouring under a confusion. The creation of a new life is nearest the Divine, I agree. All I want is that one should approach that act in a divine way. That is to say, man and woman must come together with no other desire than that of creating a new life. But if they come together merely to have a fond embrace, they are nearest the devil. Man, unfortunately, forgets that he is

nearest the Divine, hankers after the brute instinct in himself and becomes less than the brute.

Mrs. How-Martyn: But why must you cast aspersions on the brute?

Gandhiji: I do not. The brute fulfils the law of his own nature. The lion in his majesty is a noble creature and he has a perfect right to eat me up, but I have none to develop paws and pounce upon you. Then, I lower myself and become worse than the brute.

Mrs. How-Martyn: I am sorry, I have expressed myself very badly. I confess that in a majority of cases it is not going to be their salvation, but a factor which will conduce to higher life. You understand what I mean, though I am afraid I have not been able to make myself quite clear.

Sin in the Garb of Virtue

Gandhiji: Oh, no. I do not want to take any undue advantage of you. But I want you to understand my viewpoint. Do not run away with misconceptions. Man must choose either of the two courses, the upward or the downward, but as he has the brute in him, he will more easily choose the downward course than the upward, especially when the downward course is presented to him in a beautiful garb. Man easily capitulates when sin is presented in the garb of virtue, and that is what Marie Stopes and others are doing. If I were to popularize the religion of indul-

gence, I know that men would simply clutch at it. I know that, if people like you in selfless zeal cried themselves hoarse upholding your doctrine, you might even ride to apparent victory, but I also know that you will ride to certain death, of course totally unconscious of the mischief you are doing. The downward instinct requires no advocacy, no argument. It is there embodied in them, and unless you regulate and control it, there is danger of disease and pestilence.

The Divine and the Devilish

[Mrs. How-Martyn, who until now seemed to accept the distinction between the divine and the devilish, contended that there was really none and that they were much more allied than people imagined. That really is the thing at the back of all birth control philosophy, and the enthusiasts forget that that is their Achilles' heel.]

Gandhiji: So, you think the Devil and the Divine are the same? Do you believe in the sun? And if you do, don't you think you must believe in the shadow?

Mrs. How-Martyn: Why should you call 'shadow' devil?

Gandhiji: You may call it 'no-God', if you like.

Mrs. How-Martyn: I do not think there is no-God in the shadow. There is life everywhere.

Gandhiji: There is a thing like absence of life. Do you know that Hindus will reduce the body of

the dearest one to ashes as soon as life in it is extinct? There is an essential unity in all life, but there is diversity, too, and one has to penetrate it and find the unity behind—but not by intellect, as you are trying to do. Where there is truth, there must be untruth; where there is light, there must be shadow. You cannot realize the wider consciousness, unless you subordinate completely reason and intellect, and the body, too.

—*Harijan*: Feb. 1, 1935.

19. PROBLEMS OF BIRTH CONTROL

SWAMI YOGANAND: You would prefer self-control to birth control?

Gandhiji: I think artificial birth control, or birth control according to methods suggested to-day and recommended in the West, is suicidal. When I say 'suicidal', I do not mean resulting in the extinction of the race, I mean suicidal in a higher sense of the term, that is to say, these methods make man lower than the brute; they are immoral.

Swami Yoganand: But how long are we to tolerate indiscriminate procreation? I know a man who used to purchase a seer of milk, and went on diluting with water in order to divide it between his children whose number increased every year. Don't you think this was a sin?

Gandhiji: It is a sin to bring forth unwanted children, but I think it is a greater sin to avoid the

consequences of one's own action. It simply unmans man.

Example Better than Precept

Swami Yoganand: What then, is the most practical method of telling man this truth?

Gandhiji: The most practical method is to live the life of self-control. Example is better than precept.

Swami Yoganand: But the West asks us: 'Why is it that you have greater child mortality and lower life average than we, though you regard yourselves as more spiritual than the West?' Do you believe in many children, Mahatmaji?

Gandhiji: I believe in no children.

Swami Yoganand: Then, the whole race will be extinct.

Gandhiji: It won't be extinct, it will be transformed into something better. But it can never happen, for we have inherited from eternity the sex instinct from our progenitors. It means a tremendous effort to check this habit of ages, and yet it is a simple effort. Absolute renunciation, absolute *Brahmacharya* is the ideal state. If you dare not think of it; marry by all means; but even then live a life of self-control.

Method of Self-Control

Swami Yoganand: Have you any working method to teach this to the masses?

A DISMAL ABYSS

Gandhiji: It is, as I said a moment ago, to attain complete self-control and go and live that life amongst the masses. A life of self-restraint and denial of all luxuries cannot but have its effect on the masses. There is an indissoluble connection between self-control and the control of the palate. The man who observes *Brahmacharya* will be controlled in every-one of his acts and will be humble.

Swami Yoganand: I see what you mean. The masses do not know the happiness of self-control and we have to teach them that. But what about the argument of the West I referred to before?

Gandhiji: I do not think that we are more spiritually-minded than the West. If we were, we should not have fallen so low. But because the average life of a Westerner is much higher than ours, it does not prove the spirituality of the West. Whoever is spiritually-minded must show a better, not necessarily a longer, life.

—*Harijan*: Sept. 7, 1935.

20. A DISMAL ABYSS

BIRTH control, to me, is a dismal abyss. It amounts to playing with unknown forces. Assuming that birth control by artificial aids is justifiable under certain conditions, it seems to be utterly impracticable of application among the millions. It seems to me to be easier to induce them to practise self-control than control by contraceptives.

This little globe of ours is not a toy of yesterday. It has not suffered from the weight of over-population through its age of countless millions. How can it be that the truth has suddenly dawned upon some people that it is in danger of perishing of shortage of food, unless birth-rate is checked through the use of contraceptives?

—*Harijan*: Sept. 14, 1935.

21. APPEAL TO WOMEN

MY wife I made the orbit of all women. In her I studied all women. I came in contact with many European women in South Africa, and I knew practically every Indian woman there. I worked with them. I tried to show them they were not slaves either of their husbands or parents, not only in the political field but in the domestic as well. But the trouble was that some could not resist their husbands.

The Remedy

The remedy is in the hands of women themselves. The struggle is difficult for them, and I do not blame them. I blame the men. Men have legislated against them. Man has regarded woman as his tool. She has learned to be his tool and, in the end, found it easy and pleasurable to be such; because when one drags another in his fall, the decent is easy.

Learn to Say 'No'

I have felt that, during the years still left to me, if I can drive home to women's minds the truth that

they are free, we will have no birth control problem in India. If they will only learn to say 'No' to their husbands when they approach them carnally, I do not suppose all husbands are brutes, and if women only know how to resist them, all will be well. I have been able to teach women who have come in contact with me how to resist their husbands.

The Real Problem

The real problem is that many do not want to resist them... No resistance bordering upon bitterness will be necessary in 99 out of 100 cases. If a wife says to her husband: 'No, I do not want it,' he will make no trouble. But she hasn't been taught. Her parents, in most cases, won't teach it to her. There are some cases, I know, in which parents have appealed to their daughters' husbands not to force motherhood on their daughters. And I have come across amenable husbands, too. I want woman to learn the primary right of resistance. She thinks now that she has not got it.

—*Harijan*: Feb. 22, 1936.

22. SEX-LOVE v. SEX-LUST

MRS. SANGER: Sex love is a relationship which makes for oneness, for completeness between husband and wife and contributes to a finer understanding and a greater spiritual harmony.

Gandhiji: When both want to satisfy animal passion without having to suffer the consequences of their

act, it is not love, it is lust. But if love is pure, it will transcend animal passion and will regulate itself. We have not had enough education of the passions. When a husband says: "Let us not have children, but let us have relations," what is that but animal passion? If they do not want to have more children, they should simply refuse to unite. Love becomes lust the moment you make it a means for the satisfaction of animal needs. It is just the same with food. If food is taken only for pleasure, it is lust. You do not take chocolates for the sake of satisfying your hunger. You take them for pleasure and then ask the doctor for an antidote. Perhaps, you will tell the doctor that whisky befogs your brain and he gives you an antidote. Would it not be better not to take chocolates or whisky?

Mrs. Sanger: No. I do not accept the analogy.

IS Sex Expression a Spiritual Need?

Gandhiji: Of course, you will not accept the analogy because you think this sex expression without desire for children is a need of the soul, a contention I do not endorse.

Mrs. Sanger: Yes, sex expression is a spiritual need and I claim that the quality of this expression is more important than the result, for the quality of the relationship is there regardless of results. We all know that the great majority of children are born as an accident, without the parents having any desire for conception. Seldom are two people drawn together in

the sex act by their desire to have children. Do you think it possible for two people who are in love, who are happy together, to regulate their sex act only once in two years, so that relationship would only take place when they wanted a child? Do you think it possible?

Gandhiji: I had the honour of doing that very thing, and I am not the only one. I know from my own experience that as long as I looked upon my wife carnally, we had no real understanding. Our love did not reach a high plane. There was affection between us always, but we came closer and closer the more we, or rather I, became restrained. There never was want of restraint on the part of my wife. Very often she would show restraint, but she rarely resisted me although she showed disinclination very often. All the time I wanted carnal pleasure, I could not serve her. The moment I bade good-bye to a life of carnal pleasure, our whole relationship became spiritual. Lust died and love reigned instead.

Sexual Union

Mrs. Sanger: Must the sexual union take place only three or four times in an entire lifetime?

Gandhiji: Why should people not be taught that it is immoral to have more than three or four children, and that after they have had that number they should sleep separately? If they are taught this, it would harden into custom. And if social reformers cannot im-

press this idea upon the people, why not a law? If husband and wife have four children, they would have had sufficient animal enjoyment. Their love may then be lifted to a higher plane. Their bodies have met. After they have had the children they wanted, their love transforms itself into a spiritual relationship. If these children die and they want more, then they may meet again. Why must people be slaves of this passion when they are not of others? When you give them education in birth control, you tell them it is a duty. You say to them that if they do not do this thing, they will interrupt their spiritual evolution. You do not even talk of regulation. After giving them education in birth control, you do not say to them: 'thus far and no further'. You ask people to drink temperately, as though it was possible to remain temperate. I know these temperate people.

'Safe Period'

[And yet as Mrs. Sanger was so dreadfully in earnest, Gandhiji did mention a remedy which could conceivably appeal to him. That method was the avoidance of sexual union during unsafe periods, confining it to the 'safe' period of about ten days during the month. That had at least an element of self-control which had to be exercised during the unsafe period. Whether this appealed to Mrs. Sanger or not, I do not know. M.D.]

—*Harijan*: Feb. 22, 1936.

23. THE 'SAFE PERIOD' METHOD

A CO-WORKER, who is a careful reader of my writings, was disturbed to read that I was likely to approve of the 'Safe Period' method of birth control. I endeavoured to make it clear to the friend that the 'Safe Period' method did not repel me as did the use of contraceptives, and that it was open largely only to married couples. But the discussion of the topic led us into much deeper waters than either of us had expected. The fact, that my friend was repelled by the 'Safe Period' method as much as by that of contraceptives, showed to me that he believed in the possibility of ordinary persons practising the restraint imposed by the *Smritis*, i.e., that the union between husband and wife was permitted only when the parties really desired to have children.

The New Light

Whilst I knew the rule, I had never regarded it in the light that I began to do at the discussion. All these long years, I had regarded it as a counsel of perfection not to be carried out literally, and had believed that so long as married couples carried on intercourse by mutual consent, but without special regard to the desire for progeny, they were carrying out the purpose of marriage without breaking any positive injunction of the *Smritis*. But the new light in which I viewed the *Smriti* text was a revelation to me. I understood now, as I never had done before, the statement that

married people, who strictly observed the injunction of the *Smritis*, were as much *Brahmacharis* as those who were never married and lived chaste lives.

Sole Object of Sexual Intercourse

The sole object of sexual intercourse, according to the new light, was the desire for progeny, never gratification of the sexual instinct. Simple gratification of the instinct would be counted, according to this view of marriage, as lust. This may appear to be a harsh expression to use for our enjoyment, which has hitherto been regarded as innocent and legitimate. But I am not dealing with custom. I am dealing with the Science of Marriage as propounded by Hindu sages. Their presentation may be faulty, it may be altogether wrong. But for one like me, who believes in several *Smriti* texts as inspired and based on experience, there is no escape from a full acceptance of their meaning. I know no other way of finding the truth of things and testing certain old texts in accordance with their full meaning, no matter how hard the test may appear and how harsh its deductions may sound.

Birth Control—a Profound Error

In the light of what I have said above, birth control by contraceptives and the like is a profound error. I write thus with a full sense of my responsibility. I have great regard for Mrs. Margaret Sanger and her followers. She impressed me much by her great zeal for her cause. I know that she has great sympathy

for the women who suffer, because they have to bear the burden of carrying and rearing unwanted children. I know also that this method of birth control has the support of many Protestant divines, scientists, learned men and doctors, many of whom I have the honour of knowing personally and for whom I entertain high regard. But I should be false to my God, who is Truth and nothing but Truth, if I concealed my belief from the reader or these great advocates of the method. Indeed, if I hid my belief, I should never discover my error—if my present belief is one. Moreover, its declaration is due to those many men and women who accept my guidance and advice in many moral problems, including this one concerning birth control.

Regulation of Birth

That birth requires to be regulated and controlled is common cause between me and the advocates of contraceptives and the like. The difficulty of control through self-restraint is not to be denied. Yet there is no other way of attaining the end, if mankind is to fulfil its destiny. It is my innermost conviction that if the method under discussion gains universal acceptance, mankind will suffer moral deterioration. This I say in spite of the evidence to the contrary that is often produced by the advocates of the method.

I believe I have no superstition in me. Truth is not truth merely because it is ancient. Nor is it necessarily to be regarded with suspicion because it is an-

cient. There are some fundamentals of life which may not be lightly given up because they are difficult of enforcement in one's life.

Birth Control through Self-Control

Birth control through self-control is no doubt difficult. But no one has yet been known seriously to dispute its efficacy and even superiority over the use of contraceptives.

Then, I feel that the full acceptance of the implication of the injunction of the *Shastras* as to the strictly confined use of the sexual act, makes the observance of self-control much easier than if one regards the act itself as a source of supreme enjoyment. The function of the organs of generation is merely to generate progeny, obviously of the highest type possible, for a married couple. This can and should only take place when both parties desire, not sexual union but progeny which is the result of such union. Desire for such union, therefore, without the desire for progeny, must be considered unlawful and should be restrained.

—*Harijan*: March 14, 1936.

24. PLEA FOR SELF-CONTROL

THERE is nothing in our society to-day which would conduce to self-control. Our very upbringing is against it. The primary concern of parents is to marry their children anyhow so that they may breed like rabbits. If they are girls, they are married at as early

an age as they conveniently can be, irrespective of their moral welfare. The marriage ceremony is one long-drawn-out agony of feasting and frivolity. The householder's life is in keeping with the past life. It is a prolongation of self-indulgence. Holidays and social enjoyments are so arranged as to allow one the greatest latitude for sensuous living. The literature that is almost thrust on one generally panders to the animal passion. The most modern literature almost teaches that indulgence in it is a duty and total abstinence a sin.

Conception of Marriage

Is it any wonder if control of the sexual appetite has become difficult if not almost impossible? If, then, birth control through self-restraint is the most desirable and sensible and totally harmless method, we must change the social ideal and environment. The only way to bring about the desired end is for individuals who believe in the method of self-control to make the beginning themselves and with unquenchable faith to affect their surroundings. For them, the conception of marriage has, it seems to me, the greatest significance. A proper grasp of it means a complete mental revolution. It is not meant merely for a few select individuals. It is presented as the law of the human species. Its breach reduces the status of human beings and brings swift punishment in the shape of multiplicity of unwanted children, a train of ever-increasing diseases, and disruption of man as a moral being responsible to his Maker.

Incalculable Moral Harm

Birth control by contraceptives no doubt regulates to a certain extent the number of new-comers, and enables persons of moderate means to keep the wolf from the door. But the moral harm it does to the individual and society is incalculable. For one thing, the outlook upon life for those who satisfy the sexual appetite for the sake of it is wholly changed. Marriage ceases to be a sacrament for them. It means a revaluation of the social ideals hitherto prized as a precious treasure. No doubt, this argument will make little appeal to those who regard the old ideals about marriage as a superstition. My argument is only addressed to those who regard marriage as a sacrament and woman not as an instrument of animal pleasure, but as mother of man and trustee of the virtue of her progeny.

Brahmacharya in Married Life

My experience of self-control by fellow-workers and myself confirms me in the view presented here. It assumes overwhelming force from the discovery in a vivid light of the ancient conception of marriage. For me, *Brahmacharya* in married life now assumes its natural and inevitable position and becomes as simple as the fact of marriage itself. Any other method of birth control seems useless and unthinkable. Once the idea, that the only and grand function of the sexual organ is generation, possesses man and woman, union for any other purpose they will hold as criminal waste of the

vital fluid, and consequent excitement caused to man and woman as an equally criminal waste of precious energy. It is now easy to understand why the scientists of old have put such great value upon the vital fluid and why they have insisted upon its strong transmutation into the highest form of energy for the benefit of society. They boldly declare that one who has acquired a perfect control over his or her sexual energy strengthens the whole being, physical, mental and spiritual, and attains powers unattainable by any other means.

Present-Day Brahmacharis

Let not the reader be disturbed by the absence of many or even any living specimens of such giant *Brahmacharis*. The *Brahmacharis* we see about us to-day are very incomplete specimens. At best, they are aspirants who have acquired control over their bodies but not their minds. They have not become proof against temptation. This is not because *Brahmacharya* is so difficult of attainment. Social environment is against them, and the majority of those who are making an honest effort unknowingly isolate the control of the animal passion from all other passions, whereas the effort to be successful must include control over all the passions to which man is prey. Whilst *Brahmacharya* is not impossible of attainment by the average man and woman, it must not be supposed that it requires less effort than that required by an average student who has set his heart upon becoming a master

of any one of the sciences. Attainment of *Brahmacharya*, in the sense here meant, means mastery of the Science of Life.

—*Harijan*: March 21, 1936.

25. FOR THE YOUNG

IT is the fashion in some quarters nowadays for the young to discredit whatever may be said by old people. I am not prepared to say that there is absolutely no justification for this belief. But I warn the youth of the country against always discounting whatever old men or women may say for the mere fact that it is said by such persons. Even as wisdom often comes from the mouths of babes, so does it often come from the mouths of old people. The golden rule is to test everything in the light of reason and experience, no matter from whom it comes.

Birth Control by Contraceptives

I want to revert to the subject of birth control by contraceptives. It is dinned 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.

Sexual Perversion

If satisfaction of the sex urge is a duty, the unnatural vice 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.

Birth Control Literature

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, well-nigh 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.

Harmful Propaganda ...

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 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 Finest Seed

The greatest harm, however, done by that 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 a 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

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 bles-

sed them and use it, if they wish, for the only purpose for which it is intended.

—*Harijan*: March 28, 1936.

26. A YOUTH'S DIFFICULTY

A CORRESPONDENT seeks an answer to a question arising out of my article addressed to the young. The letter is in Hindi. Its purport is:

"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 wants 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.

A New Discovery

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 re-

cently, 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 and if he has love for his wife and has faith in himself, he will convert her to his view.

Sincerity on Trial

Is he sincere when he says he can restrain himself? Has the animal passion become transuted 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.

Not Possible without Faith in God

For, I must confess that the observance of the Law of Continence is impossible without a living faith in God which is living Truth. 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 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*: April 25, 1936.

27. FOR CONTRACEPTIVES

THE reader should have both the sides of the question to enable him to come to a decision. I am myself eager to know why a thing, which is claimed to be scientific and beneficial and which has many distinguished supporters, repels me notwithstanding my effort to see the bright side of it.

Thus, it is not proved to my satisfaction that sexual union in marriage is in itself good and beneficial to the unionists. To the contrary effect, I can bear ample testimony from my own experience and that of many friends. I am not aware of any of us having derived

any benefit, mental, spiritual or physical. Momentary excitement and satisfaction there certainly was. But it was invariably followed by exhaustion. And the desire for union returned immediately the effect of exhaustion had worn out. Although I have always been a conscientious worker, I can clearly recall the fact that this indulgence interfered with my work. It was the consciousness of this limitation that put me on the track of self-restraint; and I have no manner of doubt that the self-restraint is responsible for the comparative freedom from illnesses that I have enjoyed for long periods and for my output of energy and work, both physical and mental, which eye-witnesses have described as phenomenal.

Art in Self-Restraint

Man is undoubtedly an artist and creator. Undoubtedly he must have beauty and, therefore, colour. His artistic and creative nature at its best taught him to see art in self-restraint and ugliness in uncreative union. His instinct for the artistic taught him to discriminate and to know that any conglomeration of colours was no mark of beauty, nor every sense enjoyment good in itself. His eye for art taught man to seek enjoyment in usefulness. Thus, he learnt at an early stage of his evolution that he was to eat not for its own sake as some of us still do, but that he should eat to enable him to live. At a later stage, he learnt further that there was neither beauty nor joy in living for its own sake, but that he must live to serve his fellow-

creatures and through them his Maker. Similarly, when he pondered over the phenomenon of the pleasurable-ness of sexual union, he discovered that, like every other organ of sense, this one of generation had its use and abuse. And he saw that its true function, its right use was to restrict it to generation. Any other use he saw was ugly, and he saw further that it was fraught with very serious consequences as well to the individual as to the race.

Necessity—The Mother of Art

Man makes art out of his necessities. Necessity is not only the mother of invention, it is the mother also of art. We should, therefore, beware of that art which has not necessity as its basis.

Nor may we dignify every want by the name of necessity. Man's estate is one of probation. During that period, he is played upon by evil forces as well as good. He is ever prey to temptations. He has to prove his manliness by resisting and fighting temptations. He is no warrior who fights outside foes of his imagination and is powerless to lift his little finger against the innumerable foes within or, what is worse, mistakes them for friends.

—*Harijan*: April 4, 1936.

28. FOR WOMEN REFORMERS

FROM a serious discussion I had with a sister, I fear that my position on the use of contraceptives has not yet been sufficiently understood. My opposi-

tion is not due to their having come to us from the West. I thankfully use some Western things, when I know that they benefit us as they benefit those in the West. My opposition to contraceptives is based on merits.

I take it that the wisest among the protagonists of contraceptives restrict their use to married women who desire to satisfy their and their husbands' sexual appetite without wanting children. I hold this desire as unnatural in the human species and its satisfaction detrimental to the spiritual progress of the human family.

No doubt the tendency among married people is to regard sexual satisfaction for itself as legitimate. But in the modern age, in which nothing is taken for granted and everything is rightly scrutinized, it is surely wrong to take it for granted that, because we have hitherto indulged in the sexual appetite in married life, the practice is either legitimate or healthy. Many old practices have been discontinued with good results. Why should this particular practice be exempt from examination, especially in the light of the experience of those who even as married men and women are living a life of restraint with mutual benefit, both physical and moral?

Why I Object to Contraceptives

But I object to contraceptives also on special grounds in India. Young men in India do not know what sexual restraint is. It is not their fault. They are

married early. It is the custom. Nobody tells them to exercise restraint in married life. Parents are impatient to see grand-children. The poor girl wives are expected by their surroundings to bear children as fast as they can. In such surroundings, the use of contraceptives can only further aggravate the mischief. The poor girls, who are expected to submit to their husbands' desires, are now to be taught that it is a good thing to desire sexual satisfaction without the desire to have children. And in order to fulfil the double purpose, they are to have recourse to contraceptives!!!

Art of Saying 'No'

I regard this to be the most pernicious education for married women. I do not believe that woman is prey to sexual desire to the same extent as man. It is easier for her than for man to exercise self-restraint. I hold that the right education in this country is to teach woman the art of saying 'No' even to her husband, to teach her that it is no part of her duty to become a mere tool or a doll in her husband's hands. She has rights as well as duties. Those who see in Sita a willing slave under Rama do not realize the leftiness of either her independence or Rama's consideration for her in everything. Sita was no helpless, weak woman, incapable of protecting herself or her honour.

Putting the Cart before the Horse

To ask India's women to take to contraceptives is, to say the least, putting the cart before the horse. The

first thing is to free her from mental slavery; to teach her the sacredness of her body, and to teach her the dignity of national service and the service of humanity. It is not fair to assume that India's women are beyond redemption, and that they have, therefore, to be simply taught the use of contraceptives for the sake of preventing births and preserving such health as they may be in possession of.

Let not the sisters who are rightly indignant over the miseries of women who are called upon to bear children, whether they will or no, be impatient. Not even the propaganda in favour of contraceptives is going to promote the desired end overnight. Every method is a matter of education. My plea is for the right type.

—*Harijan*: May 2, 1936.

29. SELF-CONTROL AGAIN

"Your recent articles on self-control have created quite a stir. Persons who are in sympathy with your views find it difficult to exercise self-control for any length of time. They argue that you are applying your own experience and practice to the whole mankind. And even you have admitted that you do not fulfil the definition of a complete *Brahmachari*. For, you yourself are not free from animal passion. And since you admit the necessity of limiting the number of children a married couple may have, the use of contraceptives is the only practical method open to the vast majority of mankind."

Thus writes a correspondent.

I have admitted my own limitations. In this matter of self-control v. contraceptives, they constitute my qualifications. For, my limitations show quite clearly

that I am like the majority of earth earthy, and can have no pretensions to any extraordinary gifts.

Motive for My Self-Control

The motive for my self-control was also quite ordinary, viz. the desire to limit the progeny for the purpose of serving the country or humanity. Inability to support a large family should be a greater incentive than the very distant one of serving one's country or humanity. That in spite of thirty-five years of successful (from the present standpoint) self-control the animal in me still needs watching, shows in an eminent degree that I am very much an ordinary mortal. I, therefore, do suggest that what has been possible for me is possible for any human being who would make the required effort.

My Quarrel with Advocates of Contraceptives

My quarrel with the advocates of contraceptives lies in their taking it for granted that ordinary mortals cannot exercise self-control. Some of them even go so far as to say that even if they can, they ought not to do so. To them, no matter how eminent they may be in their own spheres, I say, in all humility but with utmost confidence, that they are talking without experience of the possibilities of self-control. They have no right to limit the capacity of the human soul. In such instances, the positive evidence of one person like me, if it is reliable, is not only of greater value but decisive. To dismiss my evidence as useless because I

am popularly regarded as a '*Mahatma*', is not proper in a serious inquiry.

A Weighty Argument

Far more weighty is the argument of a sister who says in effect: "We, the advocates of contraceptives, have come on the scene only recently. You self-controllers had the field all to yourselves all these long generations,—may be thousands of years. What have you to show to your credit? Has the world learnt the lesson of self-control? What have you done to stop the misery of over-burdened families? Have you heard the cry of wounded motherhood? Come, the field is even now open to you. We do not mind your advocacy of self-control. We may even wish you success, if perchance you save wives from the unwanted approaches of their husbands. But why should you seek to decry the methods which we employ, and which take note of and make every allowance for common human weaknesses or habits, and which when properly employed almost never fail to accomplish their purpose?"

Appeal of Human Misery

The taunt is dictated by the anguish of a sister, filled with compassion for the families that are always in want because of the ever-increasing number of children. The appeal of human misery has been known to melt hearts of stone. How can it fail to affect high-souled sisters? But such appeals may easily lead one astray, if one is lifted off one's feet and, like a drowning man, catches any floating straw.

We are living in times when values are undergoing quick changes. We are not satisfied with slow results. We are not satisfied with the welfare merely of our own caste-fellows, not even of our own country. We feel or want to feel for the whole of humanity. All this is a tremendous gain in humanity's march towards its goal.

But we won't find the remedy for human ills by losing patience and by rejecting everything that is old because it is old. Our ancestors also dreamt, perhaps vaguely, the same dreams that fire us with zeal. The remedies they applied for similar ills, it is possible, are applicable even to the horizon that appears to have widened beyond expectations.

Let Us not Lower our Standard

And my plea based on positive experience is that even as Truth and *Ahimsa* are not merely for the chosen few, but for the whole of humanity to be practised in daily life, so exactly is self-control not merely for a few '*Mahatmas*', but for the whole of humanity. And even as, because many people will be untruthful and violent, humanity may not lower its standard; so also though many, even the majority, may not respond to the message of self-control, we may not lower our standard.

Let Us have Correct Ideology

A wise judge will not give a wrong decision in the face of a hard case. He will allow himself to appear

to have hardened his heart, because he knows that truest mercy lies in not making bad law.

We may not attribute the weaknesses of the perishable body or the flesh to the imperishable soul that resides in it. We have to regulate the body in the light of the laws that govern the soul. In my humble opinion, these laws are few and unchangeable, capable of being understood and followed by the whole of the human family. There would be differences of degree but not of kind in their application. If we have faith, we won't lose it, because it may take a million years before humanity realizes or makes the nearest or visible approach to its goal. In Jawaharlal's language, let us have the correct ideology.

Advocacy of Self-Control

The sister's challenge, however, remains to be answered. The 'self-controllers' are not idle. They are carrying on their propaganda. If their method is different in kind from the method of contraceptives, so is and must be their propaganda. 'Self-controllers' do not need clinics. They cannot advertise their cure for the simple reason that it is not an article to be sold or given. But their criticism of contraceptives and warning to the people against their use is part of their propaganda. The constructive side has always been there, but naturally in an unfelt and unseen manner. Advocacy of self-control has never been suspended. The most effective is that of example. The larger the num-

ber of honest persons who practise successful self-control, the more effective becomes the propaganda.

—*Harijan*: May 30, 1936.

30. WHAT IT IS LIKE

BERNARD SHAW is reported to have said that coition accompanied by the use of contraceptives was nothing less than sexual masturbation. A moment's reflection would show how accurate the description is.

It is the philanthropic motive that no doubt impels many birth control reformers to a whirlwind campaign in favour of the use of contraceptives. I invite them to contemplate the ruinous consequences of their misplaced philanthropy. Those whom they want to reach will never use them in any appreciable numbers. Those who ought not to use them will, without doubt, use them to the undoing of themselves and their partners. This would not matter in the least, if the use of contraceptives was incontestably proved to be right physically and morally.

—*Harijan*: Sept. 12, 1936.

31. EVILS OF SELF-INDULGENCE

WHEREVER contraceptive practices have taken root, they have let loose a host of evils which even he who runs can see. But birth control enthusiasts fail to recognize this fact because they hold indulgence to be in itself good, and have persuaded themselves that the spread of the birth control methods is morally desirable.

But whatever the good motives of the promoters might be, their activity can only result in an aggravation of the evil of self-indulgence. For, as sure as water runs down-hill, the use of contraceptives must result in the down-hill path of self-indulgence.

Spread of contraceptive knowledge and practice can only aid the growth of self-indulgence and abuse and its inevitable concomitants, misery and disease. I would, therefore, earnestly suggest to the promoters that if they will only utilize their time and energy to study deeply the evils of self-indulgence and inculcate upon the women the necessity and naturalness of practising self-control as a means of attaining birth control, they will find that they have discovered the best and quickest method of realizing their goal.

—*Harijan*: Dec. 12, 1936.

32. A WITNESS FROM AMERICA

MISS MABEL E. SIMPSON of Montana (U.S.A.) writes to the Editor:

"I greatly enjoyed Mr. Gandhi's article on birth control, displaying his usual clear sight into the heart of things. If he had visited America twenty years ago when birth control was disapproved and now when it is in full swing, he would not be able to convince anybody of it, for it also brings a blindness to both moral and spiritual perception that makes it impossible for its followers to discern with sensitivity along high moral and spiritual lines. If India follows the West in this, she will surely lose two of her most priceless and beautiful jewels: affection for little children and reverence for parenthood. America has lost both—and does not know it. Could you print a statement of the meaning of *Brahmacharya*? I have been asked about it, and while I have an idea I am not sure enough to attempt to explain it to others. Thank you."

The reader may place what value he or she chooses on this piece of evidence. I suggest, however, that such evidence against the use of contraceptives is worth far more than that of those who claim to derive benefit from their use. The reason is obvious. The benefit in the sense that advent of children is often checked is not denied. What is contended is that the moral harm the use does is incalculable. Miss Simpson has given us a measure of such harm.

Now for the definition—the meaning—of *Brahmacharya*. Its root meaning may be given thus: that conduct which puts one in touch with God.

The conduct consists in the fullest control over all the senses. This is the true and relevant meaning of the word.

Popularly, it has come to mean mere physical control over the organ of generation. This narrow meaning has debased *Brahmacharya* and made its practice all but impossible. Control over the organ of generation is impossible without proper control over all the senses. They are all interdependent. Mind on the lower plane is included in the senses. Without control over the mind mere physical control, even if it can be attained for a time, is of little or no use.

—*Harijan*: June 13, 1936.

33. THE ARTIFICIAL METHODS

THE practice of preventing progeny, by means of artificial methods, is not a new thing. In the past, such methods were practised secretly and they were

crude. Modern society has given them a respectable place and made improvements. They have been given a philanthropic garb.

The advocates of contraceptives say that sexual desire is a natural instinct—some call it a blessing. They, therefore, say that it is not desirable to suppress the desire even if it were possible. Birth control by means of self-restraint is, in their opinion, difficult to practice. If a substitute for self-restraint is not prescribed, the health of innumerable women is bound to suffer through frequent pregnancies. They add that if births are not regulated, over-population will ensure; individual families will be pauperized and their children will be ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-educated. Therefore, they argue, it is the duty of the scientists to devise harmless and effective methods of birth control.

Avoid Contraceptives as Poison

This argument has failed to convince me. The use of contraceptives is likely to produce evils of which we have no conception. But the worst danger is that the use of contraceptives bids fair to kill the desire for self-restraint. In my opinion, it is too heavy a price to pay for any possible immediate gain. Those who would like to pursue this subject further should read and digest what I have said and then do as their heads and hearts may dictate. Those who have not the desire or the leisure to read will, if they follow my advice, avoid contraceptives as poison. They should try their best to exercise self-restraint. They should take up such activities as would keep their bodies and minds

fully occupied and give a suitable outlet to their energy. It is necessary to have some healthy recreation when one is tired by physical labour. There should not be a single moment of idleness for the devil to creep in.

In this way, true conjugal love will be established and directed into healthy channels. Both the partners will make a progressive rise in their moral height. The joy of true renunciation, once they come to know it, will prevent them from turning to animal enjoyment. Self-deception is the greatest stumbling block. Instead of controlling the mind, the fountain of all animal desire, men and women involve themselves in the vain endeavour to avoid the physical act. If there is a determination to control the thought and the action, victory is sure to follow. Man must understand that woman is his companion and helpmate in life, and not a means of satisfying his carnal desire. There must be a clear perception that the purpose of human creation was wholly different from that of the satisfaction of animal wants.

—*Key to Health*: P. 52.

34. HEADING FOR PROMISCUITY

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 C ntinence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.

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.

Sexual Relations

The coming in of contraceptives has changed the ideas about sexual relations. 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. Many 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.

—*Harijan*: Oct. 3, 1936.

35. MARRIED BRAHMACHARYA

THE road to any progress is strewn with much difficulty, and the story of man's ascent in the scale of evolution is co-extensive with the history of the successful overcoming of these difficulties. Take the story of the attempts to conquer the Himalayas. The higher you go the steeper becomes the climb, the more difficult the ascent, so much so that its highest peak still remains unvanquished. The enterprise has already exacted a heavy toll of sacrifice. Yet every year sees fresh attempts made only to end in failure like their predecessors. All that has, however, failed to damp the spirit of the explorers.

If that is the case with the conquest of the Himalayas, what about the conquest of self, which is a harder job by far, even as the reward is richer? The scaling of the Himalayas can, at best, give a temporary feeling of elation and triumph. But the reward of the conquest of self is a spiritual bliss that knows no waning and grows ever more and more.

A Well-Known Maxim

It is a well-known maxim of the Science of *Brahmacharya* that insemination in the case of a man, who has properly kept the rules of *Brahmacharya*, cannot, ought not to, fail to lead to conception. And this is just as it should be. When a man has completely conquered his animality, involuntary incontinence becomes impossible, and the desire for sexual gratification for its

own sake ceases altogether. Sexual union then takes place only when there is a desire for offspring. This is the meaning of what has been described as 'Married *Brahmacharya*.' In other words, a person who obeys this rule, though leading a married life, attains the same state as, and is equal in merit to, one who completely abstains from the sexual act, which is only a means for procreation, never for self-indulgence.

Self-Indulgence Leads to Destruction

In practice, it is true, this ideal is seen to be rarely realized in its completeness. But in shaping our ideals, we cannot think in terms of our weaknesses or the possible lapses. The present tendency, however, is to take a complete swing round, and the protagonists of contraceptives have almost set up self-indulgence as their ideal. Self-indulgence obviously can never be an ideal. There can be no limit to the practice of an ideal. But unlimited self-indulgence, as everybody would admit, can only result in certain destruction of the individual or the race concerned. Hence, self-control alone can be our ideal, and it has been so regarded from the earliest times. Therefore, we have to explore the means of its attainment, not to circumvent it.

Practice of Brahmacharya

It has become my settled conviction that most of the difficulties that are experienced in connection with the practice of *Brahmacharya* are due to our ignorance about its laws and would of themselves disappear if we discovered them. In the ideal state, in a normally

healthy couple, who have from their childhood upward observed the rules of *Brahmacharya*, sexual union can never prove infertile. In practice, however, anomalies do arise. The only rule that can be laid down in such instances is that the coitus may be permitted once at the end of the monthly period till conception is established. If its object is achieved it must be abjured forthwith, for mere sensual gratification should never be its object.

Bodily and Mental Health

It is my faith based on my experience that bodily and mental health increases in the same ratio as bodily and mental chastity. Nor is it to be wondered at. A substance that is capable of producing such a wonderful being as man cannot but, when properly conserved, be transmuted into matchless energy and strength. Anyone can test for himself the truth of this observation of the *Shastras* for himself by personal experience. And the rule holds good in respect of woman no less than man. The real difficulty, however, is that we vainly expect to be free from outward manifestations of lust, while harbouring it in our minds, with the result that physically and mentally we become utter wrecks, and our lives, in the words of the *Gita*, become a living lie or hypocrisy personified.

Not Inconsistent

The sexual act performed solely for the purpose of begetting offspring is not inconsistent with the highest

ideal of *Brahmacharya*. Sexual intercourse for the purpose of carnal satisfaction is reversion to animality, and it should, therefore, be man's endeavour to rise above it. But failure to do so as between husband and wife cannot be regarded as a sin or a matter of obloquy. Millions in this world eat for the satisfaction of their palate; similarly, millions of the husbands and wives indulge in the sex act for their carnal satisfaction and will continue to do so and also pay the inexorable penalty in the shape of numberless ills with which Nature visits all violations of its order. The ideal of Absolute *Brahmacharya* or of Married *Brahmacharya* is for those who aspire to a spiritual or higher life; it is the *sin qua non* of such life.

—*Harijan*: June 5. 1937.

36. ‘A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS’

CURRENT literature, that India imports weekly from the Far West, would have us believe that in America none but idiots and imbeciles oppose the use of this modern method (contraceptives) of deliverance from the bondage of the superstition which imprisons the body and crushes it by denying it its supreme enjoyment. That literature produces as much momentary intoxication as the act which it teaches and incites us to perform without incurring the risk of its ordinary result.

More Tempting than The Whisky Bottle

The use of contraceptives is infinitely more tempting than the whisky bottle. But it is no more lawful

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More Tempting than The Whisky Bottle

The use of contraceptives is infinitely more tempting than the whisky bottle. But it is no more lawful

for the desire is not found sufficiently convincing. The desire is there. It seems to be natural. I am not sorry for having been born. It cannot be unlawful for me to see the best in me reproduced. Anyway, till I see evil in procreation itself and till I see that the sexual act for mere pleasure is justifiable, I must hold that the sexual act is justified only where there is desire for children. I understand that this was so clear to the makers of *Smritis* that Manu described only the first-born as children born of *Dharma* and the rest of *Kama*—lust. The more thought I give to the subject as dispassionately as is possible, the more convinced I feel about the correctness of the position I have taken and am enforcing. It is becoming clearer to me that the difficulty lies in our ignorance of the subject with which needless secrecy is being associated. Our thought is clouded. We dread to face consequences. We resort to half-measures as if they were perfect or final and thus render them most difficult of execution. If our thoughts were clear, if we became sure of our ground, our speech and action would be firm.

Plea for Self-Examination

Thus, if I am sure that every morsel of food I take is for building and sustaining the body, I shall never desire to take food for the pleasure of the palate. I shall further realize that if I have any desire to eat things because they are tasty, and apart from hunger or the thought of sustaining the body, it is a token

of disease and I should seek to cure myself of it and not satisfy it as if it was lawful or healthy. Even so, if I am quite clear that the sexual act, apart from the unquestioned desire for progeny, is unlawful and detrimental to the body, mind and soul, surely resistance to the desire will become easy—far easier than when I am not clear whether the gratification of mere desire is or is not lawful and beneficial. If I am quite clear about the unlawfulness of the desire, I shall treat it as if it were a disease and repel its attacks with all my vigour. I shall feel the stronger for the resistance. They are wrong, even untruthful, who claim that they do not like the act but are helpless and, therefore, resistance leaves them weak and defeated. If all such people were to examine themselves, they would discover that their thoughts deceive them. Their thoughts cherish the desire and their speech is a false interpreter of their thoughts. If, on the other hand, the speech is a true interpreter of the thoughts, there can be no such thing as weakness. Defeat there may be. Weakness never.

Unhealthy parents can have or should have no desire for progeny. They are deceiving themselves and the world if they say that they perform the sexual act for progeny. In an examination of any subject, truthfulness is always assumed. Desire for progeny must not be feigned in order to cover the pleasure of sexual union.

—*Harijan*: April 24, 1937.

39. TO THE NEWLY-WEDS—I

YOU will guard your wife's honour and be not her master, but her true friend.

You will hold her body and her soul as sacred as, I trust, she will hold your body and soul.

To that end, you will have to live a life of prayerful toil and simplicity and restraint.

Let not either of you regard another as the object of his or her lust.

Let your lives be consecrated to the service of the Motherland, and toil away until you wear out your bodies.

You will both earn your bread in the sweat of your brow as poor people do.

You will help each other in daily toil and rejoice in it.

Let the *Gita* be to you a mine of diamonds, as it has been to me. Let it be your constant guide and friend on life's way. Let it light your path and dignify your labour.

May God give you a long life of service!

—*Young India*: Feb. 2, 1928.

40. TO THE NEWLY-WEDS—II

YOU must know that I do not believe in ceremonies except to the extent that they awaken in us a sense of duty. I have had that attitude of mind ever since I began to think for myself.

One of the wishes expressed by the husband during the ceremony is that the bride may be the mother

of a good and healthy son. The wish...does not mean that procreation is obligatory, but it means that if progeny is wanted, marriage performed in a strictly religious spirit is essential. He who does not want a child need not marry at all. Marriage for the satisfaction of sexual appetite is no marriage. It is *vyabhi-chara*—concupiscence. The ceremony, therefore, means that the sexual act is permitted only when there is a clear desire by both for a child. The whole conception is sacred.

Sexual Act to be Performed Prayerfully

The act has, therefore, to be performed prayerfully. It is not preceded by the usual courtship designed to provide sexual excitement and pleasure. Such union may only be once in a lifetime, if no other child is desired. Those who are not morally and physically healthy, have no business to unite; and if they do, it is *vyabhichara*, concupiscence. You must unlearn the lesson, if you have learnt it before, that marriage is for the satisfaction of animal appetite. It is a superstition. The whole ceremony is performed in the presence of the sacred fire. Let the fire make ashes of all the lust in you.

A Ruinous Superstition

I would also ask you to disabuse yourselves of another superstition which is rampant now-a-days. It is being said that restraint and abstinence are wrong and free satisfaction of the sexual appetite and free

love is the most natural thing. There was never a more ruinous superstition. You may be incapable of attaining the ideal, your flesh may be weak, but do not, therefore, lower the ideal, do not make irreligion your religion. In your weak moments, remember what I am telling you. The remembrance of this solemn occasion may well steady and restrain you. The very purpose of marriage is restraint and sublimation of the sexual passion. If there is any other purpose, marriage is no consecration, but marriage for other purposes besides having progeny.

Husband and Wife are Friends and Equals

You are being united in marriage as friends and equals. If the husband is called *Swami*, the wife is *Swamini*—each master of the other, each helpmate of the other, each co-operating with the other in the performance of life's tasks and duties. To you boys, I would say that if you are gifted with better intellects and richer emotions, infect the girls with them. Be their true teachers and guides, help them and guide them, but never hinder them or misguide them. Let there be complete harmony of thought and word and deed between you. May you have no secrets from each other, may you be one in soul!

Do not Attempt the Impossible

Don't be hypocrites, don't break your health in the vain effort of performing what may be impossible for you. Restraint never ruins one's health. What

ruins one's health is not restraint, but outward suppression. A really self-restrained person grows every day from strength to strength and from peace to more peace. The very first step in self-restraint is the restraint of thoughts. Understand your limitations and do only as much as you can. I have placed the ideal before you—the right angle. Try as best you can to attain the right angle. But if you fail, there is no cause for grief or shame. I have simply explained to you that marriage is a consecration, a new birth, even as the sacred thread ceremony is a consecration and a new birth.

Nothing more Potent than Thought

Let not what I have told you alarm you or weaken you. Always aim at complete harmony of thought and word and deed. Always aim at purifying your thoughts and everything will be well. There is nothing more potent than thought. Deed follows word and word follows thought. The world is the result of a mighty thought, and where the thought is mighty and pure, the result is always mighty and pure. I want you to go hence armed with the armour of a noble ideal, and I assure you no temptation can harm you, no impurity can touch you.

Remember the various ceremonies that have been explained to you. Look at the simple-looking ceremony of *Madhuparka*. The whole world is full of *Madhu*—sweet nectar or honey—if only you will

partake of it after the rest of the world has taken its share of it. It means enjoyment by means of renunciation.

I Do not Believe in Platonic Marriages

Q. But if there is no desire for progeny, should there be no marriage?

A. Certainly not. I do not believe in Platonic marriages. In certain rare cases, men are known to have married women to protect the latter and not for any physical union at all. But those cases are very rare indeed. You must read all that I have written on pure married life. What I read in the *Mahabharata* is daily growing upon me. Vyasa is described therein as having performed *Niyoga*. He is not described as beautiful, but he was the reverse of it. His form is represented as terrible, he made no amorous gestures, but he smeared his whole body with *ghee* before he performed the union. He performed the act not for lust, but for procreation. The desire for a child is perfectly natural, and once the desire is satisfied there should be no union.

Law of Sexual Relations

Manu has described the first child as *Dharmaja*—born out of sense of duty, and children born after the first as *Kamaja*—carnally born. That gives, in a nutshell, the Law of Sexual Relations. And what is God but the Law? And to obey God is to perform

the Law. Remember that you were thrice asked to repeat: 'I will not transgress the Law in any respects.' Even if we had a handful of men and women prepared to abide by the Law, we should have race of men and women stalwart and true.

When I came to Enjoy my Married Life

Remember that I really came to enjoy my married. But, on coming to my senses, I felt that I took the vow of abstinence when I was in the prime of youth and health, when I was young enough to enjoy married life in the accepted sense of the term. I saw in a flash that I was born, as we all are, for a sacred mission. I did not know this when I was married. But, on coming to my senses, I felt that I must see that the marriage subserved the mission for which I was born. Then, indeed, did I realize true *Dharma*. True happiness came into our lives only after the vow was taken. Ba, though she looks frail, has a fine constitution and toils from morning until night. She would never have done so, had she continued to be the object of my lust.

The Armour of Truth

And yet I woke up late in the sense that I had lived the married life for some years. You are lucky enough to be aroused in good time. Circumstances, when I was married, were as unpropitious as they could be. For you, they are as propitious as they

could be. There was one thing, though, that I possessed and that carried me through. It was the armour of Truth. That protected me and saved me. Truth has been the very foundation of my life. *Brahmacharya* and *Ahimsa* were born later out of Truth. Whatever, therefore, you do, be true to yourself and to the world. Hide not your thoughts. If it is shameful to reveal them, it is more shameful to think them.

—*Harijan*: April 24, 1937.

41. FAITH vs. REASON

REASON is a poor thing in the midst of temptations. Faith alone can save us. Reason *appears* to be on the side of those who indulge in drink and free love. The fact is that reason is blurred on such occasions. It follows the instinct. Do not lawyers ranged on opposite sides make reason appear to be on their side? And yet one of them must be wrong, or it may be that both are. Hence, faith in the rightness of one's moral position is the only bulwark against the attack of reason.

Our Only Rock of Ages

There is no such thing as absolute morality for all times. But there is a relative morality which is absolute enough for imperfect mortals that we are. Thus, it is absolutely immoral to drink spirituous liquors except as medicine, in medicinal dozes and

under medical advice. Similarly, it is absolutely wrong to see lustfully any woman other than one's wife. Both these positions have been proved by cold reason. Counter-arguments have always been advanced. They have been advanced against the very existence of God—the Sum of all that Is. Faith that transcends reason is our only Rock of Ages. My faith has saved me and is still saving me from pitfalls. It has never betrayed me. It has never been known to betray anyone.

—*Harijan*: Dec. 23, 1939.

42. TEST-TUBE BABIES

Q. You say that motherhood is sublime but sex is bad. From the spiritual and eugenic point of view, don't you agree that the test-tube technique of begetting babies is ideal since it altogether eliminates lust and carnality from procreation?

A. I would reconcile myself to your method, if carnality itself can be eradicated thereby. So long as I hold to the view that carnality prevents man or woman from rising to the fullest height possible, so long must I rebel against these artificial methods of procreation. Your method, as far as I can see, can only result in multiplying idiots or monsters, not human beings, thrown into the sea of passions which it should be their pride to subjugate. But I own I belong to an age that is perhaps dying. The new age to come, when men and women will walk, if they at all do, only for pleasure but go to their work on

wheels or fly to it, and when the institution of marriage and all it implies will be abolished, does not enthuse me.

—*Harijan*: June 22, 1940.

43. THE MARRIED ESTATE

A SISTER, who is a good worker and was anxious to remain celibate in order better to serve the country's cause, has recently married having met the mate of her dreams. But she imagines that in doing so, she has done wrong and fallen from the high ideal which she had set before herself. I have tried to rid her mind of this delusion. It is no doubt an excellent thing for girls to remain unmarried for the sake of service, but the fact is that only one in a million is able to do so. Marriage is a natural thing in life, and to consider it derogatory in any sense is wholly wrong. When one imagines any act a fall, it is difficult, however hard one tries, to raise oneself. The ideal is to look upon marriage as a sacrament and, therefore, to lead a life of self-restraint in the married estate. Marriage in Hinduism is one of the four *Ashramas*. In fact, the other three are based on it. But, in modern times, marriage has unfortunately come to be regarded purely as a physical union. The other three *Ashramas* are all but non-existent.

Marriage—a Sacrament

The duty of the above-mentioned and other sisters who think like her is, therefore, not to look down upon marriage, but to give it its due place and

make of it the sacrament it is. If they exercise the necessary self-restraint, they will find growing within themselves a greater strength for service. She who wishes to serve, will naturally choose a partner in life who is of the same mind, and their joint service will be the country's gain.

Motherhood—a Religious Duty

It is a tragedy that, generally speaking, our girls are not taught the duties of motherhood. But if married life is a religious duty, motherhood, must be so, too. To be an ideal mother is no easy task. The procreation of children has to be undertaken with a full sense of responsibility. The mother should know what is her duty from the moment she conceives right up to the time the child is born. And she, who gives intelligent, healthy and well-brought-up children to the country, is surely rendering a service. When the latter grow up, they too will be ready to serve. The truth of the matter is that those who are filled with a living spirit of service will always serve, whatever their position in life. They will never adopt a way of life which will interfere with service.

—*Harijan*: March 22, 1942.

44. TRUE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

RIGHTLY speaking, the true purpose of marriage should be, and is, intimate friendship and companionship between man and woman. There is in it no room for sexual satisfaction. That marriage is no

marriage which takes place for the satisfaction of the sex desire. That satisfaction is a denial of true friendship. I know of English marriages undertaken for the sake of companionship and mutual service. If a reference to my own married life is not considered irrelevant, I may say that my wife and I tasted the real bliss of married life when we renounced sexual contact, and that in the heyday of youth. It was then that our companionship blossomed, and both of us were enabled to render real service to India and humanity in general. I have written about this in my *'Experiments with Truth.'* Indeed, this self-denial was born out of our great desire for service.

Sanctity of Marriage Tie

Of course, innumerable marriages take place in the natural course of events, and such will continue. The physical side of married life is given pre-eminence in these. Innumerable persons eat in order to satisfy the palate, but such indulgence does not, therefore, become one's duty. Very few eat to live, but they are the ones who really know the law of eating. Similarly, those only really marry who marry in order to experience the purity and sanctity of the marriage tie and thereby realize the Divinity within.

—*Harijan*: July 7, 1946.

World—the Playground of God

The couple who realize these things will never have sexual union for the fulfilment of their lust, but only when they desire issue. I think it is the height

RULES FOR SELF-CONTROL

of ignorance to believe that the sexual act is an independent function necessary like sleeping or eating. The world depends for its existence on the act of generation, and as the world is the playground of God and a reflection of His glory, the act of generation should be controlled for the ordered growth of the world. He who realizes this, will control his lust at any cost, equip himself with the knowledge necessary for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of his progeny, and give the benefit of that knowledge to posterity.

—*My Experiments with Truth*: Part III; Chap. VI.

45. RULES FOR SELF-CONTROL

1. Remember, if you are married, that your wife is your friend, companion and co-worker, not an instrument of sexual enjoyment.
2. Self-control is the Law of your Being. Therefore, the sexual act can be performed only when both desire it, and that, too, subject to rules which in their lucidity both may have agreed upon.
3. If you are unmarried, you owe it to yourself, to society and to future partner to keep yourself pure. If you cultivate this sense of loyalty, you will find it as an infallible protection against all temptation.
4. Think always of that Unseen Power which, though we may never see, we all feel within us

as watching and noting every impure thought, and you will find that Power ever helping you.

5. Laws governing a life of self-restraint must be necessarily different from a life of self-indulgence. Therefore, you will regulate your society, your reading, your haunts of recreation and your food.
6. When your passions threaten to get the better of you, go down on your knees and cry out to God for help. As an extraneous aid, take a hip-bath, *i.e.* sit in a tub full of cold water with your legs out of it, and you will find your passions have immediately cooled. Sit in it for a few minutes, unless you are weak and there is danger of a chill.
7. Take brisk walking exercise in the open air early in the morning, and at night before going to bed.
8. 'Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise,' is a sound proverb. 9 o'clock to bed and 4 o'clock to rise is a good rule. Go to bed on an empty stomach. Therefore, your last meal must not be after 6 p.m.
9. Remember that man is a representative of God to serve all that lives, and thus to express God's dignity and love. Let service be your sole joy, and you will need no other enjoyment in life.

—*Self-Restraint v. Self-Indulgence*: P. VIII.

