



ALL MEN ARE EQUAL

“I believe implicitly that all men are born equal. All—whether born in India or in England or America or in any circumstances whatsoever—have the same soul as any other. And it is because I believe in this inherent equality of all men that I fight the doctrine of superiority which many arrogate to themselves.

“I have fought this doctrine of superiority in South Africa inch by inch, and it is because of that inherent belief that I delight in calling myself a scavenger, a spinner, a weaver, a farmer and a labourer.

“And I have fought against the *Brahmins* themselves wherever they have claimed any superiority for themselves either by reason of their birth, or by reason of their subsequently acquired knowledge.

“I consider that it is unmanly for any person to claim superiority over a fellow being. He who claims superiority, at once forfeits the claim to be called a man.”

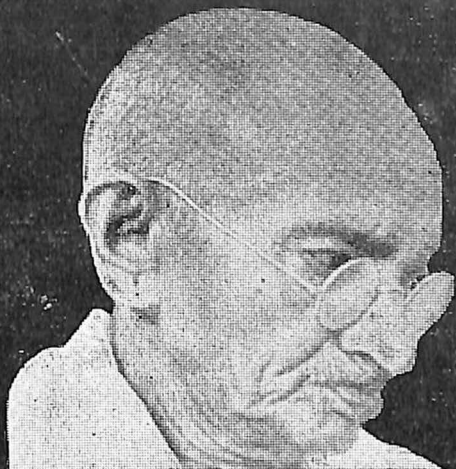
M. K. GANDHI



POCKET GANDHI SERIES



NONE HIGH : NONE LOW



G
177.5 H 59 N

...to believe that anyone else is inferior or
We are all equal. None are high
distinction between high and low is
ch we must obliterate."

M. Gandhi

• BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY - 7 •



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
ADVANCED STUDY
SIMLA**

Abdul Majid Khan.

1/50
G-4864

23. 6. '65

I like Mr. Gandhi'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.

M. Gandhi



DATA ENTERED

CATALOGUED

"Pocket Gandhi Series" No. 11

NONE HIGH : NONE LOW

BY
M. K. GANDHI



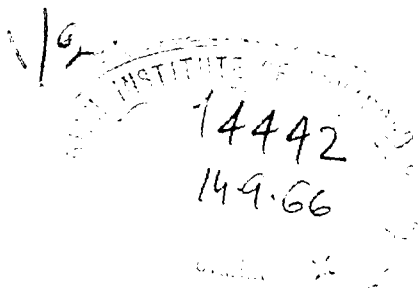
EDITED & PUBLISHED
BY
ANAND T. HINGORANI



1965

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
BOMBAY-7

All Rights Reserved
(By the kind permission of the Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad)



First Edition: March 1965
Price: Rs. 1.50

G 177.5
H59N

 Library IAS, Shimla



00014442

PRINTED IN INDIA
By P. H. Raman at Associated Advertisers & Printers, 505, Tardeo,
Arthur Road, Bombay 34, and published by S. Ramakrishnan,
Executive Secretary, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 7, for
Anand T. Hingorani, 7, Edmonstone Road, Allahabad.

PREFACE

AS the title of this book suggests, there is no one high and no one low on this God's earth—all men are equal, all men are brothers. Notwithstanding the innumerable differences and dissimilarities in this phenomenal world of ours, there is, what Gandhiji calls, "the inner oneness" which pervades all life. The forms are many, he says, but the Informing Spirit is one. He compares humanity to a huge tree having countless branches and leaves through all of which throbs the same life. Although, therefore, the universe is full of endless variety, there is nevertheless "an all-embracing fundamental unity underlying the outward diversity." Men may differ, as certainly they do, in size, colour and quality, in material possessions and property, in talents and dispositions and what not, yet "the soul that is hidden beneath this earthy crust is one and the same for all men and women belonging to all climes."

The recognition and realization of this essential oneness of the human soul inevitably leads to the belief in the equality of man. This is how Gandhiji declares his own faith in such equality: "I believe implicitly that all men are born equal. All—whether born in India or in England or America or in any circumstances whatsoever—have the same soul as any other. I consider that it is unmanly for any person to claim superiority over a fellow-being. He who claims superiority, at once forfeits the claim to be called a man."

Not only this idea of superiority and inferiority is "unmanly" in Gandhiji's view, but it is also repugnant to the most elementary principles of morality. He holds that it is even against the true spirit and genius of Hinduism. Thus, there can be no place for untouchability, as it is being practised to-day, in Hinduism. Indeed, it passes his comprehension that in this age of enlightened reason, of wide travel and comparative study

of religions, there should be found people upholding "the hideous doctrine of treating a single human being as an untouchable, or unapproachable, or unseeable, because of his birth." How can there be born untouchable since all of us are sparks of the same Divine Fire? "If we believe", says Gandhiji, "that we are all children of one and the same God and that God is Truth and Justice, how can there be any untouchability amongst us, His children? God of Truth and Justice can never create distinctions of high and low among His own children." And he further adds that "just as in the eyes of parents all their children are absolutely equal, so also in God's eyes all His creatures must be equal."

Untouchability, therefore, is regarded by Gandhiji as a great blot on Hinduism which he adjures us to obliterate. Our shabby and insulting treatment of the Harijans comes in for a severe castigation at his hands: In a deep sorrow and anguish of mind he says: "To deprive a man of his natural liberty and to deny to him the ordinary amenities of life is worse than starving the body. It is starvation of the soul—the Dweller of the body. Harijans are a powerful illustration of this process of starvation of the soul. No amount of mere literary education or even economic betterment will restore the lost dignity of man." This restoration, according to him, will come only when the self-realization comes; and that in its turn will come not without repentance on the part of the superior class. And by way of repentance he suggests that those of us who arrogate to ourselves a higher status must shed this superiority complex and treat Harijans as our own kith and kin. For, "God is Light, not darkness. God is Love, not hate. God is Truth, not untruth. God alone is great. We, His creatures, are but dust. Let us be humble and recognize the place of the lowliest of His creatures."

PREFACE

Krishna honoured Sudama in his rags, as he honoured no one else."

Thus, when the Hindu heart is purged of this sin of untouchability, Gandhiji has not a shadow of doubt that the event will have a most beneficent influence on all the communities in India belonging to different religions who will then live in "happiness, contentment, peace and unity", as their suspicions and jealousies will melt away before "mutual love, respect and trust". And he makes a confession that in dealing with the monster of untouchability, his own innermost desire is "not that the brotherhood of Hindus only may be achieved, but it essentially is that the Brotherhood of Man—be he Hindu, Mussalman, Christian, Parsi or Jew—may be realized." May we strive our honest best to fulfil this deeply cherished desire of Gandhiji by believing in the fundamental unity and equality of man and forgetting that there are any distinctions of high and low among the children of one and the same God!

7, Edmonstone Road,
Allahabad.

ANAND T. HINGORANI

Jan. 30, 1965.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	v
1. None High : None Low	1
2. All Men are Equal	2
3. The Canker of Superiority	3
4. No Sanction in Hinduism	4
5. The True Brahmin	6
6. Brahminism	8
7. Equality of Life	10
8. My Conception of Varna	11
9. Gita's Doctrine of Equality	13
10. Natural Differences	13
11. Meaning of 'Status'	14
12. Untouchability and Caste System <	16
13. A Device of Satan	18
14. Against Dictates of Reason	19
15. Monstrous Injustice	20
16. Repugnant to the Spirit of Hinduism	21
17. Equal Respect for All Religions ..	22
18. The Source of My Ideas	22
19. An Excrescence	25
20. Hinduism and Untouchability ..	26
21. Untouchability is Gone	27
22. Removal of Untouchability	29
23. Curse of Untouchability ..	31
24. A Tragedy	34
25. A Penance	36
26. Prayer of My Heart	37

NONE HIGH : NONE LOW

	Page
27. Gita and Untouchability ..	38
28. Message of the Gita ..	38
29. Canker of Untouchability ..	40
30. Gain to Humanity	43
31. The Inwardness of the Movement	44
32. Towards Universal Brotherhood	45
33. On Behalf of Humanity ..	46
34. In the Eyes of God ..	48
35. Unity in Diversity ..	49
36. A Plea for Equality ..	50
37. High and Low	50
38. My Implicit Faith ..	52
39. A Service of Humanity ..	53
40. The Period of Probation ..	55
41. Wanted a Change of Heart	56
42. Religious Obligation ..	57
43. Our Duty to Harijans ..	58
44. Starvation of the Soul ..	60
45. Caricature of the Law of Karma	60
46. Hinduism and Untouchability	62
47. The Wider Message ..	64
48. Towards Brotherhood of Man ..	66
49. 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'	68
50. Message of Anti-Untouchability	69
51. Not Enough ..	70
52. Oneness of Life	71
53. A Sin Against God and Man ..	72
54. A Hydra-Headed Monster ..	73
55. A Big Step	75

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
56.	Unity of All Life	76
57.	The Real Untouchables	77
58.	A Great Blot on Hinduism	79
59.	A Problem of Life and Death	80
60.	Interdining and Intermarriage	81
61.	Not a Necessary Reform	83
62.	Self-Imposed Restrictions	84
63.	Intercaste Marriages	86
64.	To the Women	88
65.	The Crime of Caste	91
66.	Temples and Hindus	92
67.	Approach in Faith	94
68.	Temple Entry	95
69.	Acid Test of Hinduism	96
70.	Are Temples Necessary?	97
71.	Temple Worship	99
72.	An Impatient Worker	100
73.	The Wrong Way	101
74.	Throwing Open of Temples	103
75.	Who is A Sanatanist?	105
76.	Treasure Chests of Spiritual Wealth	106
77.	The Essence of Hinduism	108
78.	Duty of Caste-Hindus	109
79.	Evil—A Result	115
80.	To The Harijans	116
81.	To Harijan Sceptics	122
82.	Question Box	127

1. NONE HIGH—NONE LOW

NO one is high and no one is low in this world; therefore, he who thinks he belongs to a high class is never high-class, and he who believes himself to be low is merely the victim of ignorance. He has been taught by his masters that he is low. If a *Brahmin* has knowledge, those who are without it will respect him as a matter of course. But if he is puffed up by the respect thus shown to him and imagines himself to belong to a high class, he directly ceases to be a *Brahmin*. Virtue will always command respect, but when the man of virtue thinks much of himself, his virtue ceases to have any significance for the world. Talents of all kinds are a trust and must be utilized for the benefit of society. The individual has no right to live unto himself. Indeed, it is impossible to live unto oneself. We fully live unto ourselves when we live unto society.

No matter what was the position in ancient times, no one can now-a-days go through life claiming to belong to a high class. Society will not willingly admit any such claim to superiority, but only under duress. The world is now wide awake. This awakening has perhaps given rise to some licence, but, even so, public opinion is not now prepared to accept any distinctions of high and low, which are being attacked on all sides. There is ever increasing realization that all are equal as human souls. The fact, that we are all the creatures of one God, rules out all ideas of high and low. When we say that no one is high-born or low-born, it does not mean that all have, or ought to have, equal talents.

All have not equal talents, equal property or equal opportunities. Still, all are equal like brothers and sisters of different dispositions, abilities and ages.

—*Ashram Observances in Action*: P. 84.

2. ALL MEN ARE EQUAL

MEN are equal. For, though they are not of the same age, the same height, the same skin, and the same intellect, these inequalities are temporary and superficial; the soul that is hidden beneath this earthy crust is one and the same for all men and women belonging to all climes. The word 'inequality' has a bad odour about it, and it has led to arrogance and inhumanities, both in the East and the West.

—*Young India* : August 11, 1927.

In my opinion, there is no such thing as inherited or acquired superiority. I believe in the rock-bottom doctrine of *Advaita*, and my interpretation of *Advaita* excludes totally any idea of superiority at any stage whatsoever. I believe implicitly that all men are born equal. All—whether born in India or in England or America or in any circumstances whatsoever—have the same soul as any other. And it is because I believe in this inherent equality of all men, that I fight the doctrine of superiority which many of our rulers arrogate to themselves. I have fought this doctrine of superiority in South Africa inch by inch, and it is because of that inherent belief, that I delight in calling myself a scavenger, a spinner, a weaver, a farmer and a

labourer. And I have fought against the *Brahmins* themselves wherever they have claimed any superiority for themselves, either by reason of their birth or by reason of their subsequently acquired knowledge. I consider that it is unmanly for any person to claim superiority over a fellow-being. And there is the amplest warrant for the belief that I am enunciating in the *Bhagavad Gita*, and I am, therefore, through and through with every Non-*Brahmin* when he fights this monster of superiority, whether it is claimed by a *Brahmin* or by anybody else. He who claims superiority, at once forfeits the claim to be called a man.

—*Young India* : Sept. 29, 1927.

3. THE CANKER OF SUPERIORITY

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

I believe in *Varnashrama* because I imagine that it defines the duties of men belonging to different vocations. And *Brahmin* is he who is the servant of all, even of the *Shudras* and the 'untouchables'. He dedicates his all to such service and lives upon the charity and sufferance of his fellow-beings. He is no *Kshatriya* who puts forth pretensions to rank, power and privileges. He alone is a *Kshatriya* who uses the whole of himself for the defence and honour of society. And a *Vaishya*, who earns for himself only and believes in merely amassing wealth, is a thief. A *Shudra*, because he labours for hire on behalf of society, is in no way inferior to the three classes. According to my conception of Hinduism, there is no such thing as a fifth or 'untouchable' class. The so-called untouchables are as much privileged labourers of society as *Shudras*.

—*Young India* : Nov. 5, 1925.

4. NO SANCTION IN HINDUISM

IN Hinduism, there is no sanction for treating a single human being as untouchable. In the estimation of a *Brahmin* knowing and living his religion, a *Shudra* is as good as himself. The *Bhagavad Gita* has nowhere taught that a *Chandala* is in any way inferior to a *Brahmin*. A *Brahmin* ceases to be a *Brahmin*, immediately he becomes insolent and considers himself a superior being. India owes a deep debt to the *Brahmins* who voluntarily sacrificed themselves for the betterment of all. It was *Brahmins* who have called God

Servant of servants, the Purifier of the fallen. It was *Brahmins* who taught that the prostitute and the *Chandala* could attain *Moksha*, if she or he only purified her or his heart.

But, unfortunately for the human race, the *Brahmin* shares with mankind the frailties of all. In common with others, he has neglected his duty of giving knowledge to mankind, of guiding them in the right and truest path.

—*Young India* : May 11, 1925.

It is, I hold, against the genius of Hinduism to arrogate to oneself a higher status or assign to another a lower. All are born to serve God's creation,—a *Brahmin* with his knowledge, a *Kshatriya* with his power of protection, a *Vaishya* with his commercial ability, and a *Shudra* with bodily labour. This, however, does not mean that a *Brahmin*, for instance, is absolved from bodily labour, or the duty of protecting himself and others. His birth makes a *Brahmin* predominantly a man of knowledge, the fittest by heredity and training to impart it to others. There is nothing, again, to prevent the *Shudra* from acquiring all the knowledge he wishes. Only, he will best serve with his body and need not envy others their special qualities for service. But a *Brahmin*, who claims superiority by right of knowledge, falls and has no knowledge. And so with the others who pride themselves upon their special qualities.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 11, 1933.

5. THE TRUE BRAHMIN

NO man can be accepted as a *Brahmin* by society merely by reason of his birth. The *Shastras* themselves say that a born *Brahmin*, who does not act according to the requirements of *Brahminism*, will forfeit his right to be called a *Brahmin* by the people in general. I believe that the *Brahmin* is the corner-stone of Hinduism as of every other religion. But there you must understand the meaning of the word *Brahmin*. The *Brahmin* is the person who has realized *Brahman*. If he has not that realization in every act of his, he shows that he is ever after it and nothing else. Such a *Brahmin* demands my ten thousand prostrations every morning, but not the *Brahmin* who is dictated to by self, who is multiplying himself day after day and thinks mostly of himself, rarely of others, nor even the *Brahmin* who smears himself with ashes from top to toe and can punctiliously and correctly recite the *Vedas*. It may be necessary for him to smear himself with ashes. It is necessary for him to translate the *Vedas* in his own life. It is necessary for him to exhibit *Brahman* in every act of his life. It is necessary for him to be pure and to impart that purity to all his surroundings. It is necessary for him to be ever ready to die that others may live.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 26. 1934.

A Living Treasure of Scriptures

He is no *Brahmin* merely because he has marks on his forehead. *Brahminhood* is not known by ex-

ternal marks. The scriptures I swear by, and in whose defence I would love to die, tell me that he alone is a *Brahmin* who knows *Brahman*. *Brahminhood* is the essence of humility, self-effacement, pity. All those virtues, which our ancestors have taught us to prize, have to incarnate themselves in a *Brahmin*. He is a *Brahmin* who is a living treasure of scriptures, but not he who makes a demonstration of untruth.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 19, 1934.

An Image of Humility

According to the *Shastras*, *Brahmins* are expected to spend themselves in the service of religion by *tapas*, social service and the quest of *Brahma* or Truth. It is a pity that modern *Brahmins* not only pay no attention to the duties which have been laid upon them and do not serve religion, but follow all manner of professions to enrich themselves. A true *Brahmin* should be the very image of humility, and not be proud of his knowledge or wisdom. A *Brahmin* would cease to be a *Brahmin* if he considers himself superior to others, as it is his duty to teach people to look upon a *Brahmin* and a *Bhangi* with an equal eye. Again, a *Brahmin* is hardly worth the name, if he does not have the courage of his own convictions. We must fear the Lord and none else. Cowardice is incompatible with divine wisdom.

—*Harijan* : May 18, 1934.

6. BRAHMINISM

I BELIEVE *Brahminism* to be unadulterated wisdom leading one to the realization of *Brahma*, that is, God. If I did not hold that view, I should no longer call myself a Hindu. *Brahmins*, however, like all the other members of the human family, are not all true representatives of *Brahminism*. But I have to believe that, of all the classes in the world, the *Brahmin* will show the largest percentage of those who have given up their all in search of knowledge, that is Truth. I know of no system other than Hinduism under which a class has been set apart from generation to generation for the exclusive pursuit of divine knowledge and consigned to voluntary poverty. That *Brahmins* could not keep up the high standard that they had imposed upon themselves, is no special fault of theirs. Their imperfection merely proves that they were as fallible as the rest of mankind, and so corruption crept into the so-called Sacred Books; and we have the spectacle of the most selfless rules governing *Brahmins* side by side with the selfish rules also made by them in order to help their breed. But it was the *Brahmins* who rose against the corruptions and selfish interpolations into the sacred texts. It was they who, time and again, strove to purge themselves and society of evil. But I admit that *Brahmins*, as a class, have suffered degradation. If they had not, if they had lived up to their profession, Hinduism would not be in the degraded state in which it is. It would be a contradiction in terms to suggest that Hinduism is what it is, in spite of the

correct life of the *Brahmins*. That could not be, because the *Brahmins* themselves have taught us to believe that they are the true custodians of the divine wisdom and that, where there is divine wisdom, there is no fear, there is no grinding pauperism, there is no high and low state, there is no greed, jealousy, war plunder and the like. Because *Brahminism* went down, it drew down with it all the other classes of Hindus, and I have not a shadow of doubt in my mind that, if *Brahminism* does not revive, Hinduism must perish; and, for me, the infallible test of the revival of *Brahminism*, that is Hinduism, is the root and branch removal of untouchability.

Greatest Blot on Hinduism

The more I study the Hindu Scriptures and the more I discuss them with all kinds of *Brahmins*, the more I feel convinced that untouchability is the greatest blot upon Hinduism. This conviction is amply supported by many learned *Brahmins* who have no axes to grind, who are devoted to the pursuit of Truth and who receive nothing, not even thanks for their opinion. But to-day, *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas*, *Vaiśhyas* and *Shudras* are mere labels. There is utter confusion of *Varna* as I understand it, and I wish that all the Hindus will voluntarily call themselves *Shudras*. That is the only way to demonstrate the truth of *Brahminism* and to revive *Varnadharmā* in its true state: Because all Hindus may be classed as *Shudras*, wisdom and power and wealth will not disappear, but they will

be all used for the service of not a sectional religion but the service of Truth and Humanity. Anyway, in battling against untouchability and in dedicating myself to that battle, I have no less an ambition than to see a complete regeneration of humanity. It may be a mere dream, as unreal as the silver in the sea-shell. It is not so to me while the dream lasts, and in the words of Romain Rolland: "Victory lies not in realization of the goal, but in a relentless pursuit after it."

—*Harijan* : March 25, 1933.

7. EQUALITY OF LIFE

THE idea of superiority and inferiority is repugnant to the most elementary principles of morality. A *Brahmin* who considers himself superior to any single creature of God, ceases to be a knower of *Brahma*. If we are children of the same God, how can there be any rank among us? The very first mention of *Varna* in the *Vedas* likens the four *Varnas* to the four main parts of the body. Is the head superior to the arms, the belly and the feet, or the feet superior to the other three? What will happen to the body, if these members began a quarrel about rank? The Law of *Varna* is one of absolute equality among all the creatures of God. It is the basis of all the religions of the world. The verses in the *Smritis* about *Shudras* deserve to be summarily rejected as being contrary to the spirit of humanity.

—*Harijan* : Sept. 28, 1934.

8. MY CONCEPTION OF VARNA

VARNASHRAMA is not a vertical line but that it is a horizontal plane on which all the children of God occupy absolutely the same status, though they may be engaged in different pursuits of life and though they may have different qualities and different tastes.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 18, 1933.

According to my conception of *Varna*, all inequality is ruled out of life. Inequality of intellect or in material possessions ought not to mean inequality of social status. I do most emphatically maintain that man is not made to choose his occupation for rising in the social scale. He is made to serve his fellow-man and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. And since the primary wants of all are the same, all labour should carry the same value.

This law Hinduism discovered and called the Law of *Varna*, and carried it out in practice, more or less, perfectly with amazing success. What we see to-day in Hinduism is its caricature. It is my certain conviction that obedience to that law alone can save the perishing world. Its conscious recognition means contentment and consequent freeing of human energy for the moral uplift. Its disregard spells unhealthy discontent, greed, cut-throat competition and moral stagnation ending in spiritual suicide. This law, as I understand it, is not and never has been a mere ceremonial rule regulating the restrictions on eating and marrying.

—*Harijan* : March 11, 1933.

All of the Same Status

Varna to-day has become a means of arrogating to oneself a higher status. The real *Varna* of my conception does not exist to-day. In the purest type of Hinduism a *Brahmin*, an ant, an elephant and a dog-eater (*Shwapacha*) are of the same status. And because our philosophy is so high, and we have failed to live up to it, that very philosophy to-day stinks in our nostrils. Hinduism insists on the brotherhood not only of all mankind, but of all that lives. It is a conception which makes one giddy, but we have to work up to it. The moment we have restored real living equality between man and man, we shall be able to establish equality between man and the whole creation. When that day comes, we shall have peace on earth and goodwill to men.

—*Harijan* : March 28, 1936.

No Real Varna To-day

If I had the power, I should declare that we are all Hindus, all of the same *Varna*. As I have made it clear over and over again, there is no real *Varna* to-day. When we have come to our own, when we have cleansed ourselves, we may have the four *Varnas* according to the way in which we can express the best in us. But *Varna* then will invest no one with a superior status or right, it will invest one with higher responsibility and duties. Those who will impart knowledge in a spirit of service, will be called *Brahmins*. They will assume no superior airs, but will be true

NATURAL DIFFERENCES

servants of society. When inequality of status or rights is ended, every one of us will be equal.

—*Harijan* : April 4, 1936.

9. GITA'S DOCTRINE OF EQUALITY

I DO not believe that all class distinctions can be obliterated. I believe in the doctrine of equality as taught by Lord Krishna in the *Gita*. The *Gita* teaches us that members of all the four castes should be treated on an equal basis. It does not prescribe the same *dharma* for the *Brahmin* as for the *Bhangi*. But it insists that the latter shall be entitled to the same measure of consideration and esteem as the former with all his superior learning. It is, therefore, our duty to see that the 'untouchables' do not feel that they are despised or looked down upon. How can I accord differential treatment to any person, be he a *Brahmin* or a *Bhangi*, who worships the same God and keeps his body and soul pure and clean?

—*Young India* : Jan. 22, 1925.

10. NATURAL DIFFERENCES

I AM not after extinguishing all differences. Who can destroy natural differences? Is there no difference between a *Brahmin*, a dog and a dog-cater? And yet the *Gita* says:

विद्याविनयसंपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पंडिताः समदर्शिनः ॥

i.e., 'The men, who have realized the Truth, look with an equal eye on a learned and cultured *Brahmin*, on a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog eater'. There is a difference between them, but the man who knows the science of life will say that there is no difference between them in status, as there is none between an elephant and an ant, a savage and a savant. Of course, the savage may be awe-struck before a savant; but the latter should not have any sense of superiority. No, we are all equal in the eye of the law and God. That is the ideal we have to live up to.

'But, then, there should be no master, no servant?'

No. There is a beautiful Latin saying—*Primus inter pares*—First among equals, and the Master or the President will be the first among equals. I can see that it is difficult to practise the thing, that is why you will say you will strive your utmost to live up to your belief. That we cannot practise it at once, or fully, does not show that it is wrong; it shows that human nature can be despicable.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 11, 1934.

11. MEANING OF 'STATUS'

EVIDENTLY, however, equality has been confused with obliteration of differences. If there were no differences or no varieties, there would be no phenomenal world, and the question of equality, *i.e.*, inferiority and superiority, would not arise at all. But when God became many, differentiation became a necessity

MEANING OF 'STATUS'

of the case. It would be surely rebellion against the Maker for any of the component parts to claim superiority over others. They must be all equal in status, though different in stature, colour, form, qualities, etc. Husband and wife, pupil and teacher, master and servant, judge and criminal, jailor and prisoner are undoubtedly different, but woe betide the husband who considers himself as superior to his wife, or the master as superior to his servant, or the judge as superior to the condemned criminal. All the misery in the world is born of the belief in inequality. Untouchability, as Hindus practise it, is its extreme form. And what can be more appropriate than that a Harijan Sevak should, whilst purging himself of the ancestral taint, think inwardly and get rid altogether of the poison of inequality? But what is to be the mark of a master who considers his servant to be his inferior, and of the one who considers him to be his equal? Well, the one has no consideration for his servant, for he has no interest in him save that he wants service from him against the pay he receives. The other treats him as a member of his family. Old servants in God-fearing families take the place of parents to their masters' children. The masters are sharers in their servants' misfortunes and trials. The servants do not feel that they are any different from their masters, whom they will even upbraid if they go wrong. The difference between the superior master and the humble master is the difference between chalk and cheese. It is a difference in kind, not merely in degree. We are all far from the attainment

of this equality, though it is natural and becoming to us as human beings endowed with reason and heart.* But it is our duty, as also privilege, to strive to enforce that belief in daily life and not merely hope to live it in the world hereafter. If we do not make an honest effort, what can be the meaning of equality in the eye of the law?

—*Harijan* : Feb. 15, 1935.

A Living Family Tie

In England, there is a living family tie between its noblemen and their domestic servants. It was a matter of joy to me on visiting them in their homes to find that there was a subtle bond of affection between them and their servants. There was no untouchability there. What I have told you is literally true of hundreds of the noblemen of England. Wherever I went, it was an unexpected pleasure to me at the end of the visit to be introduced to the domestic staff, not as inferior beings, but as members of the family. I wish that you would copy this virtue in your own lives.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 8, 1933.

12. UNTOUCHABILITY AND CASTE SYSTEM

THERE are innumerable castes in India. They are a social institution. They are so many trade guilds, as was well said by the late Sir William Wilson Hunter.

* "I very much fear that we are a long way from that bright and happy day when we shall be all masters and no servants, or all servants and no masters, all members of the human family, regarding ourselves as blood-brothers and blood-sisters."

—*Harijan* : Nov. 24, 1933.

And, at one time, they served a very useful purpose, as, perhaps, they are even now doing to a certain extent. This institution has superadded to it restrictions which, in my opinion, are undesirable and are bound to go in course of time. There is nothing sinful about them. They retard the material progress of those who are labouring under them. They are no bar to the spiritual progress. The difference, therefore, between caste system and untouchability is not one of degree, but of kind. An untouchable is outside the pale of respectable society. He is hardly treated as a human being. He is an out-caste, hurled into an abyss by his fellow-beings occupying the same platform. The difference, therefore, is somewhat analogous to the difference between heaven and hell.

Attack on 'High-and-Lowness'

I do not believe the caste system, even as distinguished from *Varnashrama*, to be an 'odious and vicious dogma.' It has its limitations and its defects, but there is nothing sinful about it, as there is about untouchability; and, if it is a bye-product of the caste system, it is only in the same sense that an ugly growth is of a body, or weeds of a crop. It is as wrong to destroy caste because of the out-caste, as it would be to destroy a body because of an ugly growth in it, or of a crop because of the weeds. The outcaste-ness, in the sense we understand it, has, therefore, to be destroyed altogether. It is an excess to be removed, if the whole system is not to perish. Untouchability is the

product, therefore, not of the caste system, but of the distinction of high and low that has crept into Hinduism and is corroding it. The attack on untouchability is thus an attack upon this 'high-and-low'ness. The moment untouchability goes, the caste system itself will be purified, that is to say, according to my dream, it will resolve itself into the true *Varnadharma*, the four divisions of society, each complementary of the other and none inferior or superior to any other, each as necessary for the whole body of Hinduism as any other.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 11, 1933.

13. A DEVICE OF SATAN

I HAVE always claimed to be a *Sanatani* Hindu. I am not a profound scholar of Sanskrit. I have read the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* only in translations. Naturally, therefore, mine is not a scholarly study of them. My knowledge of them is in no way profound, but I have studied them, as I should, as a Hindu and I claim to have grasped their true spirit.

True, Hinduism does not regard untouchability as a sin. I do not want to enter into any controversy regarding the interpretation of the *Shastras*. It might be difficult for me to establish my point by quoting authorities from the *Bhagavat* or *Manu-smriti*. But I claim to have understood the spirit of Hinduism.

—*Young India* : Jan. 19, 1921.

14. AGAINST DICTATES OF REASON

UNTOUCHABILITY, as at present practised, is the greatest blot on Hinduism. It is (with apologies to *Sanatanists*) against the *Shastras*. It is against the fundamental principles of humanity, it is against the dictates of reason that a man should, by mere reason of birth, be for ever regarded as an untouchable, even unapproachable and unseeable. These adjectives do not convey the full meaning of the thing itself. It is a crime for certain men, women and their children to touch, or to approach within stated distances, or to be seen by those who are called caste-Hindus. The tragedy is that millions of Hindus believe in this institution, as if it was enjoined by the Hindu religion.

Happily, Hindu reformers have recoiled with horror from this practice. They have come to the conclusion that it has no support in the Hindu *Shastras* taken as a whole. Isolated texts, torn from their context and considered by themselves, can no doubt be produced in support of this practice, as of any evil known to mankind. But there is abundant authority in the *Shastras* to warrant the summary rejection, as being un-Hindu, of anything or any practice that is manifestly against the fundamental principles of humanity or morality or *Ahimsa* or *Satya*.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 11, 1933.

15. MONSTROUS INJUSTICE

GOD did not create men with the badge of superiority or inferiority; and no scripture, which labels a human being as inferior or untouchable because of his or her birth, can command our allegiance, it is a denial of God and Truth which is God. God, who is the embodiment of Truth and Right and Justice, can never have sanctioned a religion or practice which regards a fifth of our vast population as untouchables. I want you, therefore, to rid yourselves of this monstrous notion. Untouchability attaching to unclean work is there, must be there. It applies to every one of us; but the moment we have washed ourselves clean of dirt or filth, we cease to be untouchables. But no work or conduct can render a man or woman untouchable for all time. Sinners we are all to a greater or less extent, and every one of our spiritual books—*Gita*, *Bhagvata*, and *Tulsi Ramayana*—declares, in no uncertain terms, that whoever seeks refuge in Him, whoever takes His name, shall be free from sin. That covenant is for all mankind.

There is another simple test that I want you to apply to this question. Every species, human and sub-human, has some distinguishing mark, so that you can tell a man from a beast, or a dog from a cow and so on. Have the so-called untouchables any distinguishing mark declaring them to be untouchables? They are as much human as every one of us, and we do not regard even sub-human beings as bearing the mark of un-

REPUGNANT TO THE SPIRIT OF HINDUISM

touchability. Why and whence then, this monstrous injustice?

—*Harijan* : August 31, 1934.

16. REPUGNANT TO THE SPIRIT OF HINDUISM

THE idea of hereditary superiority and inferiority is, in my opinion, repugnant to the spirit of Hinduism, which teaches oneness of all life in unequivocal terms. The religions of mankind are being examined and tested both analytically and synthetically. And I have no doubt that, if Hindus cling to untouchability, Hinduism and Hindus will be swept out of existence. I cling to Hinduism because it gives me all the solace I need, and because I have found in it no warrant for untouchability as we know it to-day.

Both Hinduism and the Hindus are on their trial to-day. I have said in all humility that, if they fail in that trial, they are bound to perish. For, God cannot have created one man high and another low. I have seen nowhere in the world untouchability observed in the name of religion and based on birth such as we are observing to-day. Neither the intellect nor the heart can reconcile itself to it.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 8, 1933.

Pure Hinduism has no inequality. All are equal in the eye of God. All the religions in the world are on their trial to-day. I want Hinduism to come out of the test with full marks.

—*Harijan* : July 27, 1947.

17. EQUAL RESPECT FOR ALL RELIGIONS

FOR me, untouchability and the idea of high and low have no room in Hinduism. There are the *Varnas*, but none of the *Varnas* is superior to the other. *Varna* does not connote superiority; it connotes different functions and different duties. Whoever has more of the earthly or spiritual goods has to perform more service to the community, has to be more humble. The moment untouchability and the sense of high and low crept in, Hinduism began to decline. Hinduism is based on the firm foundation of Truth and Non-violence and, therefore, there is no room in it for conflict with other religions.

It must be the daily prayer of every adherent of the Hindu faith that every known religion of the world should grow from day to day and should serve the whole of humanity.

—*Harijan* : March 25, 1939.

18. THE SOURCE OF MY IDEAS

I REGARD untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism. This idea was not brought home to me by my bitter experiences during the South Africa struggle. It is not due to the fact that I was once an agnostic. It is equally wrong to think—as some people do—that I have taken my views from my study of Christian religious literature. These views date as far back as the time when I was neither enamoured of,

nor was acquainted with, the *Bible* or the followers of the *Bible*.

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

At School

While at school, I would often happen to touch the 'untouchables'; and as I never would conceal the fact from my parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification after the unholy touch was to cancel the touch by touching a Mussalman passing by. And simply out of reverence and regard for my mother, I often did so, but never did so believing it to be a religious obligation. After some time, we shifted to Porbandar where I made my first acquaintance with Sanskrit. I was not yet put to an English school, and my brother and I were placed in the charge of a *Brahmin* who taught us *Ramaraksha* and *Vishnu Puja*.

The texts '*Jale Vishnuh, sthale Vishnuh*', (the Lord is present in water, the Lord is present on land!) have never gone out of my memory. A motherly old dame used to live close by. Now, it happened that I was very timid then, and would conjure up ghosts and goblins whenever the lights went out and it was dark. The old mother, to disabuse me of fears, suggested that I should mutter the *Ramaraksha* texts whenever I was afraid, and all evil spirits would fly away. This I did and, as I thought, with good effect. I could never believe then that there was any text in the *Ramaraksha* pointing to the contact of the 'untouchables' as a sin. I did not understand its meaning then, or understood it very imperfectly. But I was confident that *Ramaraksha*, which would destroy all fear of ghosts, could not countenance any such thing as fear of contact with the 'untouchables'.

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

touchable'—that it is satanic to do so. I have hence been never tired of repeating that it is a great sin. I do not pretend that this thing had crystalized as a conviction in me at the age of twelve, but I do say that I did then regard untouchability as a sin.

—*Young India* : April 27, 1921.

19. AN EXCRESCENCE

I HAVE never been able to reconcile myself to untouchability. I have always regarded it as an excrescence in Hinduism. It is true that it has been handed down to us from generations, but so are many evil practices even to this day. I should be ashamed to think that dedication of girls to virtual prostitution was a part of Hinduism. Yet it is practised by Hindus in many parts of India. I consider it positive irreligion to sacrifice goats to *Kali* and do not consider it a part of Hinduism. Hinduism is a growth of ages. The very name, Hinduism, was given to the religion of the people of Hindustan by foreigners. There was, no doubt, at one time sacrifice of animals offered in the name of religion. But it is not religion, much less is it Hindu religion. And so also it seems to me, that when cow-protection became an article of faith with our ancestors, those who persisted in eating beef were excommunicated. The civil strife must have been fierce. Social boycott was applied not only to the recalcitrants, but their sins were visited upon their children also. The practice, which had probably its origin in good inten-

tions, hardened into usage and even verses crept in our sacred books giving the practice a permanence wholly undeserved and still less justified. Whether my theory is correct or not, untouchability is repugnant to reason and to the instinct of mercy, pity or love. A religion that establishes the worship of the cow, cannot possibly countenance or warrant a cruel and inhuman boycott of human beings. And I should be content to be torn to pieces rather than disown the suppressed classes. Hindus will certainly never deserve freedom nor get it, if they allow their noble religion to be disgraced by the retention of the taint of untouchability. And as I love Hinduism dearer than life itself, the taint has become for me an intolerable burden. Let us not deny God by denying to a fifth of our race the right of association on an equal footing.

—*Young India* : Oct. 6, 1921.

20. HINDUISM AND UNTOUCHABILITY

U NTOUCHABILITY, in its extreme form, has always caused me so much pain, because I consider myself to be a Hindu of Hindus saturated with the spirit of Hinduism. I have failed to find a single warrant for the existence of untouchability as we believe and practise it to-day in all those books which we call as Hindu *Shastras*. But, as I have repeatedly said, if I found that Hinduism really countenanced untouchability, I should have no hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself. For, I hold that religion, to be worthy of the name, must not be inconsistent with the fundamental truths

UNTOUCHABILITY IS GONE

of ethics and morality. But as I believe that untouchability is no part of Hinduism, I cling to Hinduism, but daily become more and more impatient of this hideous wrong.

—*Young India* : Oct. 20. 1927.

In a Limited Sense

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

—*Young India* : Jan. 22. 1925.

21. UNTOUCHABILITY IS GONE

IF 'untouchables' are not absorbed in the Hindu mass and do not become one with the rest of the **Hindus**, the responsibility will not lie on my shoulders. It will

lie on those of the so-called high-class Hindus who are resisting the absorption. According to them, the so-called untouchable classes have been untouchable from the beginning of time, and will, if they can help it, remain so to the end of time. Some of them have gone so far as to say that they will sacrifice themselves in the attempt to perpetuate this untouchability. What I have done is not merely to unfurl the banner of revolt against the perpetuation of what I hold to be a monstrous wrong, but I am constantly praying that I may be considered a fit sacrifice for the cause of liberation. I am inviting others to join in the prayer that they might also be deemed worthy to offer themselves as a sacrifice in this sacred cause. If, therefore, untouchability remains, it will do so, not because of what I have done, but in spite of what I have done and am doing. But that will be no new experience. Do we not know that God often upsets the plans of human beings? And it may be that His purpose demands that the so-called high-caste Hindus should harden their hearts, that they should refuse to listen to dictates of reason and justice, and that Hinduism should become an extinct religion. For, refusal on the part of high-caste Hindus to regard the Harijans in every sense as equal members with the other Hindus, will not now mean perpetuation of untouchability. I am quite clear in my mind that untouchability is gone. The untouchabilities will not remain slaves for ever. Thank God, they are being surely, if slowly, awakened. The pace is daily increasing. There are limits even to

REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY

the patience of God Almighty. He gives a long rope to untruth and irreligion. But, in the end, only Truth remains and nothing else. Hence, Hinduism can only live minus untouchability, which is an untruth.

—*Harijan* : April 22, 1933.

22. REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY

UNTOUCHABILITY means pollution by the touch of certain persons by reason of their birth in a particular state or family. In the words of Akha, it is an excrescence. In the guise of religion, it is always in the way and corrupts religion.

None can be born untouchable, as all are sparks of one and the same Fire. It is wrong to treat certain human beings as untouchables from birth. It is also wrong to entertain false scruples about touching a dead body, which should be an object of pity and respect. It is only out of considerations of health, that we bathe after handling a dead body, or after an application of oil, or a shave. A man who does not bathe in such cases may be looked upon as dirty, but surely not as a sinner. A mother may be 'untouchable' so long as she has not bathed, or washed her hands and feet, after cleaning up her child's mess; but if a child happened to touch her, it would not be polluted by the touch.

But *Bhangis*, *Dhedhs*, *Chamars* and the like are contemptuously looked down upon as untouchables from birth. They may bathe for years with any amount of

soap, dress well and wear the marks of *Vaishnavas*, read the *Gita* every day and follow a learned profession, and yet they remain untouchables. This is rank irreligion, fit only to be destroyed. By treating removal of untouchability as an observance, we assert our belief that untouchability is not only not a part and parcel of Hinduism, but a plague, which it is the bounden duty of every Hindu to combat. Every Hindu, therefore, who considers it a sin, should atone for it by fraternizing with untouchables, associating with them in a spirit of love and service, deeming himself purified by such acts, redressing their grievances, helping them patiently to overcome ignorance and other evils due to the slavery of ages, and inspiring other Hindus to do likewise.

When one visualizes the removal of untouchability from this spiritual standpoint, its material and political results sink into insignificance, and we befriend the so-called untouchables regardless of such results. Seekers after Truth will never waste a thought on the material consequences of their quest, which is not a matter of policy with them, but something interwoven with the very texture of their lives.

False Notions

When we have realized the supreme importance of this observance, we shall discover that the evil it seeks to combat is not restricted in its operation to the suppressed classes. Evil, no bigger than a mustard seed in the first instance, soon assumes gigantic proportions, and, in the long run, destroys that upon which it settles.

CURSE OF UNTOUCHABILITY

Thus, this evil has now assailed all departments of life. We have hardly enough time even to look after ourselves, thanks to the never ending ablutions and exclusive preparation of food necessitated by false notions of untouchability. While pretending to pray to God, we offer worship not to God, but to ourselves.

Breaking Down of Barriers

This observance, therefore, is not fulfilled merely by making friends with 'untouchables', but by loving all life as our own selves. Removal of untouchability means love for, and service of, the whole world, and thus merges into *Ahimsa*. Removal of untouchability spells the breaking down of barriers between man and man, and between the various orders of Being. We find such barriers erected everywhere in the world, but here we have been mainly concerned with the untouchability which has received religious sanction in India, and reduced lakhs and crores of human beings to a state bordering on slavery.

—From *Yeravda Mandir* : Chap. VIII.

23. CURSE OF UNTOUCHABILITY

UNTOUCHABILITY is a curse that is eating into the vitals of Hinduism, and I often feel that unless we take due precautions and remove this curse from our midst, Hinduism itself is in danger of destruction. That in this age of reason, in this age of wide travel, in this age of a comparative study of re-

ligions, there should be found people, some of whom are educated, to uphold the hideous doctrine of treating a single human being as an untouchable, or unapproachable, or unseeable because of his birth, passes my comprehension. As a lay human student of Hinduism and claiming to be one desirous of practising Hinduism in the spirit and to the letter, let me tell you that I have found no warrant or support for this terrible doctrine. Let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that everything that is written in Sanskrit and printed is *Shashtra* and has any binding effect upon us. That which is opposed to the fundamental maxims of morality, that which is opposed to trained reason, cannot be claimed as *Shashtra* no matter how ancient it may be. There is enough warrant for the proposition that I have just stated in the *Vedas*, in the *Mahabharata* and in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Poisons Hinduism

Untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk. Knowing the quality of milk, and the use of milk, and knowing the quality of arsenic, we should be impatient with the man sitting near a pitcher of milk and trying to remove arsenic grain by grain, and we should throw the whole pitcher overboard. Even so do I, as a Hindu, feel that the curse of untouchability is rendering the milk of Hinduism altogether poisoned and impure. I feel, therefore, that patience in a matter of this character is not a virtue. It is impossible to restrain ourselves. Patience with

evil is really trifling with evil and with ourselves. Remember, that in this age whatever one man or group of men and women do, does not remain secret for any length of time, and we are daily being weighed and found wanting so long as we nurse untouchability in our bosom. You must remember that all the great religions of the world are at the present time in the melting pot. Let us not ostrich-like hide our faces and ignore the danger that lies at the back of us. I have not a shadow of doubt that in the great turmoil now taking place, either untouchability has to die or Hinduism has to disappear. I do know that Hinduism is not dying, is not going to die, because I see untouchability is a corpse struggling with its last breath to hold on for a little while.

In the Melting Pot

In fair weather, a captain would be justified in leisurely sailing along at a moderate pace, and feel that in the time to come he will reach the goal. But our barque of Hinduism is to-day sailing in essentially foul and stormy weather. In common with other religions of the world, it is also in the melting pot. The world's eyes are centred upon India's millions of Hindus. They are eagerly waiting to see how we Hindus solve this question, and in this stormy weather it seems to me that it is folly to be satisfied with some little progress that we might be making. If we want to overtake the storm which is about to burst on us, we must take bolder risks and sail full steam ahead.

It is impossible to wait and weigh in golden scales the sentiments of prejudice and superstition that have gathered round the priests who are considered to be custodians of Hinduism. In the face of the evil which every one seems to recognize, it is not possible to wait till the superstitions and prejudices have given way.

—*Young India* : Oct. 27, 1927.

A Snake with a Thousand Mouths

Untouchability is a snake with a thousand mouths through each of which it shows its poisonous fangs. It defies definition. It needs no sanction from Manu or the other ancient law-givers. It has its own local *Smriti*.....Hinduism that refuses to think accepts the tradition unquestionably, and exposes itself to merited ridicule and worse. Reformers are trying to cope with the evil. I feel, however, that much more drastic methods are needed than are employed to rid Hinduism of the blot. We are needlessly afraid to wound the susceptibilities of orthodoxy. We have to shed the fear, if we expect to end the evil in our own generation. This untouchability naturally recoils on the heads of those who are responsible for it.

—*Young India* : July 11, 1929.

24. A TRAGEDY

IT is a tragedy that religion for us means to-day nothing more than restrictions on food and drink, nothing more than adherence to a sense of superiority

and inferiority. Let me tell you that there cannot be grosser ignorance than this. Birth and observance of forms cannot determine one's superiority or inferiority. Character is the only determining factor. God did not create men with the badge of superiority or inferiority, and no scripture which labels a human being as inferior or untouchable because of his or her birth can command our allegiance; it is a denial of God and Truth which is God. God, who is the embodiment of Truth and Right and Justice, can never have sanctioned a religion or practice which regards a fifth of our vast population as untouchables. I want you, therefore, to rid yourselves of this monstrous notion. Untouchability attaching to unclean work is there, must be there. It applies to every one of us, but the moment we have washed ourselves clean of dirt or filth, we cease to be untouchables. But no work or conduct can render a man or woman untouchable for all time. Sinners we are all to a greater or less extent, and every one of our spiritual books—*Gita*, *Bhagavat*, and *Tulsi Ramayana*—declares in no uncertain terms that whoever seeks refuge in Him, whoever takes His name, shall be free from sin. That covenant is for all mankind.

I cannot understand how a *Dharma*, that boasts of having produced a *Tulsidas*, can sanction a practice which condemns an entire section of humanity to a life of abasement and inferiority. "Kindness is the foundation of all religions, pride is the parent of all sins"—has sung *Tulsidas*. He has further said that no one can

see God, unless he develops a universal outlook first, and sheds all narrowness and parochialism. I commend this text to you all to remember and reflect upon.

—*Harijan* : April 20, 1934.

25. A PENANCE

TO remove untouchability is a penance that caste-Hindus owe to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification required is not of untouchables, but of the so-called superior castes. There is no vice that is special to the untouchables, not even dirt and insanitation. It is our arrogance which blinds us, 'superior' Hindus, to our own blemishes and which magnifies those of our down-trodden brethren, whom we have suppressed and whom we keep under suppression. Religions, like nations, are being weighed in the balance. God's grace and revelation are the monopoly of no race or nation. They descend equally upon all who wait upon God. That religion and that nation will be blotted out of the face of the earth which pins its faith to injustice, untruth or violence. God is Light, not darkness. God is Love, not hate. God is Truth, not untruth. God alone is Great. We His creatures are but dust. Let us be humble and recognize the place of the lowliest of His creatures. Krishna honoured Sudama in his rags, as he honoured no one else. 'Love is the root of religion or sacrifice, and this perishable body is the root of self or irreligion,' says Tulsidas. The Hindus

PRAYER OF MY HEART

have to purify themselves before they can hope to revive the *Vedic* philosophy and make it a living reality.

—*Young India* : Dec. 26. 1924.

26. PRAYER OF MY HEART

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

—*Young India* : Jan. 22. 1925.

* "I do want *Moksha*, I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born as an 'untouchable', so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings, and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition.... If I should die with any of my desires unfulfilled, with my service of the 'untouchables' unfinished, with my Hinduism unfulfilled, I may be born again amongst the 'untouchables' to bring my Hinduism to its fulfilment."

—*Harijan* : Sept. 12. 1936.

27. GITA AND UNTOUCHABILITY

I DO believe in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Smitis* and the *Puranas*. But to me the *Gita* is the key to a knowledge of the *Shastras*. It enunciates the principles on which all conduct must be based. It sums up the whole of the *Shastras* and, therefore, absolves laymen from having to explore the other books. But I go a step further. The *Vedas* are not the four books known as such. They contain only fragments of the originals. Eternal Truth cannot be buried in or confined to printed books. The *Vedas* are, therefore, indefinable and unwritten. They reside in one's heart. And our *Shastras* tell us what discipline and study are necessary for opening out the heart for receiving the Truth. One's experience, therefore, must be the final guide. The written word undoubtedly helps, but even that has to be interpreted, and when there are conflicting interpretations, the seeker is the final arbiter. I had to make my choice. Years ago I made it, and came to the conclusion that the *Shastras* did not countenance untouchability as we practise it to-day.

—*Conversations of Gandhiji* : P. 49.

28. MESSAGE OF THE GITA

FOR me, *Sanatana Dharma* is the vital faith handed down from generations belonging even to pre-historic period, and based upon the *Vedas* and the writings that followed them. For me, the *Vedas* are as indefinable as God and Hinduism. It would be only parti-

ally true to say that the *Vedas* are the four books which one finds in print. These books are themselves the remnants of the discourses left by unknown seers. Those of later generations added to these original treasures according to their lights. There then arose a great and lofty-minded man, the composer of the *Gita*. He gave to the Hindu world a synthesis of Hindu religion, at once deeply philosophical and yet easily to be understood by any unsophisticated seeker. It is the one open book to every Hindu who will care to study it, and if all the other scriptures were reduced to ashes, the seven hundred verses of this imperishable booklet are quite enough to tell one what Hinduism is and how one can live up to it. And I claim to be a *Sanatanist*, because for forty years I have been seeking literally to live up to the teachings of that book. Whatever is contrary to its main theme, I reject as un-Hindu. It excludes no faith and no teacher. It gives me great joy to be able to say that I have studied the *Bible*, the *Quran*, the *Zend Avesta* and the other scriptures of the world with the same reverence that I have given to the *Gita*. This reverent reading has strengthened my faith in the *Gita*. They have broadened my outlook and, therefore, my Hinduism. Lives of Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohammed, as I have understood them, have illuminated many a passage in the *Gita*. I take pride in calling myself a Hindu, because I find the term broad enough not merely to tolerate but to assimilate the teachings of prophets from all the four corners of the earth. I find no warrant for untouchability in this Book of Life.

On the contrary, it compels me, by an appeal to my reason and a more penetrating appeal to my heart, in language that has a magnetic touch about it, to believe that all life is one and that it is through God and must return to Him. According to the *Sanatana Dharmu* taught by that venerable Mother, life does not consist in outward rites and ceremonial, but it consists in the uttermost inward purification and merging oneself, body, soul and mind, in the Divine Essence. I have gone to the masses in their millions with this message of the *Gita* burnt into my life, and they have listened to me, I am quite sure, not for any political wisdom or for eloquence, but because they have instinctively recognized me as one of them, as one belonging to their faith. As days have gone by, my belief has grown stronger and stronger that I could not be wrong in claiming to belong to *Sanatana Dharmu*, and if God wills it, He will let me seal that claim with my death.

—*My Soul's Agony* : P. 6-7.

29. CANKER OF UNTOUCHABILITY

THE caste-Hindus are responsible for whatever bad habits are to be observed amongst the Harijans. The so-called higher castes have deprived them of facilities for keeping themselves clean and also the incentive for doing so. As for the occupations of scavenging and tanning, they are no more dirty than many other occupations I can name. What may be admitted is that these occupations, like several others, are carried on in a dirty manner. That is due to the high-handed

CANKER OF UNTOUCHABILITY

indifference and criminal neglect of the 'high castes'. I can say from experience that both scavenging and tanning can be made in a perfectly healthy and clean manner.

Every mother is a scavenger in regard to her own children, and every student of modern medicine is a tanner inasmuch as he has to dissect and skin human carcasses. But we regard theirs to be sacred occupations. I submit that the scavenger's and the tanner's occupations are no less sacred and no less useful than those of mothers and medical men. We shall go wrong, if the caste-Hindus consider themselves as patrons distributing favours to the Harijans. Whatever is done now by the caste-Hindus for Harijans will be but a tardy reparation for all the wrongs done to them for generations, and if now they have to be received in their existing state, as they must be, it is a well-deserved punishment for the past guilt. But still there is this certain satisfaction that the very act of receiving them with open hearts would be a sufficient incentive to cleanliness, and the caste-Hindus will, for their own comfort and convenience, provide Harijans with facilities for keeping themselves clean.

Social Disabilities of Harijans

Socially, they are lepers. Economically, they are worse. Religiously, they are denied entrances to places we miscall houses of God. They are denied the use, on the same terms as the caste-Hindus, of public roads, public schools, public hospitals, public wells, public

taps, public parks, and the like. In some cases, their approach within a measured distance is a social crime, and, in some other rare cases, their very sight is an offence. They are relegated for their residence to the worst quarters of cities and villages where they get no social services. Caste-Hindu alwyers and doctors will not serve them as they do the other members of society. *Brahmins* will not officiate at their religious functions. The wonder is that they are at all able to eke out an existence or that they still remain within the Hindu fold. They are too downtrodden to rise in revolt against their suppressors. It is only ceaseless effort that can raise these downtrodden fellow-beings from degradation, purify Hinduism, and raise the whole Hindu society and with it the whole of India.

We are too near the scene of tragedy to realize that this canker of untouchability has travelled far beyond its prescribed limits, and has sapped the very foundations of the whole nation. The touch-me-not spirit pervades the atmosphere. If this white ant is touched at its source, I feel certain that we shall soon forget the differences with regard to caste and caste, and religion and religion, and begin to believe that even as all Hindus are one and indivisible, so are Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsis, Jews and Christians, branches of the same parent tree. Though religions are many, Religion is one. That is the lesson I would have us learn from the campaign against untouchability.

—*Press Statement* : Nov. 5, 1932.

30. GAIN TO HUMANITY

I AM a humble servant of India, and in trying to serve India, I serve humanity at large. I discovered in my early days that the service of India is not inconsistent with the service of humanity. As I grew older in years, and I hope also in wisdom, I saw that the discovery was well made, and after nearly 50 years of public life, I am able to say to-day that my faith in the doctrine, that the service of one's nation is not inconsistent with the service of the world, has grown. It is a good doctrine. Its acceptance alone will ease the situation in the world and stop the mutual jealousies between nations inhabiting this globe of ours. I have said more than once that, if untouchability is removed in its fulness from the Hindu heart, it will have far reaching consequences, inasmuch as it touches millions of human beings. If untouchability is really removed from the Hindu heart, that is, if the high-caste Hindus purge themselves of this terrible taint, we shall soon discover that we are all one and not different peoples, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, whatever we may call ourselves. We shall feel the unity, once the barrier of untouchability is removed. As I have often said, untouchability is hydra-headed monster, appearing in many shapes. Some of them are very subtle. If I have jealousy for any human being, that also is a species of untouchability. I do not know if my dream about the removal of untouchability will be fully realized while I am living. All those who are religiously inclined, those who believe not in formal religion but in

the essence of religion, cannot but believe in the removal of a subtle type of untouchability that effects the lives of a vast mass of humanity. If Hindu hearts can be purged of this evil, our eyes of understanding will be more and more opened. It is not possible to estimate the gain to humanity when untouchability is really removed.

—*Harijan*: Nov. 17, 1933.

31. THE INWARDNESS OF THE MOVEMENT

IT is my certain conviction that, if the Hindu heart is completely purged of the taint of untouchability, the event will have its inevitable influence not only upon all the communities in India, but on the whole world. This belief is daily becoming stronger. I cannot remove from my heart untouchability regarding several millions of human beings and harbour it towards some other millions. The very act of the Hindu heart getting rid of distinctions of high and low, must cure us of mutual jealousies and distrusts of and among other communities. It is for that reason that I have staked my life on this issue. In fighting this battle against untouchability, I am fighting for unity not only among Hindu touchables and Hindu untouchables, but among Hindus, Muslims, Christians and all other different religious communities. Do not for one moment believe that I am interested in the numerical strength of Hindus. I have never, throughout my life, laid stress upon quantity. I have ever insisted upon quality at the sacrifice of quantity. If I collected a million false

coins, they would be a worthless burden to me. One true coin would be worth its value. A religion cannot be sustained by the number of its lip followers, denying in their lives its tenets. This great Hindu religion itself will perish in spite of its so-called millions of followers, if its votaries persist in harbouring the evil of untouchability. Not because untouchables can be counted by the millions. It would perish even if they were a handful. Milk is poisoned and has to be thrown away whether you put a little or much arsenic in it. If we believe that we are all children of one and the same God and that God is Truth and Justice, how can there be untouchability amongst us, His children? God of Truth and Justice can never create distinctions of high and low among His own children. I, therefore, invite all without distinction of race and religion to assist this movement by praying for its complete success, so that we may all live in peace and friendship.

—*Harijan* : Nov. 17. 1933

32. TOWARDS UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

THROUGH the anti-untouchability campaign, I am seeking to realize Universal Brotherhood. To me the Harijan problem is purely religious. It is a question of purification of Hindus and Hinduism, of a vital change of heart among the so-called caste or high class Hindus. I am of opinion that untouchability, in its subtle forms, extends not only to Harijans who are Hindus, but also to non-Hindus, and is a bar to the

achieving of heart unity among the Hindus and the other communities. I, therefore, cherish the hope that the extinction of untouchability among Hindus would remove one of the greatest hindrances to communal unity. As in untouchability, so in communal unity, the change of heart is the real need. I believe in the saying that they also work who watch, wait and pray. I am praying all the twenty-four hours for the heart unity of all the communities for whom India is their home. Success of the Harijan movement means perhaps the greatest step towards communal unity. Indeed, I presume to claim that, if the Hindus really purged themselves of untouchability in its widest sense, it would be a contribution even to world unity.

—*Harijan* : Nov. 24, 1933.

33. ON BEHALF OF HUMANITY

I AM trying to serve all communities to-day through this work. They are branches of one big family. I have found in the Hindu branch a disease, which, if not removed in time, will spread through the whole family and destroy it. The evil of untouchability has travelled far beyond its prescribed limits. In trying to root out untouchability among Hindus, I am trying to serve all the communities. Some European friends assure me that I am waging this war against untouchability on behalf of the whole of humanity. Once this canker is removed from Hinduism, Hindus, Mussalmans and others will sink their differences and

ON BEHALF OF HUMANITY

will embrace one another as blood-brothers, and all communities will feel that they are all branches of the same tree.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 8, 1933.

All Equal in God's Eyes

Once we are able to purge ourselves of untouchability, and with it the spirit of high and low, we shall realize the unity underlying all races and religions. In spite of the differences of races and religions, we shall learn to tolerate and respect one another and consider all human beings as children of one God and, therefore, brothers and sisters of one another. God is the Creator of all life; all His creatures are, therefore, equal in His eyes. Humanity is a gigantic tree having innumerable branches and leaves and the same life throbs through them all. The realization of unity in diversity is implied in the removal of untouchability.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 1, 1933.

Sinner and the Saint

A sinner is equal to the saint in the eye of God. Both will have equal justice, and both an equal opportunity either to go forward or to go backward. Both are His children, His creation. A saint who considers himself superior to a sinner forfeits his sainthood and becomes worse than the sinner who, unlike the proud saint, knows not what he is doing.

—*Harijan* : Oct. 14, 1933.

34. IN THE EYES OF GOD

IN the eyes of God, who is the Creator of all, His creatures are all equal. Had He made any distinctions of high and low between man and man, they would have been visible as are the distinctions between, say, an elephant and an ant. But He has endowed all human beings impartially with the same shape and the same natural wants. If you consider Harijans untouchables because they perform sanitary service, what mother has not performed such service for her children? It is the height of injustice to consider the Harijans, who are the most useful servants of society, as untouchables and outcastes. It can never be an act of merit to look down upon any human being as inferior to us. We are all worshippers of one God, whom we worship under different names. We must, therefore, realize our essential unity and give up untouchability as well as the spirit of superiority and inferiority between human beings.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 22, 1933.

On God's Earth Nobody is Low

It is wrong, it is sinful, to consider some people lower than ourselves. On God's earth, nobody is low and nobody is high. We are all His creatures; and just as in the eyes of parents all their children are absolutely equal, so also in God's eyes all His creatures must be equal. Therefore, I ask you to believe me when I tell you that there is no sanction in religion for untouchability.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 5, 1934.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

It is a sin to believe that any one else is inferior or superior to ourselves. We are all equal. It is the touch of sin that pollutes us, and never that of a human being. None are high and none are low for one who would devote his life to service. The distinction between high and low is a blot on Hinduism, which we must obliterate.

—*The Diary of Mahadev Desai* : P. 286.

35. UNITY IN DIVERSITY

THERE is untouchability in the *Shastras* in a particular sense. Anger, lust and other evil passions raging in the heart are the real untouchables. It is a prostitution of *Shastras* to interpret them as sanctioning the distinctions we observe to-day. A true man of piety will consider himself a sinner and, therefore, untouchable. We in our haughtiness have hitherto misinterpreted the *Shastras* and have raised a sin to the status of a religious tenet. I claim to be a true *Santanist*, because I make the greatest effort I can to live up to the Truth as I see it. Diversity there certainly is in the world, but it means neither inequality nor untouchability. An elephant and an ant are dissimilar. Nevertheless, God has said that they are equal in His eyes. The inner oneness pervades all life. The forms are many, but the informing Spirit is one. How can there be room for distinctions of high and low where there is this all-embracing fundamental unity underlying the outward diversity? For, that is a fact meeting

you at every step in daily life. The final goal of all religions is to realize this essential oneness.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 15, 1933.

36. A PLEA FOR EQUALITY

I, WHO believe in the equality of the great religions of the world and from my early days have learnt to honour other religions as my own, have no difficulty in inviting and taking the co-operation of the followers of other religions in this movement. It is part of my nature. This is essentially a matter of repentance on the part of the so-called higher classes. They have to do reparation for the wrongs they have hitherto done to a portion of themselves, on whose backs they have hitherto ridden. It is an effort on the part of Hindu reformers to blot out this shame from the face of Hinduism. I have not hesitated to say that either untouchability lives and Hinduism perishes, or untouchability goes and Hinduism rises purified. It is a life and death struggle between the darkness of superstition and the light of reform. If this reform in Hinduism comes about, I have not the shadow of a doubt that it will be a service not only of all the communities of India but of the whole of humanity.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 15, 1933.

37. HIGH AND LOW

I ASK you to do one thing. Forget altogether that some are high and some are low. Forget altogether that some are touchables and some are untouch-

ables. I know that you all believe in God as I do; and God cannot be so cruel and unjust as to make distinctions of high and low between man and man, and woman and woman. This untouchability is the greatest blot on Hinduism, and I have not hesitated to say that, if untouchability lives, Hinduism dies. If one may use man's language about God, God has been very patient with us. But I have no hesitation in saying that even God's patience can be exhausted, and He will no longer be patient towards this atrocity that man has been doing to man in Hindu India.

It is impossible that God, who is the God of Justice, could have made the distinctions that men observe to-day in the name of religion.

There can be in God's eyes no distinction between man and man, even as there is no distinction between animal and animal. Had God designed one part of humanity to be lower than others, He would have put some distinguishing mark upon some parts of our bodies whereby these distinctions could have been unmistakably seen, felt and demonstrated. Go where you will, from one end of India to the other, you will fail, as I have failed, to notice any such distinguishing feature in connection with those who call themselves high caste-Hindus and those whom the so-called high caste-Hindus describe as 'untouchables', 'invisibles' and what not. I, therefore, ask you seriously to consider this urgent question. I have said, and I repeat what I have said and from a thousand platforms, that if we do not remove untouchability root and branch from our hearts,

we are a doomed race, and Hinduism like many other 'isms' will perish and the discredit will be ours. If by God's grace this message reaches your hearts, we shall forget all distinctions of high and low.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 29, 1933.

There is no God-made distinction between caste-Hindus and Harijans. The distinction is purely man-made, and is an offence in the eye of God. If the Harijans are given full opportunities for advancement, they will certainly equal, if they will not beat, others in many a field of life.

—*Harijan* : Nov. 24, 1933.

38. MY IMPLICIT FAITH

IT is my implicit faith that, if Hinduism rids itself of the distinctions of high and low, the Hindus will be in a position to mix with Mussalmans, Christians and others on terms of absolute equality. To-day there is a bar between them. I would like to lift that bar. We may have our private religious opinions, but why would they be a bar to the meeting of hearts? Moreover, you should remember that this is purely an internal reform.

I would love to absorb also Christians and Mussalmans, not by converting them to Hinduism but by disarming their suspicion. The minorities will then cease to feel themselves minorities. To-day there is an armed truce between Christians, Hindus, Mussalmans and others. If the Hindus keep their behaviour honour-

A SERVICE OF HUMANITY

able, the suspicions of the others will be disarmed. Why should Hindus have any difficulty in mixing with Mussalmans and Christians? Untouchability creates a bar not merely between Hindus and Hindus, but between man and man. When that is gone, there will be no majority and no minority. We shall all be one in God. My Hinduism is as extensive as Truth.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 29, 1933.

Look in Nature

Nature has appointed all men and women to be equal. But man in his arrogance has come to the conclusion that there are some who are high and some who are low. That doctrine of inherent inequality can never be divinely inspired. Look in Nature wherever you will, you will nowhere find a parallel to this man-made doctrine. I hope you, one and all, men and women, will eradicate the evil of untouchability from your hearts; and I ask you to join with me in a heart prayer to God Almighty that He may bless us with strength and courage to root out this evil entirely.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 5, 1934.

39. A SERVICE OF HUMANITY

THE more I think, the more do I feel that this is a cause for all humanity and for all time. And if we, Hindus, succeed in exorcising this devil of untouchability, if we succeed in purifying Hinduism of this blot, this uncleanness, I have no doubt whatsoever that we, all communities of India belonging to differ-

ent religions, will live in happiness, contentment, peace and real unity. If we got full success in this war against untouchability, I have no doubt whatsoever that we shall achieve the heart unity we are pining for. Suspicion will melt away before mutual love, respect and trust. I pray to God Almighty that He may bless us with sufficient strength and wisdom to see this error and correct it, whatever it may cost. Let us remember that for long centuries we have suppressed a portion of ourselves, and in so doing we have degraded and suppressed ourselves. Nobody in the world has succeeded in suppressing others without degrading and suppressing himself. The more I see, the more I feel that, if we do not drive out untouchability, Hinduism will perish; and it will be a loss not only to us but to the world. Remember that it is the religion which owes its inspiration to the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*. And, for what reason will it perish? That we did not deserve the message of the *Upanishads*, the grand principle enunciated in the *Vedas* that God alone is and nothing else is. Do you suppose that there can be divisions of high and low in us, who have been preachers of the doctrine that God is the God of Justice? The more I think, the more do I feel convinced that untouchability can never be part of any religion in the world. To-day all religions are in the melting pot. They are being critically examined and tested. Public opinion will reject Hinduism, if we do not drive away this evil from our midst.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 5, 1934.

40. THE PERIOD OF PROBATION

I HAVE not the shadow of a doubt that untouchability is an unmitigated curse in Hinduism. If *Shastras* represent the will and wish of God, there can be no warrant whatsoever in them for untouchability, for which you find no parallel in any part of the world save India. It is bad enough when dictated by selfish motives to consider ourselves high and other people low. But it is not only worse but a double wrong when we tack religion to an evil like untouchability. It, therefore, grieves me when learned *Pandits* come forward and invoke the authority of *Shastras* for a patent evil like untouchability. I have said, and I repeat to-day that we, Hindus, are undergoing a period of probation. Whether we desire it or not, untouchability is going. But if during this period of probation we repent for the sin, if we reform and purify ourselves, history will record that one act as a supreme act of purification on the part of the Hindus. But if, through the working of the time spirit, we are compelled to do things against our will and Harijans come to their own, it will be no credit to the Hindus or to Hinduism. But I go a step further and say that, if we fail in this trial, Hinduism and Hindus will perish.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 5. 1934.

The Warning Voice

If the caste-Hindus do not listen to the warning voice, I have not the shadow of a doubt that Hinduism will perish. I have, therefore, called this a period of

probation. A period of probation comes in a man's or a society's life only once. I am trying every moment of my life to be guided by *Ahimsa*, by love. I am essentially a lover of peace. I do not want to create dissensions. And I assure those who oppose me that I shall not do a single thing which I know may be contrary to truth and love. But, we have created a hope in the hearts of Harijans. They have begun to feel that they are going to be freed from this serfdom. I expect of you that you will fulfil it. It is said in all religions of the world that, if the poor are deceived, if the hopes given to them are not fulfilled, they heave a sigh of despair, a curse. And I have no doubt that, if, after all that we have said and promised, we play false, the curse of these poor people is bound to descend on us and we shall perish.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 12, 1934.

41. WANTED A CHANGE OF HEART

MY mission covers a much wider theme than the economic welfare of Harijans. We are, no doubt, bound to jealously guard their economic and educational welfare. But this is not enough, if we are to do reparation to Harijans for the untold hardships to which we have subjected them for centuries past. They are entitled to precisely the same rights and privileges as any other citizens. And, as Hindus, they are entitled to the same social amenities and religious privileges that any other Hindus are entitled to. My mission, therefore, is to invite *Savarna* Hindus to wash them-

selves clean of the guilt of untouchability. And if, during the short period of grace open to *Savarna* Hindus, they fail to do this duty, I have not then shadow of a doubt that Hinduism will perish. It is, therefore, my privilege, as it is my duty, to invite you to cleanse your hearts of untouchability, the distinction of high and low. If you understand thoroughly the spirit of this message, the change of heart is an incredibly simple performance; and you can see in the twinkling of an eye how, if this change comes about in *Savarna* Hindu hearts, the economic, social and religious progress of Harijans must follow. It will then be a sign and seal of this change of heart.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 12. 1934.

42. RELIGIOUS OBLIGATION

HARIJAN service is a religious obligation. There is no room in it for cunning. It has to be absolutely truthful and non-violent. It can be accomplished only by sacrifice and penance. I very much fear that we shall not be able to win the trust of the Harijans without self-purification. It should not surprise us if to-day they look upon all we do with suspicion and distrust. Hitherto, we have been riding on their shoulders. We must dismount if we would do justice to them, and regard them as we regard other Hindus. Do you not realize that, if they were to boycott us and make us untouchables, life itself would become unbearable and come to a standstill? It can be demonstrated that by our shoddy treatment of the Hari-

jans we not only lose spiritually, but also materially. Western science has made the discovery that a society that is indifferent to the welfare of its servants, suffers a heavy material loss. It should be easy enough for us to realize that society at large will gain much materially by treating its Harijans well, and giving them instruction in matters of hygiene and sanitation. True material welfare is not inconsistent with performance of religious obligations. Nearly 50 years' observation of the working of a religious life confirms the above observation. Indeed, it can be shown that conduct, which is inconsistent with true religion, results in earthly loss. I go a step further and contend that, if we would act correctly towards Harijans and purify our hearts of untouchability, we should find that we had taken a long stride towards the achievement of communal unity. That real removal of untouchability will have political consequences is true enough. A duty religiously performed carries with it many other important consequences. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and everything else will be added unto you", is, to my mind, a scientific truth.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 1, 1933.

43. OUR DUTY TO HARIJANS

OUR duty to Harijans does not end with giving them good houses or giving them separate wells, schools and so on. If we gave them all these and still kept them untouchables, it would only mean replacing

OUR DUTY TO HARIJANS

iron chains by golden ones; but the slave would still be a slave. Harijans must have all the amenities that we enjoy. But I go further and say, you must absorb them, you must bridge the gulf that lies to-day between them and you. The purification we are striving for is not complete till we have purged our hearts of this distinction. You and I may not be satisfied with anything less. I am pleading with you that we should get rid of this poison of untouchability all along the line, so that we would have not merely a particular class labelled as Harijans, but should all become in name and in truth Harijans—children of God. To-day, if we appeared before our Maker with this uncleanness in our hearts, He would disown us because we have ourselves become disinherited.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 12, 1934.

'Harijan' has, for me, a deeper meaning than you may imagine. The 'untouchable', to me, is compared to us, really a Harijan—a man of God, and we are *Durjan* (men of evil). For, whilst the 'untouchable' has toiled and moiled and dirtied his hands so that we may live in comfort and cleanliness, we have delighted in suppressing him. We are solely responsible for all the shortcomings and faults that we lay at the door of these 'untouchables'. It is still open to us to be Harijan ourselves, but we can only do so by heartily repenting of our sin against them.

—*Young India* : Aug. 6, 1931.

44. STARVATION OF THE SOUL

TO deprive a man of his natural liberty and to deny to him the ordinary amenities of life is worse than starving the body. It is starvation of the soul—the Dweller in the body. Harijans are a powerful illustration of this process of starvation of the soul. No amount of mere literary education or even economic betterment will restore the lost dignity of man. That restoration can only come when self-realization comes. This realization will not come without repentance on the part of the superior class. Superiority complex and inferiority complex are two faces of the same coin. Both are equally bad. Both require treatment.

—*Harijan* : Oct. 26, 1934.

There cannot be a common platform as between inferiors and superiors, or the enlightened and unenlightened, the regenerate and the unregenerate, the high-born and the low-born, the caste-man and the out-caste. My comparison may be defective, may even sound offensive. My reasoning may be unsound. But my proposition stands.

—*Harijan* : March 13, 1937.

45. CARICATURE OF THE LAW OF KARMA

IN my opinion, it is one of the greatest sins that we, Hindus, have been committing against man and God. To degrade human beings, as we have been doing in this part of the world, and then to say that they are what they are because of their past deeds, is a complete cari-

ature of the Law of *Karma*. I claim to know somewhat, from first-hand evidence, of the working of the Law of *Karma*, because practically a period of fifty years I have devoted to find out what this Law of *Karma* could be. And this much I do know that, to apply it to everybody else but ourselves, is to distort it altogether. I could show to the satisfaction of every one of you that you can never apply the Law of *Karma* as you apply it to the *Nayadis* (Harijans) and others. If we were to apply the Law of *Karma* as I have suggested, that is to say, towards ourselves, you would find the land here and elsewhere transformed. I have, therefore, come to beseech every one of you to exorcise this ghost of untouchability. If you do not, you may be sure that that ghost will eat us up.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 19, 1934.

Religion is Made to Uplift

A man's *Karma* is responsible for what he is, they say. But my *Karma* does not compel me to throw stones at a sinner. Religion is made to uplift, and not to keep a man crushed under the weight of his *Karma*. It is prostitution of the grand doctrine of *Karma* to consign a man of lowly birth to perdition. Rama felt privileged to find himself honoured by a fisherman. The Hindu religion is replete with illustrations of great men lifting their unfortunate brethren from their miseries. Will not the modern Hindus copy their own great men, and once for all rub out the blot of untouchability that so defiles Hinduism?

—*Young India* : Sept. 22, 1921.

46. HINDUISM AND UNTOUCHABILITY

MY present attempt has nothing to do with the strengthening of Hinduism. I ask you to take me at my word when I say that I am wholly indifferent whether Hindu religion is strengthened or weakened or perishes; that is to say, I have so much faith in the correctness of the position I have taken up that, if my taking up that position results in weakening Hinduism, I cannot help it and I must not care. I tell you what I want to do with Hindu religion. I want to purify it of the sin of untouchability. I want to exorcise the devil of untouchability, which has to-day distorted and disfigured Hinduism out of all recognition. I know that, if this evil can be removed root and branch, those very friends who say religion is the greatest obstacle to the progress of India, will immediately change their minds. But if it is any consolation to these friends, I tell them that, if I came to the conclusion that Hinduism sanctioned untouchability, I should denounce it. But even then I would not go so far with them as to say that religion itself is useless and that God is not God but devil. For me, the result will be that I shall lose faith in Hindus and Hinduism, but my faith in God will be strengthened. And I want to tell you why it will be strengthened. Faith is not a delicate flower which would wither under the slightest stormy weather. Faith is like the Himalaya mountains which cannot possibly change. No storm can possibly remove the Himalaya mountains from their foundations. I am daily praying for strength from God to be able to say

to God when Hindus disappoint me: 'Although Thy own creation has disappointed me, I still cling to Thee as a babe clings to the mother's breast'. And I want every one of you to cultivate that faith in God and religion. It is my conviction that all the great faiths of the world are true, are God-ordained and that they serve the purpose of God and of those who have been brought up in those surroundings and those faiths. I do not believe that the time will ever come when we shall be able to say there is only one religion in the world. In a sense, even to-day there is one fundamental religion in the world. But there is no such thing as a straight line in Nature. Religion is one tree with many branches. As branches, you may say religions are many; as tree, Religion is one.

Not a Hostile Movement

What is at the bottom of this movement for purification in Hinduism? It is not designed as a movement hostile to any religion. It is designed to bring all faiths nearer together. Do you for one moment suppose that, if *Savarna* Hindus make reparation in the terms that I have suggested, and if they forget the distinctions of high and low, they will forget those distinctions only in regard to Harijans and not in regard to others? To-day this poison of untouchability has overtaken the whole of Indian society. Harijans are not the only untouchables. They are on the extreme fringe. But all Hindus are untouchable to themselves, and all Hindus to non-Hindus. Non-Hindus have noted this fact; and

I suggest to you that our differences and quarrels to-day have their main root in this canker of untouchability. I ask you to believe me implicitly when I say that, if untouchability is removed, it must result in bringing all Indians together and, if I may say in all humility, all humanity nearer. It is not a small movement, but a big movement fraught with great consequences. Can you imagine that, if it were otherwise, as a wise man, which I consider myself to be, I would ceaselessly wander from place to place in the evening of my life to deliver a message which has the consequence of strengthening Hindus for fighting against Mussalmans, Christians, Jews and Parsis, among whom I have friends as dear as blood-brothers? I have that implicit faith in my mission that, if it succeeds—as it will succeed, it is bound to succeed—history will record it as a movement designed to knit all people in the world together, not as a hostile to one another but as parts of one whole.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 26. 1934.

47. THE WIDER MESSAGE

MY message is exceedingly simple. It is no new truth that has dawned upon me to-day. I have to the best of my ability striven to live up to it for the past fifty years. And the more I have succeeded in living up to it, the greater has been my inward joy. Nor is it for the first time that I am delivering this message to India. But because of some incidents in the recent past, it comes to the people as a new thing. My mes-

sage is simply this: that *Savarna* Hindus, who have been considering themselves superior to those whom they have called untouchables, unapproachables, invisibles, or *Avarna* Hindus, should realize that this arrogation of superiority has no sanction whatsoever in the *Shastras*. If I discovered that those scriptures, which are known as *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Smritis*, etc. clearly showed that they claimed divine authority for untouchability as I have described it to you, then nothing on this earth would hold me to Hinduism. I should throw it overboard, as I should throw overboard a rotten apple. My reason is offended and my heart is wounded at the very thought that God Himself, who has created both *Savarna* Hindus and *Avarna* Hindus, should impose this bar sinister between His children. The very thought that the *Rishis*, who gave the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and who, in every *mantra* that they pronounced, taught the unity of God, could ever conceive of any such thing as untouchability as it is practised to-day in Hinduism, must be repugnant to every intelligent person. But prejudice and superstitions die hard. They cloud the reason, befog the intellect and harden the heart. And so you find learned men defending this untouchability.

Idea Behind My Message

But you should know that behind this message there lurks also a much greater message. This monster of untouchability has invaded every form of society in India; and the idea behind this message is that there

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

—*Harijan* : Jan. 26, 1934.

48. TOWARDS BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

I DO not believe that life is divided into separate air-tight compartments. On the contrary, it is an undivided and indivisible whole; and, therefore, what is or may be good for one must be good for all. Whatever activity fails to stand that unmistakable test, is an activity that must be abjured by all who have the public weal at heart.

Having throughout my life believed in this doctrine of universal good, never have I taken up any activity—be it sectional or national—which would be detrimental to the good of humanity as a whole. And in pursuing that universal goal, I discovered years ago that untouchability, as it is practised to-day among Hindus, is a hindrance not only to the march of Hindus towards their own good, but also a hindrance to the

general good of all. He who runs may discover for himself how this untouchability has taken in its snaky coil not merely caste-Hindus, but all other communities representing different faiths in India, that is to say, Mussalmans, Christians and others. In dealing with the monster of untouchability, my own innermost desire is not that the brotherhood of Hindus only may be achieved, but it essentially is that the Brotherhood of Man—be he Hindu, Mussalman, Christian, Parsi or Jew—may be realized. For, I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.

Fundamental Unity of Man

Hence it is that I have not hesitated to ask all non-Hindus to help me with their prayer in this mission, and it is because I have a living faith in my mission, and because that faith is based on an extensive experience, that I have not hesitated to say with the greatest deliberation that, if we, Hindus, do not destroy this monster of untouchability, it will devour both Hindus and Hinduism. And when I ask you to purify your hearts of untouchability, I ask of you nothing else than this—that you should believe in the fundamental unity and equality of man. I invite you all to forget

that there are any distinctions of high and low among the children of one and the same God.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 23, 1934.

‘Touch-Me-Notism’

I believe in the truth of all religions of the world. And since my youth upward, it has been a humble but persistent effort on my part to understand the truth of all the religions of the world, and adopt and assimilate in my own thought, word and deed all that I have found to be best in those religions. The faith that I profess not only permits me to do so, but renders it obligatory for me to take the best from whatsoever source it may come. It is in that spirit that this campaign against untouchability is conceived. For, this ‘touch-me-notism’ has not been confined to Harijans, but it has affected caste against caste, and religion against religion. I, for one, shall not be satisfied until, as the result of this movement, we have arrived at heart-unity amongst all the different races and communities inhabiting this land, and it is for that reason that I have invited the co-operation of all the people living in India and even outside.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 16, 1934.

49. ‘LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY’

IT can be said that it was France that first gave the world the motto of the three significant words: ‘Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity’. But it is not given

MESSAGE OF ANTI-UNTOUCHABILITY

to all to enforce the three things in practice, and I am ashamed that Hindus have been the worst criminals in this respect. It was reserved for them to invoke the name of God for untouchability. But, after having studied the Hindu *Shastras* for a number of years to the extent that a layman could do, I have come to the definite conclusion that there is no warrant for untouchability in the Hindu *Shastras*. Historians have testified from the dawn of human wisdom to the unity of God; and the unity of all life in God was taught in the earliest hymns that the world knew—the *Rigveda*. They first taught that God was one; and all life was from Him and in Him. Untouchability that we practise to-day is the very negation of this magnificent truth.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 16, 1934.

50. MESSAGE OF ANTI-UNTOUCHABILITY

THE message of anti-untouchability is a message in which all can join if they wish. Though it means primarily that justice has to be done to a large part of humanity kept in suppression and subjection in the name of religion by caste-Hindus, finally it is an attempt to realize the Brotherhood of Man. The doctrine of Equality and Brotherhood of Man was preached in France before other peoples had realized that there was any such thing like Brotherhood of Man. That even people of France herself have not yet realized it in its fullness, is no fault of French reform. The bravest of them fought and bled for that realization.

An aspiration for which so many thousands fought and bled is an aspiration which human beings should treasure. The present attempt is essentially an appeal to every individual, and it is an appeal to his heart. It is an attempt to convert the stoniest heart, and let that heart understand that it is not through suppression but through full expression that Divinity can be realized.

—*Harijan* : March 2, 1934.

51. NOT ENOUGH

IT is not enough that caste-Hindus begin to touch Harijans. Mere touch can give me no satisfaction whatsoever. Their hearts must be moved and they must sincerely believe that it is an affront to human dignity to consider a single human being as lower than one's self. In that sense, you can easily understand why I call this movement against untouchability one for the realization of the Brotherhood of Man—not merely of Hindu man, but of man in general, no matter to what part of the world he belongs, to what race he belongs or to what faith he belongs. For caste-Hindus to change their hearts in connection with those whom they consider untouchables, is merely a stepping stone to this grand realization. I have invited the whole world to take part in this movement; and the whole world can take part in this movement by extending its sympathy to it and by studying it.

—*Harijan* : March 2, 1934.

52. ONENESS OF LIFE

MY life is one indivisible whole, and all my activities run into one another; and they all have their rise in my insatiable love of mankind. Seeking to realize oneness of life in practice, I cannot be happy if I see communities quarrelling with one another or men suppressing fellow-men. I am, therefore, glad that this Harijan movement is one for realizing the substantial oneness of man. And if I have thrown myself heart and soul in the campaign against untouchability, it is because I know that untouchability is the greatest stumbling block in this realization.

—*Harijan* : March 2, 1934.

A Stumbling Block

And remember, too, the magnificent result that we intend, or we expect, to achieve from this removal of untouchability—it is no less than the realization of the Brotherhood of Man. You cannot,—millions of caste-Hindus cannot—do reparation to several million Harijans, whom they have suppressed for centuries, without setting free a power, a force, that will envelop the whole of the human family and knit all its members together into one. And it is because I have never lost sight of this goal that I have called this movement a deeply spiritual and exclusively religious movement. And it is because I realize to the fullest extent how untouchability, as we practise it to-day in the name of religion, is a stumbling block in the realization of this brotherhood, that I have not hesitated to say that, if

we do not cleanse ourselves of this cursed untouchability, Hinduism and Hindus are bound to perish.

—*Harijan* : March 2, 1934.

53. A SIN AGAINST GOD AND MAN

UNTOUCHABILITY, as it is practised in Hinduism to-day is, in my opinion, a sin against God and man and is, therefore, like a poison slowly eating into the very vitals of Hinduism. In my opinion, it has no sanction whatsoever in the Hindu *Shastras* taken as a whole. Untouchability of a healthy kind is undoubtedly to be found in the *Shastras* and it is universal in all religions. It is a rule of sanitation. That will exist to the end of time; but untouchability, as we are observing to-day in India, is a hideous thing and wears various forms in various provinces, even in districts. It has degraded both the untouchables and the touchables. It has stunted the growth of nearly 40 million human beings. They are denied even the ordinary amenities of life. The sooner, therefore, it is ended, the better for Hinduism, the better for India and, perhaps, better for mankind in general.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 11, 1933.

My Personal Experience

I know that there are people among us who still cling to the belief that untouchability is not only a sin, but is an obligation imposed upon us by the *Shastras*. As against that, I can but give you my own personal experience based upon uniform conduct for the past fifty years, and that experience is backed by a

study of our *Shastras* such as is possible for a layman, and at that, a busy man like myself. After that prayerful study, after discussion with learned *Shastris* who believe in untouchability, I have come to the deliberate conclusion that untouchability has no warrant whatsoever in the Hindu *Shastras*. It is a sin before God and man. The sooner we get rid of this sin, the better it is for us, for the whole world.

—*Harijan* : March 2, 1934.

Atonement

In atoning for sin, he is the gainer who gives, and he the loser who withholds. A sinner feels constant remorse until he has atoned for sin, and not all the wealth of the world has power to make him happy. It is too late in the day now to explain how untouchability is a cardinal sin, fraught with the destruction of the Hindu religion. Someone might ask how religion could possibly be destroyed. Religion, indeed, could not be destroyed, but if irreligion masqueraded as religion, such sham religion was sure to die. I, therefore, pray that the impurity which has crept into Hinduism might be washed out and Hinduism saved from imminent danger. This salvation could come only from self-purification, and never from coercion.

—*Harijan* : March 9, 1934.

54. A HYDRA-HEADED MONSTER

UNTOUCHABILITY is a hydra-headed monster and has affected every branch of society. And, therefore, we have become untouchable, one to another.

Similarly, communities have become untouchable to one another, so that there is no caste or section which does not consider itself superior to another section or caste. There may be, there are, many other causes for it, but this superiority and inferiority complex is at the bottom of the communal trouble. Therefore, the implication of this campaign is that we wish to achieve the Brotherhood of Man, which is unattainable so long as we believe that untouchability has divine sanction. It is, therefore, upto the caste-Hindus to consider and make their choice. If they perpetuate untouchability, they and Hinduism die. If they kill untouchability altogether, that is the only way for them to live. I have, therefore, called this a movement of self-purification, a movement of repentance and reparation to Harijans. We have suppressed them for centuries and, in suppressing them, degraded ourselves. Let us now learn the lesson before it is too late, and root out untouchability from our hearts.

—*Harijan* : March 9, 1934.

Superiority Complex

It is my constant experience, that untouchability is vanishing from places where my comrades are to be found in large numbers. And who are my comrades? They only are my comrades who look upon the entire people of India—Muslims, Christians, Jews, etc.,—no less than Hindus, as brothers and sisters; who, while holding India dearer than life itself, do not wish ill to any other country on earth, who do not despise or hate anyone even in a dream.

A BIG STEP

who are ready to lay down their lives in the quest of Truth. Such comrades can never consider anybody as untouchable or inferior to themselves. However, I hope one will surmount the superiority complex, which is at the root, not only of untouchability, but also of communal bitterness. Removal of untouchability would go a long way in bringing about Universal Brotherhood.

—*Harijan* : March 9, 1934.

55. A BIG STEP

THE anti-untouchability movement is a big step towards Universal Brotherhood. Untouchability, believed in as a part of religion by millions of human family, is, perhaps, the greatest stumbling block in the way of the realization of the Brotherhood of Man. If, therefore, *Savarna*-Hindus voluntarily and sincerely gave up untouchability, humanity would be much nearer the realization of this goal than at any other time in history. The movement has no political aim. It is purely one of the self-purification. Hindus are one branch of the great human family. If that branch continued to suffer from the disease of untouchability, it would be better that it should wither and be cut off. If, however, it flourished through the removal of untouchability, it could not but promote the health of the whole family. Hence it is that I call it essentially a religious movement and invite the willing co-operation of the entire world for its success.

—*Harijan* : March 23, 1934.

56. UNITY OF ALL LIFE

I DO not know when untouchability crept into Hindu religion. But, after studying Hindu *Shastras* or the books that go by that name, as carefully as a layman having no axes to grind and having no preconceptions of any kind whatsoever should, I came to the conclusion that there was no warrant in the *Shastras*, considered as a whole, for untouchability as it is practised to-day. There are undoubtedly some passages—not a single passage in the *Veda*, but some passages of doubtful authenticity in the *Smritis*—which bear the interpretation that there is some kind of untouchability countenanced by them. But there is nothing whatsoever in those passages to warrant the belief that untouchability of to-day is a divine institution. There is nothing in them to enable us to identify the body of men who are to-day described as untouchables with those referred to in those passages. If untouchability persists, Hinduism and Hindus will perish. This is an effort to save the ancient faith of ours from disintegration. If you will work at it, it will be your real education. You may read books, but they cannot carry you far. Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity? What better education can there be than to go, day in and day out, to Harijan quarters and to regard Harijans as members of one human family? It would be an uplifting, ennobling study. Mine is no narrow creed. It is one of realizing the essential Brotherhood of Man. To my mind,

THE REAL UNTOUCHABLES

the message of the *Vedas* is unity of God and unity of all life in one God. How can Harijans be left out of that unity?

—*Harijan* : March 30, 1934.

A Peculiarity of Hinduism

The chief value of Hinduism lies in the actual belief that all life (not only human beings, but all sentient beings) is one, *i.e.* all life coming from the one Universal Source.

This unity of ALL life is a peculiarity of Hinduism which confines salvation not to human beings alone, but says that it is possible for all God's creatures. It may be that it is not possible, save through the human form, but that does not make man the Lord of creation. It makes him the servant of God's creation. Now when we talk of Brotherhood of Man, we stop there and feel that all other life is there for man to exploit for his own purposes. But Hinduism excludes all exploitation. There is no limit whatsoever to the measure of sacrifice that one may make in order to realize this oneness with all life.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 26, 1936.

57. THE REAL UNTOUCHABLES

IS it not shocking to regard the touch of a Mussalman or a Christian as unclean, even though he may be as truthful, God-fearing, pure, brave and self-sacrificing as any? God has created different faiths, just as He has the votaries thereof. How can I even secretly

harbour the thought that my neighbour's faith is inferior to mine, and wish that he should give up his faith and embrace mine? As a true and loyal friend; I can only wish and pray that he may live and grow perfect in his own faith. In God's house, there are many mansions and they are all equally holy. All the great religions of the world inculcate the equality and brotherhood of mankind and the virtue of toleration. The 'touch-me-not'-ism that disfigures the present-day Hinduism is a morbid growth. It only betrays a woodenness of the mind, a blind self-conceit. It is abhorrent alike to the spirit of religion and morality. The real untouchables are the impure thoughts that lurk in the mind: the lying, the covetousness and the deceit which mar our daily dealings. It is these whose contact is contaminating and ought to be shunned.

—*Harijan* : April 20, 1934.

Ancient Orthodox Prayer

One of the verses we sing paraphrased means this:

*"O God, I desire no earthly riches, nor heaven, nor even
salvation.
I desire the alleviation of the sufferings of all Thy
creatures."*

This is not a verse of modern coinage. It is an ancient orthodox prayer. Do you think that you can truthfully utter that prayer from day to day and yet treat crores of fellow-beings as untouchables, whose very life is crushed out of them and who are treated as less than domestic cattle? You have, therefore, to choose between untouchability and the prayer which is

A GREAT BLOT ON HINDUISM

enjoined upon every good Hindu. I suggest that you choose the prayer and banish untouchability from your hearts. Regard untouchability as a heinous sin. But whilst it is sinful to regard a single human being as an untouchable, I can introduce you to some untouchables whom you have to shun at any cost, and these are the evil thoughts which make us do all sorts of evil things from day to day. They need to be banished. If, therefore, you will take my advice, I would ask you every day to pray that God may give you strength to remove the untouchability of human beings from your breasts, and give you the wisdom to regard every evil thought as an untouchable and to give you strength to exorcise it.

—*Harijan* : April 27, 1934.

58. A GREAT BLOT ON HINDUISM

UNTOUCHABILITY is a great blot on Hinduism, and if we do not efface it in time, we shall ourselves be effaced from the face of the earth. We are guilty of untouchability as soon as we make distinctions between man and man and have grades of high and low. It is a common thing for almost all castes to consider themselves superior to some other castes and to treat Mussalmans, Christians and others as untouchability in some way or other. Removal of untouchability implies that we shall get rid of all this high-and-lowness and accord equal treatment to all human beings as children of one and the same God, and thus have a real Brotherhood of Man.

—*Harijan* : April 27, 1934.

The Root Cause

The removal of untouchability means complete removal of all distinctions of high and low, not only as to Harijans, but also among caste-Hindus themselves. That is sure to lead to heart-unity among Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others, for the political causes for the disunion are superficial. The root cause is the distinction of high and low, *i.e.*, untouchability. We must, in the language of the *Gita*, learn to treat the *Brahmin* and the *Bhangi* with equal regard. No human being could be unclean by birth. If we would search for unclean things, we have only to dive into our own minds, where we will find a multitude of evil thoughts worthy of being treated as outcasts. Bathing is all very well, but even buffaloes have long daily baths. He only is pure who walks in the fear of God and serves His creatures.

--*Harijan* : May 4, 1934.

59. A PROBLEM OF LIFE AND DEATH

SO far as I am concerned with the untouchability question, it is one of life and death for Hinduism. As I have said repeatedly, if untouchability lives Hinduism perishes, and even India perishes; but if untouchability is eradicated from the Hindu heart, root and branch, then Hinduism has a definite message for the world. I have said the first thing to hundreds of audiences, but not the latter part. Now, that is the utterance of a man who accepts Truth as God. It is, therefore, no exaggeration. If untouchability is an inte-

gral part of Hinduism, the latter is a spent bullet. But untouchability is a hideous untruth. My motive in launching the untouchability campaign is clear. What I am aiming at is not every Hindu touching an 'untouchable', but every touchable Hindu driving untouchability from his heart, going through a complete change of heart. Interdining or intermarrying is not the point. I may not dine with you, but I ought not to harbour the feeling that if I dined with you I should be polluted. If I was a woman to be married, I should not say: 'I cannot marry a man because he is an untouchable.' I am making this clear because in the programme of the Harijan Sevak Sangh we say we don't ask the orthodox Hindus to interdine or intermarry with the 'untouchables'. Many of us have no scruples about interdining or intermarriage. That untouchability is an ancient custom I admit, but there are many such things intertwined with Hinduism because it is an ancient religion, even a prehistoric religion. Instead of being the dead faith that it threatens to be, I want it to be a living faith, so that it may exist side by side with other religions of the world.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 19, 1936.

60. INTERDINING AND INTERMARRIAGE

I DO not regard interdining and intermarriage as essential to the removal of untouchability. I believe in *Varnashrama Dharma*. But I eat with *Bhangis*. I do not know whether I am a *Sannyasi*, for I seriously doubt whether in this *Kaliyuga* it is at

all possible for anyone to fulfil the conditions prescribed for a *Sannyasi*. But I am moving deliberately in the direction of *Sannyasa*. It is, therefore, not only not necessary for me to observe these restrictions, but their observance may be even harmful for me. As regards the question of intermarriage, it does not arise in cases like mine. Sufficient for me to say that my scheme does not include intermarriage.

Let me tell you that in my own clan all the members do not interdine. In certain cases, among our Vaishnava families, they do not use each other's utensils or even cook food on fire fetched from others' kitchens. You may call this practice superstitious, but I do not regard it as such. It certainly does no harm to Hinduism. In my *Ashram*, Dudhabhai, one of the 'untouchable' inmates, dines with the rest without any distinction. But I do not recommend anybody outside the *Ashram* to follow this example. Again, you know the esteem in which I hold Malaviyaji.* I would wash his feet. But he would not take food touched by me. Am I to resent it as a mark of contempt? Certainly not, because I know that no contempt is meant.

Maryada Dharma

The religion to which I belong prescribes for our observance *Maryada Dharma*. The *Rishis* of old carried on exhaustive researches through meditation and, as a result of the researches, they discovered some

* Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya.

great truths, such as have no parallel perhaps in any other religion. One of these was that they regarded certain kinds of foods as injurious for the spiritual well-being of man. So, they interdicted their use. Now, suppose someone had to travel abroad and live among strange people with different customs and standards as regards their diet. Knowing as they did how compelling sometimes the force of social customs of the people among whom men lived was, they promulgated *Muryada Dharma* to help one in such emergencies.

Though, however, I believe in *Maryada Dharma*, I do not regard it as an essential part of Hinduism. I can even conceive a time when these restrictions might be abolished with impunity. But the reform contemplated in the untouchability movement does not obliterate the restriction as to interdining and intermarrying. I cannot recommend wholesale abolition of these restrictions to the public, even at the risk of being charged with hypocrisy and inconsistency. For instance, I let my son dine freely in Mussalman households because I believe he can take sufficient care as to what to take and what not to take. I myself have no scruples in taking my food in Mussalman households because I have my own strict rules about my diet.

—*Young India* : Jan. 22, 1925.

61. NOT A NECESSARY REFORM

PERSONALLY, I am not sure that interdining is a necessary reform. At the same time, I recognize the tendency towards breaking down the re-

striction altogether. I can find reasons for and against the restriction. I would not force the pace. I do not regard it as a sin for a person not to dine with another, nor do I regard it as sinful if one advocates and practises interdining. I should, however, resist the attempt to break down the restriction in disregard of the feelings of others. On the contrary, I would respect their scruples in the matter.

Interdining, to me, is a social question. Behind the present untouchability, there is undoubtedly and necessarily contempt for a portion of one's species. It is a canker that is eating into the vitals of society. It is a denial of the rights of man. It does not stand on a par with interdining. And I would strongly urge social reformers not to mix the two. If they do, they would injure the sacred cause of 'the untouchables and unapproachables'.

—*Young India* : March 19, 1925.

62. SELF-IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS

I RULE out interdining as the means of promoting goodwill. Whilst I do not myself observe restrictions and take food that I do not regard as forbidden at the hands of anyone so long as it is cleanly dressed, I respect the scruples of those who observe the restrictions. Nor do I pat myself on the back for my 'liberal' practice as against the others' 'narrowness'. I may be narrow and selfish in spite of my apparently liberal practice, and my friend may be liberal and unselfish notwithstanding his apparently narrow practice. Merit

SELF-IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS

or demerit lies in the motive. Insistence upon interdining as part of the programme of promotion of fellowship, in my opinion, retards the growth of goodwill by raising false issues and even false hope. What I am trying to remove is the idea of pollution and superiority. These self-imposed restrictions have a sanitary as also a spiritual value. But non-observance no more dooms a man to perdition than its observance raises him to the seventh heaven. A man who observes the dining restrictions in a most punctilious manner may be a veritable blackguard fit to be shunned by society, and a cosmopolitan omnivorous man may be one ever walking in the fear of God whose society it would be a privilege to cultivate.

—*Young India* : April 30, 1925.

Interdining and intercaste marriage are in no way essential for the promotion of the spirit of brotherhood or for the removal of untouchability. At the same time, a super-imposed restriction would undoubtedly stunt the growth of any society.

—*Harijan* : April 29, 1933.

Matters of Individual Concern

Q. Are interdining and intermarriage necessary for the removal of untouchability?

A. My answer is: No and yes. 'No', because it is no part of the programme of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. Generally, too, marrying and dining are matters of individual concern. No one has a right to ask

another to choose a girl for wife or to dine with anybody against his will. But my answer is at the same time 'Yes', because if a person refuses to take food touched by another person on the ground of untouchability or inferiority, he is observing untouchability. In other words, untouchability cannot constitute any ground for restraint on interdining or marriage.

—*Harijan* : March 23, 1934.

Q. Can the members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh refuse to interdine with 'untouchables'? Have your views on this question undergone any change?

A. At one time, I did say that interdining was not an essential part of the campaign for the removal of untouchability. Personally, I was for it. To-day, I encourage it. In fact, to-day I even go further.

—*Harijan* : July 28, 1946.

63. INTERCASTE MARRIAGES

IF an educated Harijan girl marries a caste-Hindu, the couple ought to devote themselves to the service of Harijans. Self-indulgence can never be the object of such a marriage. That will be improper. I can never encourage it. It is possible that a marriage, entered into with the best of intentions, turns out to be a failure. No one can prevent such mishaps. Even if one Harijan girl marries a caste-Hindu with a high character, it will do good to both the Harijans and caste-Hindus. They will set up a good precedent and, if the Harijan girl is really worthy, she will spread

her fragrance far and wide and encourage others to copy her example. Society will cease to be scared by such marriages. They will see for themselves that there is nothing wrong in them. If children born of such a union turn out to be good, they will further help to remove untouchability. Every reform moves at the proverbial snail's pace. To be dissatisfied with this slowness of progress, betrays ignorance of the way in which reform works.

It is certainly desirable that caste-Hindu girls should select Harijan husbands. I hesitate to say that it is better. That would imply that women are inferior to men. I know that such inferiority complex is there to-day. For this reason, I would agree that at present the marriage of a caste-Hindu girl to a Harijan is better than that of a Harijan girl to a caste-Hindu. If I had my way, I would persuade all caste-Hindu girls coming under my influence to select Harijan husbands. That it is most difficult, I know from experience. Old prejudices are difficult to shed. One cannot afford to laugh at such prejudices either. They have to be overcome with patience. And if a girl imagines that her duty ends by marrying a Harijan and falls a prey to the temptation of self-indulgence after marriage, the last state would be worse than the first. The final test of every marriage is how far it develops the spirit of service in the parties. Every mixed marriage will tend, in varying degrees, to remove the stigma attached to such marriages. Finally, there will be only one caste, known by the beautiful name *Bhangi*, that is to say,

the reformer or remover of all dirt. Let us all pray that such a happy day will dawn soon.

—*Harijan* : July 7, 1946.

64. TO THE WOMEN

YOU have asked me how you can serve the Harijans. I want you, above everything else, to root out untouchability from your hearts and serve the Harijan boys and girls as you would serve your own children. You should love them as your own relatives, your own brothers and sisters, children of the same Mother India. I have worshipped woman as the living embodiment of the spirit of service and sacrifice. Man can never be your equal in the spirit of selfless service with which Nature has endowed you. Woman has a compassionate heart which melts at the sight of suffering. If, then, the sufferings of Harijans move you and you give up untouchability and, with it, the distinctions of high and low, Hinduism will be purified and Hindu society will take a great stride towards spiritual progress. It will ultimately mean the well-being of the whole of India, *i.e.*, of 35 crores of human beings. And the wonderful purificatory process that one-fifth of the human race will undergo, cannot but have a healthy reaction on the whole of humanity. This movement is fraught with such far-reaching results. This is a big movement—perhaps the biggest going—of self-purification. I expect you to contribute your full share to it.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 8, 1933.

TO THE WOMEN

Women's Share

If the Hindu heart is to be cured of the taint of untouchability, women must do the lion's share of the work. It is a movement of purification, in which women are any day more efficient than men, for women have been the guardians of religion all the world over, owing to their superior capacity for renunciation and penance. I hope, therefore, that women would remain in the forefront of the Harijan movement and fulfil all my expectations. I do not think there is a single mother who discriminates between her children. If human beings made of clay are rarely guilty of such discrimination, how could God, whose progeny all of us are, classify one class of men as touchable and another as untouchable? I am certain that there is no warrant in the *Shastras* for untouchability. A religious book can never teach irreligion. *Advaita* (oneness) is the fundamental principle of the *Vedas*, which rules out all distinctions between man and man. I, therefore, hope you will not consider anybody as untouchable and will look upon Harijans as your blood brothers and sisters. To consider anyone as inferior to oneself is a heinous sin, and I pray to God that you will not fall victims to it.

—*Harijan* : March 9, 1934.

Women Hold the Key Position

Women are superior to men in faith and love, and my battle would be more than half won if I could enlist your whole-hearted support. I hope that the wo-

men would rise to the occasion. Women hold the key position in society and it would be a tragedy if they blocked the path of reform.

Untouchability has its origin not in religion, but in mere pride of race and the tendency of the strong to keep down the weak. It has persisted so long because Harijans are cut off from all contact and consigned to the worst places. If, however, they are allowed freely to mix with all classes of society and to practise all professions on a footing of equality, we would, in a few years, be surprised that they should ever have been looked down upon.

The reformer's is an uphill task, as we have imported religion into untouchability. Sacrifice is essential; but service is impossible without sacrifice, and no sacrifice could be too great to be offered in order to wipe out the deep and long-standing stain of untouchability.

—*Harijan* : June 29, 1934.

Defenders of The Faith

Women have all the world over been defenders of the faith, not by making eloquent speeches or writing fine books about it, but by putting it into practice. Speeches or books are useful only in so far as the speaker or the writer draws upon his own spiritual experiences. Woman easily surpasses man in the qualities of patience and renunciation. My success would, therefore, be assured, if I could win women over to my view of the sinfulness of untouchability. On the other

THE CRIME OF CASTE

hand, men would feel perfectly helpless, if women took it into their heads to resist any attempt at reform.

—*Harijan* : July 13, 1934.

Mercy is the Root of Religion

Everyone would agree that we are subject to the Law of Love. As Tulsidas put it, mercy is the root of religion. Untouchability must be abolished, if only because it is opposed to the Law of Love and to the spirit of mercy. How can we swear by love and at the same time consign a large class of our fellow-men to insanitary surroundings, prevent them from drawing water at wells, compel them to drink water spoilt by cattle and assault them if they tried to assert their common right over public wells? So also, if quite a number of dirty *Savarna* children could attend the public schools with impunity, is it right to exclude Harijans even when they are clean? To consider others as lower than ourselves is a species of pride, which Tulsidas called the root of sin, and pride goes before destruction.

—*Harijan* : July 20, 1934.

65. THE CRIME OF CASTE

A SIMPLE cleanly dressed *Panchama* entered a temple in a perfectly devotional spirit without the slightest intention of hurting anybody's feeling or insulting any religion. He had been in the habit of paying his respects at this temple every year though he did not enter it. But last year in his ecstatic mood he

forgot himself and entered the temple. The priest in charge could not distinguish him from the others and, therefore, accepted his offering. But when he regained self-possession, he was terrified to find himself in a prohibited place and ran away from the temple. But some who knew him caught him and handed him to the police. The temple authorities, when they discovered the crime, had the temple duly purified. Then followed a trial. A Hindu Magistrate convicted him and imposed a fine of Rs. 75 or one month's rigorous imprisonment for insulting his own religion! An appeal was filed. There was an elaborate argument over it. Judgement had to be reserved! And when conviction was set aside, it was not because the court held that the poor *Panchama* had a right to enter the temple, but because the prosecution in the lower court had forgotten to prove the insult. This is no triumph of justice or truth or religion or morality.

The only consolation to be derived from the successful appeal is that the *Panchama* will not have to suffer imprisonment for having in his zeal for worship forgotten that he was a prohibited entrant. If, however, he or his fellow-*Panchamas* again dare to enter the temple, it is highly probable that they would be severely punished if they are not lynched by those who look down upon them with contempt.

It is a curious situation. We resent, and properly, the treatment meted out to our countrymen in South Africa. We are impatient to establish *Swaraj*. But we Hindus refuse to see the incongruity in treating a

fifth of our own co-religionists as worse than dogs. For, dogs are not untouchables. Some of us now-a-days even keep them as drawing-room pets.

Much has no doubt been done to remove this evil. But it is all too little so long as criminal prosecutions for temple entry are possible and so long as the suppressed classes continue to be denied the right of entering temples, using public wells, and sending their children freely to national schools. We must yield to them the same rights as we would have the Europeans concede to our countrymen in South Africa.

It is to be wished that every educated Hindu will constitute himself the 'untouchable's' friend and regard it his duty to free him from the tyranny of custom masquerading under the name of religion. Not the entry of a *Panchama* into a temple but the brand of prohibition against him is an insult to religion and humanity.

—*Young India* : Jan. 14, 1926.

Fanatical Obstinacy

It is simple fanatical obstinacy to persist in persecuting men in the sacred name of religion. It is the persecutors who are unknowingly defiling their own religion by keeping out of public temples men who are at least as honourable as they claim to be themselves, and are willing to abide by all the ceremonial rules observable by Hindus in general on such occasions. More than that no man has any right to impose or expect. The heart of man only God knows. An

ill-dressed *Panchama* may have a much cleaner heart than a meticulously dressed high-caste Hindu.

—*Young India* : March 11, 1926.

66. TEMPLES AND HINDUS

Q. Why do you want temple entry for Harijans? Are not temples the lowest thing in Hinduism?

A. I do not think so for one moment. Temples are to Hindus what churches are to Christians. In my opinion, we are all idolaters; that in Hinduism we have images of stone or metal inside temples makes to me no difference. Thousands of Hindus who visit temples in simple faith derive precisely the same spiritual benefit that Christians visiting churches in simple faith do. Deprive a Hindu of his temple, and you deprive him of the thing he generally prizes most in life. That superstition and even evil have grown round many Hindu temples is but too true. That, however, is an argument for temple reform, not for lowering their value for Harijans or any Hindu. It is my certain conviction that temples are an integral part of Hinduism.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 11, 1933.

67. APPROACH IN FAITH

THESSE temples are so many bridges between the Unseen, Invisible and Indefinable God and ourselves who are infinitesimal drops in the Infinite Ocean. We, the human family, are not all philosophers. We are of the earth very earthy, and we are not satisfied

TEMPLE ENTRY

with contemplating the Invisible God. Somehow or other, we want something which we can touch, something which we can see, something before which we can kneel down. It does not matter whether it is a book, or an empty stone building, or a stone building inhabited by numerous figures. A book will satisfy some, an empty building will satisfy some others, and many others will not be satisfied unless they see something inhabiting these empty buildings. Then, I ask you to approach these temples not as if they represented a body of superstitions. If you will approach these temples with faith in them, you will know each time you visit them you will come away from them purified, and with your faith more and more in the living God.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 23, 1937.

68. TEMPLE ENTRY

IT is said that the Harijans themselves do not want temple entry and that they want only betterment of their economic and political condition. The reformer, too, wants the latter, but he believes that this betterment will be much quicker brought about, if religious equality is attained. The reformer denies that the Harijans do not want temple entry. But it may be that they are so disgusted with caste-Hindus and Hindu religion itself as to want nothing from them. They may in sullen discontent choose to remain outside the religious pale. Any penance on the part of caste-Hindus may be too late.

Nevertheless, the caste-Hindus who recognize that untouchability is a blot on Hinduism have to atone for the sin of untouchability. Whether, therefore, Harijans desire temple entry or not, caste-Hindus have to open their temples to Harijans, precisely on the same terms as the other Hindus. Temple entry is the one spiritual act that would constitute the message of freedom to the untouchables, and assure them that they are not outcastes before God.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 11, 1933.

69. ACID TEST OF HINDUISM

NOTHING will strike the imagination of Hindu mass mind, including the Harijans, as the throwing open of the public temples to them precisely on the same terms as to caste-Hindus. After all, temples play a most important part in the life of the masses, and I, who have been trying all my life to identify myself with the illiterate and the downtrodden, cannot be satisfied until all the temples are open to the outcastes of Hindu humanity. This does not mean that I belittle in any shape or form other disabilities under which they are now belabouring. Only I feel that the evil is so deep-rooted that one must not make a choice between different disabilities, but must not tackle them all at once.

There are many thousands of people like me who cling to Hinduism because they believe that there is in it the amplest scope for mental, moral and spiritual

ARE TEMPLES NECESSARY?

expansion. This bar sinister, put upon nearly forty million human beings, is a standing demonstration against that claim. Men like me feel that untouchability is no integral part of Hinduism, it is an excrescence. This campaign, therefore, in my opinion, is the acid test of what I have claimed for Hinduism. Hinduism dies if untouchability lives, and untouchability has to die if Hinduism is to live.

—*Mahatma* : Vol. III : P. 224.

70. ARE TEMPLES NECESSARY?

SOME priests are bad. Temples, churches and mosques very often show corruption, more often deterioration. Nevertheless, it would be impossible to prove that all priests are bad or have been bad and that all churches, temples and mosques are hot-beds of corruption and superstition. Nor does the argument take note of this fundamental fact that no Faith has done without a habitation; and I go further that in the very nature of things it cannot exist so long as man remains as he is constituted. His very body has been rightly called the temple of the Holy Ghost, though innumerable such temples belie fact and are hot-beds of corruption used for dissoluteness. And I presume that it will be accepted as a conclusive answer to a sweeping suggestion that all bodies should be destroyed for the corruption of many, if it can be shown, as it can be, that there are some bodies which are proper temples of the Holy Ghost. The cause for the corruption of many bodies will have to be sought else-

where. Temples of stone and mortar are nothing else than a natural extension of these human temples and though they were in their conception undoubtedly habitations of God like human temples, they have been subject to the same law of decay as the latter.

I know of no religion or sect that has done or is doing without its house of God, variously described as a temple, mosque, church, synagogue or *agiari*. Nor is it certain that any of the great reformers, including Jesus, destroyed or discarded temples altogether. All of them sought to banish corruption, from temples as well as from society. Some of them, if not all, appear to have preached from temples. I have ceased to visit temples for years, but I do not regard myself on that account as a better person than before. My mother never missed going to the temple when she was in a fit state to go there. Probably her faith was far greater than mine, though I do not visit temples. There are millions whose faith is sustained through these temples, churches and mosques. They are not all blind followers of a superstition, nor are they fanatics. Superstition and fanaticism are not their monopoly. These vices have their root in our hearts and minds.

My advocacy of temple entry I hold to be perfectly consistent with the declaration which I often made in Europe that Truth is God. It is that belief which makes it possible, at the risk of losing friendships, popularity and prestige, to advocate temple

TEMPLE WORSHIP

entry for Harijans. The Truth that I know, or I feel I know, demands that advocacy from me. Hinduism loses its right to make a universal appeal, if it closes its temples to the Harijans.

That temples and temple worship are in need of radical reform must be admitted. But all reform without temple entry will be to tamper with the disease. To reject the necessity of temples is to reject the necessity of God, religion and earthly existence.

—*Harijan* : March 11, 1933.

71. TEMPLE WORSHIP

MY memory revives the scenes of my childhood when I used daily to visit the *Ramji Mandir* adjacent to my ancestral home. My *Rama* then resided there. He saved me from many fears and sins. It was no superstition for me. The custodian of the idol may have been a bad man. I know nothing against him. Misdeeds might have gone on in the temple. Again, I know nothing of them. Therefore, they would not affect me. What was and is true of me, is true of millions of Hindus. I want my Harijan brother, if he wishes, to share this temple worship with the millions of his co-religionists the so-called caste men. It is the latter's duty to throw open their temples to their Harijan brethren. Temple worship supplies the felt spiritual want of the human race. It admits of reform. But it will live as long as man lives.

—*Harijan* : March 18, 1933.

72. AN IMPATIENT WORKER

AN earnest but impatient worker has been trying to have temples and public places thrown open to Harijans. He had some success but nothing to be proud of. In his impatience, therefore, he writes:—

“It is no use waiting for these orthodox men to make a beginning. They will never move unless compelled to do so. Drastic steps are required to wipe off untouchability. Appeals and entreaties have produced no effect, and to lose more time on these will, in my humble opinion, be sheer waste of valuable time.”

Nevertheless, I fully agree with the correspondent that ‘most drastic steps are required to wipe off untouchability’. But these steps have to be taken against ourselves. The orthodox people sincerely believe that untouchability, as they practise it, is enjoined by the *Shastras* and that great evil will befall them and Hinduism if it was removed. How is one to cope with this belief? It is clear that they will never change their belief by being compelled to admit Harijans to their temples. What is required is not so much the entry of Harijans to the temples as the conversion of the orthodox to the belief that it is wrong to prevent Harijans from entering the temples. This conversion can only be brought about by an appeal to their hearts, *i.e.*, by evoking the best that is in them. Such an appeal can be made by the appellants’ prayers, fasting and other suffering in their own persons; in other words, by their ever increasing purity. It has never yet been known to fail. For, it is its own end. The reformer must have consciousness of the truth of his cause. He will not

then be impatient with the opponent, he will be impatient with himself. He must be prepared even to fast unto death. Not every one has the right or the capacity to do so. God is most exacting. He exacts humility from His votaries. Even fasts may take the form of coercion. But there is nothing in the world that in human hands does not lend itself to abuse. The human being is a mixture of good and evil, Jekyll and Hyde. But there is the least likelihood of abuse when it is a matter of self-suffering.

—*Harijan* : April 15, 1933.

73. THE WRONG WAY

THE following extracts from the letter of a professor, who claims to be a *Sanatanist*, will be read with interest.—

“I am an orthodox *Sanatanist Brahmin*. Up till now, I was also an opponent of temple-entry by Harijans, but my inner voice to-day, all of a sudden, spoke to me that, unless the so-called untouchables are given the right of having *darshan* of *Patitapawan Bhagwan* in temples, Hinduism is doomed. Bitter experiences of past months have compelled me to revolutionise my views now. But, in order to persuade orthodox *Sanatanists* to agree with me, I request you with all the emphasis at my command to accept a condition that only those Harijans may be freely allowed to enter a temple who have taken a solemn vow to bathe daily, to wear clean clothes, and to discard beef and carrion. Poor *Sanatanists* are also not to be blamed. It is these unclean habits that are really responsible for the practice of untouchability itself. Harijans are themselves to be blamed to a great extent for the disabilities under which they are groaning. To ask *Sanatanists* to allow Harijans to enter temples without, at the same time, rebuking them for their evil habits is, I fear, tantamount to putting a premium on them (habits).”

Whilst I appreciate the conversion of the writer on the temple entry question, I cannot help saying

that the condition he seeks to impose upon the Harijans will frustrate the very end he has in view. He forgets that caste-Hindus are responsible for the present condition of the Harijans. We have, therefore, to receive them as they are and have faith that our contact and love will, if we are true, make them shed all those habits that may be repugnant to decent society. To blame the Harijans for their present condition is like a slave holder blaming his slave for the misery and squalor the latter may be living in. We would ridicule the slave holder, perhaps even accuse him of insincerity, if he made the removal of squalor by the slave as a condition precedent to the grant of freedom. It should also be borne in mind that the Harijans will enter temples subject to the same condition that is applicable to the rest of Hindus. Nature has not made of Harijans a separate species distinguished from caste-Hindus by definite unmistakable signs. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Harijans enter temples without being detected. Only Hindus can claim no merit for the undetected entry of the so-called State-made untouchables into temples. What is now claimed is that caste-Hindus should seek merit, in other words, purify themselves, by deliberately banishing untouchability from their midst as a sin. I cannot repeat too often that by untouchability I mean the thing as it is practised to-day. Let the professor and those who think like him remember that the reform, the anti-untouchability campaign stands for, is no mere makeshift for placating Harijans. It stands for a funda-

THROWING OPEN OF TEMPLES

mental change in Hindu practice, it stands for the total abolition of the practice of high-and-lowness that has crept into Hinduism in spite of its lofty and unequivocal declaration that all life is one and that differentiation is *Maya*, is false. Practice of equal treatment of all human beings should be the least direct outcome of that belief not reserved for *Sanyasis* but the ordinary man in his ordinary dealings with fellow-men.

—*Harijan* : July 15, 1933.

74. THROWING OPEN OF TEMPLES

THE economic and educational uplift is no doubt an essential part of true repentance by caste-Hindus. It is a test of the sincerity of their professions. But the uplift will not be complete without the throwing open of temples. The throwing open of temples will be an admission of the religious equality of Harijans. It will be the surest sign of their ceasing to be the out-castes of Hinduism, which they are to-day.

It is beside the point that tens of thousands of Harijans do not want to enter temples. If it were properly probed, the fact would be found to be quite otherwise. Thousands of Harijans do want to enter temples. Only they have been so accustomed to the prohibition that the very hope of entering temples has dried up in them. They believe that admission to temples on a par with the other Hindus is an impossibility.

But whether Harijans desire the consolation of temple entry or not, whether, if temples are thrown open to them, they will make use of them or not, caste-Hindus have to perform their simple duty. They have to open their temples for Harijans to offer worship in, precisely on the same terms as for themselves. A debtor is not absolved from the duty of payment because his creditor does not care for the payment, or has forgotten the debt altogether.

—*Harijan* : Sept. 2, 1933.

A Matter of Sheer Justice

It is my firm belief that caste-Hindus will not have fulfilled their obligations till they have opened all their temples to Harijans. It is immaterial to me whether Harijans come to worship in those temples or not. It is a matter of sheer justice and penance for caste-Hindus. It is repugnant to my sense of justice that Harijans should be excluded from places of worship which are open to other Hindus. I would not consider untouchability as having been eradicated, unless and until the bar against Harijans' entry into temples is removed altogether.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 22, 1933.

On the Same Terms

And it is my settled conviction, based upon an unbroken experience extending over a period of nearly fifty years, that untouchability, as we practise it to-day, has absolutely no warrant whatsoever in the Hindu *Shastras*. I claim that Harijans have precisely the same

common rights of worship, of use of public institutions and in all other walks of life that the tallest of Hindus enjoy in common with the rest of Hindu mankind. And, therefore, I have not the shadow of a doubt that caste-Hindus will not have performed their elementary duties by Harijans until they have thrown open the gates of Guruvayur and such ancient temples to the Harijans, precisely on the same terms on which they are open to other Hindus.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 26, 1934.

75. WHO IS A SANATANIST?

सत्यं दमस्तपः शीघ्रं संतोषो ह्यीः क्षमार्जवम् ।

ज्ञानं शमो दया ध्यानमेष धर्मः सनातनः ॥

अद्रोहः सर्वभूतेषु कर्मणा मनसा गिरा ।

अनुग्रहश्च दानं च सतां धर्मः सनातनः ॥

A SANATANIST is one who follows the *Sanatan Dharma*. According to *Mahabharata*, it means observance of *Ahimsa*, *Satya*, non-stealing, cleanliness and self-restraint. As I have been endeavouring to follow these to the best of my ability, I have not hesitated to describe myself as a *Sanatanist*.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 23, 1939.

I have always claimed to be a *Sanatanist*, for the simple reason that from my youth up I have endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to live up to the *Shastras* as I have understood them; and as such I feel it is the duty of a *Sanatanist* to do repentance in connection with untouchability, to purify himself and to get

rid of this taint. It is his bounden duty to admit Harijans to the same rights and privileges as he himself possesses. He may not be satisfied till he has endeavoured his best for temple-entry for Harijans on the same terms on which he enjoys it.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 23, 1934.

76. TREASURE-CHESTS OF SPIRITUAL WEALTH

IT is a matter of choice for the Harijans to visit or not to visit them. *Savarna* Hindus have to lift the bar against Harijans. For those millions who regard temples as treasure-chests of spiritual wealth, they are living realities which they hold dear as life itself. If they are truly repentant towards Harijans, they must share these treasures with the latter. No hole and corner opening can do any good whatsoever to Hinduism. To be of spiritual or any value at all, the opening has to be performed with due publicity, solemnity and the willing consent of the existing temple-goers, and not of such self-styled reformers as have no faith or interest in temples and for whom temples may even be a superstition. For, without temples being freely open to Harijans, untouchability could not be said to have been removed root and branch.

—*Harijan* : March 16, 1934.

The Seed Has Been Sown

OF course, there is no abolition of untouchability till every public temple is open to every Hindu precisely on the same terms as to the other Hindus. A

common place of worship is the surest test of a common faith. No wonder, all other efforts appear as insincere to Harijans. But they are not necessarily insincere because they appear so. There are hundreds of workers whose efforts to remove the blot of untouchability are not any the less sincere because they are unable to-day to have every temple flung open to Harijans. The seed has been sown, never to die. It is bound to bear fruit in its own time. Seeds of hardy trees take long to sprout. Nonetheless, they are growing every minute. So is the seed of temple entry growing. The reformers will not rest till every public temple is open to Harijans. All ameliorative measures are steps in the direction of temple entry.

—*Harijan* : March 22, 1935.

Spiritual Hospitals

It would not do to say that sinful people could not be allowed to enter temples. Temples are like spiritual hospitals, and the sinful, who are spiritually diseased, have the first right to be ministered unto by them. Temples are for sinners, not for saints. And who is to judge where no man is without sin? We declare every day in our prayers: पापोऽहं पापकर्माहम् । (I am sinful, I am a doer of sinful deeds). So, if the temples are intended only for the sinless, we will have to bar their doors in the face of all mankind.

—*Harijan* : March 18, 1934.

77. THE ESSENCE OF HINDUISM

IN the midst of my struggle against untouchability, I have been asked as to the essence of Hinduism. I have fixed upon one *Mantra* that I am going to recite to you, as containing the whole essence of Hinduism. Many of you, I think, know the *Ishopanishad*. I read it years ago with translation and commentary. I learnt it by heart in Yeravda Jail. But it did not then captivate me, as it has done during the past few months, and I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the *Upanishads* and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse of the *Ishopanishad* were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever.

ईशवास्यमदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

This verse, when translated, would read as follows:

“God the Ruler pervades all there is in this Universe. Therefore, renounce and dedicate all to Him and then enjoy or use the portion that may fall to thy lot. Never covet anybody’s possessions.”

What more can a man in the street want to learn than this that the one God and Creator and Master of all that lives, pervades the Universe?

If all that there is in the Universe is pervaded by God, that is to say, if the *Brahmin* and the *Bhangi*, the learned man and the scavenger, the *Ezhava* and the *Pariah*, no matter what caste they belong to—if all

DUTY OF CASTE-HINDUS

these are pervaded by Lord God, in the light of this *Mantra*, there is none that is high and none that is low, all are absolutely equal, equal because all are the creatures of that Creator. And this is not a philosophical thing to be dished out to *Brahmins* or *Kshatriyas*, but it enunciates an eternal truth which admits of no reduction, no palliation. Therefore, we are all creatures and servants of one God. And if that is so, how can anyone dare to arrogate superiority to himself or herself over any other human being? I tell you, therefore, that if this *Mantra* holds good, if there is any man or woman who believes that the temples are defiled by those called *Avarnas*, that person, I declare, would be guilty of a grave sin.

I would like the *Mantra* I have recited to be enshrined in the hearts of all our men and women and children; and if this contains, as I hold, the essence of Hinduism, it should be inscribed on the portals of every temple. Don't you then think that we should be belying that *Mantra* at every step, if we excluded anyone from those temples?

—*Harijan* : Jan. 30, 1937.

78. DUTY OF CASTE-HINDUS

UNTOUCHABILITY is a blot upon Hinduism and must be removed at any cost. Untouchability is a poison which, if we do not get rid of it in time, will destroy Hinduism.

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

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

A Mockery

Untouchability is a phenomenon which is peculiar to Hinduism only and it has got no warrant either

DUTY OF CASTE-HINDUS

in reason or in *Shastras*, and what little I have studied of the *Shastras* and what I have been told by people who have made a deeper study of them, shows that there is no warrant for untouchability by birth in Hinduism.

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

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

Take Harijans to Temples

You will begin by taking the Harijans along with you to the temple, if you are in the habit of going to a temple. But if you discover that you will not be allowed into the temple along with your Harijan companions, then if you have the living belief that I have that untouchability is wrong, you will shun that temple as you shun a scorpion or fire. You will then believe with me that such a temple is not inhabited by God. I will take, by way of illustration, the greatest temple

all over the world, viz., Kashi Vishwanath in Benares. The Lord who is supposed to reside there is known as the Lord of the Universe. And yet, in the very name of that Vishwanath, the *Savarna* Hindus have to-day the impudence to say to the Harijan: 'You shall not come to this Temple'!

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

Purify Your Hearts

I become impatient when *Savarna* Hindus tell me from their platform of high superiority that they will remove untouchability when Harijans give up their habits of drinking, eating carrion, uncleanness, etc. Suppose my father, mother, son or daughter were

lepers, can I say that I will touch him or her only when he or she had got rid of leprosy? I will be false to our sacred tie if I do not serve him or her in his or her need. The position regarding Harijans is infinitely worse, because we ourselves are responsible for the condition to which Harijans have been reduced. For their drinking, eating carrion, and other unclean habits we are directly responsible. Therefore, if we are true, we have to embrace them in spite of their shortcomings; and I hope, not without foundation, that immediately you adopt an attitude of mind looking upon the Harijans as your brothers, they will change their habits. People who had experience in this direction will confirm this statement. It is, therefore, first necessary that *Savarna* Hindus should purify their hearts and change their attitude towards Harijans.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 20, 1936.

Sinners are Not to be Despised

Degradation lies in not touching the 'untouchable'. What though a man drinks, kills cows and eats carrion? He is no doubt an evil-doer, though no greater than the one who commits secret and more deadly sins. But he is not to be treated as an untouchable, even as society does not treat the secret sinner as one. Sinners are not to be despised, but pitied and helped to rid themselves of their sinfulness. The existence of untouchability among Hindus is a denial of the doctrine of

Ahimsa on which we pride ourselves. We are responsible for the evils among the 'untouchables'. What have we done to wean them from their ways? Do we not spend a fortune to reform members of our own families? Are the untouchables not members of the great Hindu family? Indeed, Hinduism teaches us to regard the whole of humanity as one indivisible and undivided family, and holds each one of us responsible for the misdeeds of all. But if it is not possible to act up to the grand doctrine for its vastness, let us at least understand the unity of the 'untouchables' with us since we regard them as Hindus.

Let Us Do Penance

And what is worse, eating carrion or thinking carrion? We daily create, harbour and nourish millions of untouchable thoughts. Let us shed them, for they are the true untouchables deserving to be hated and cast out. And let us do penance for our past injustice towards the 'untouchable' brothers by lovingly embracing them.

They are not untouchables, we are untouchables. Let them have every attention, every kindness that they deserve from us. They eat and drink and think and feel even as we do. If a sum total of their virtues and vices and the privileges they are denied were to be made and compared with our virtues and vices and the privileges we enjoy and deny to them, I am sure in God's books we should find our debit side far heavier than

theirs. Let us then think no more of any single person on earth as an untouchable.

—*Young India* : May 13, 1926.

79. EVIL—A RESULT

THERE is no doubt that this habit of carrion-eating, and especially beef-eating, has a great deal to do with the prevalent prejudice, but in no other thing is the weakness of Hinduism, or rather of caste-Hindus, betrayed so forcibly as in regarding a portion of fellow-Hindus to be untouchable and neglecting them in the cruellest manner possible. We have, therefore, only ourselves to thank that the untouchables are what they are. But it is not yet too late to mend. The Harijans should realize that untouchability is dead and gone. Its evil effect will persist for a long time to come. The duration will be the measure of our joint neglect. Greater by far is the responsibility of the caste-Hindus. If they will do their duty and work whole-heartedly, they will certainly succeed in stopping these sacrifices and the habit of carrion-eating. Nothing but the spread of enlightenment is required to rid the community of evil superstition and evil habits. But I cannot too often remind the reformers and caste-Hindus in general that they will not purify Harijans of any single one of the evil habits, if they will make the reform a condition of the removal of untouchability. Rather let us realize that the evils are a result, and not a cause, of untouchability, anyway most decidedly not at the present moment.

—*Harijan* : March 18, 1933.

80. TO THE HARIJANS

JUST as I do not want the so-called touchables to despise you, so also I do not want you to entertain any feeling of hatred and ill-will towards them. I do not want you to wrest your rights by violence. The trend of world opinion is against such violence. I can clearly see a time coming in the world when it will be impossible to secure rights by arbitrament of force, so I tell you to-day that if you resort to force for the attainment of your purpose you will certainly fail. I do not want to employ diplomacy in my dealings with you or, for that matter, with anyone. I do not want to keep you under any false illusion or win your support by holding out temptations. I would not exploit you for gaining any political ends of mine. The issue with me is bigger even than *Swaraj*. I am anxious to see an end put to untouchability, because for me it is an expiation and a penance. Hinduism has committed a great sin in giving sanction to this evil and I am anxious—if such a thing as vicarious penance is possible—to purify it of that sin by expiating for it in my own person.

That being so, it follows that the only means open for my purpose are those of *Ahimsa* and Truth. I have adopted an 'untouchable' child as my own. I confess I have not been able to convert my wife completely to my view. She cannot bring herself to love her as I do. But I cannot convert my wife by anger, I can do so only by love. If any of my people have done you

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

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

us by prayer purify ourselves and we shall not only remove untouchability, but shall also hasten the advent of *Swaraj*.

—*Young India* : Jan. 22, 1925.

Work Your Own Salvation

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

—*Harijan* : July 29, 1933.

Give Up Your Evil Habits

Caste-Hindus must first ask you to forgive the wrongs they have done to you. But I should also tell you, as a Harijan by choice, that you should give up your evil habits, especially carrion and beef-eating. The

whole world looks upon carrion with abhorrence. And beef-eating should be given up because that is a *sine qua non* for a Hindu. The cow is the giver of plenty, and by killing her we kill ourselves. Then, I would urge you not to accept leavings. And, above all, you should abolish the distinctions of high and low that have crept in among yourselves. And these things you should do, not in a bargaining spirit but because they are good in themselves. I would, therefore, ask you also to give up drink, irrespective of the fact that many other Hindus drink.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 1, 1933.

Most Honourable Occupation

You should know that I am a scavenger myself by choice; and you must take me literally when I tell you that I have cleaned hundreds of *cheris* in my life. Everyone in the *Ashram* which I was conducting—and there were women also in the *Ashram*—had to do this work every day. I call scavenging as one of the most honourable occupations to which mankind is called. I don't consider it an unclean occupation by any means. That you have to handle dirt is true. But that every mother is doing and has to do. But nobody says a mother's occupation is unclean. And yet the scavenger's occupation is considered an unclean occupation. Therefore, I say that those who call themselves caste-Hindus commit a sin when they consider themselves higher than Harijans. I am going up and down the country to convince *Savarna* Hindus that it is a sin to consider

themselves superior to or higher than anyone else. But I am trying also to tell fellow-scavengers that, while we may handle dirt, we must be clean ourselves both inwardly and outwardly. After we have done the cleansing, we must cleanse ourselves and put on clean clothes. I know many scavengers eat carrion and beef. Those who are doing this must abstain. Many of them are given to the evil habit of drink. Drink is a bad, filthy, unclean, degrading habit. A man who drinks intoxicating liquor forgets the distinction between wife, mother and sister. I would beseech you to give up all evil habits, and you will at once find that you are accepted as honourable members of society without any stain on you.

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 76.

Your Salvation Rests with You

You cannot be free from self-purification. You, too, have to bring your own sacrifice to this altar and that consists in the strict observance of the laws of sanitation—internal and external;¹ and, secondly in the giving up of carrion and beef-eating, wherever that habit still persists. In every part of the civilized world, carrion is abhorred. It is considered unfit for human consumption. And no one can call himself a Hindu and partake of beef. Sacredness of the cow and her

1 "You should conform to the rules of hygiene and sanitation—internal as well as external. Internal sanitation consists in taking the name of God—the first thing to be done after getting up in the morning. That is the breakfast for the soul."

—*Harijan* : Jan. 12, 1934.

TO THE HARIJANS

worship are an integral part of Hinduism. Thirdly, I would ask every Harijan, man and woman, to give up the habit of drinking. Let no Harijan say to himself or herself or to me that many *Savarna* Hindus also drink. I would beseech you as a fellow-Harijan by choice to shun all vices of *Savarna* Hindus. In spite of all the reparation that *Savarna* Hindus may make to you, in spite of all the repentance they may show in the presence of God, after all, in the ultimate resort, your salvation will rest with yourselves.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 19, 1934.

Be Patient a Little Longer

Do not mind what the caste-Hindus do or say. Think of what you have to do. It is no small thing that you still care for a religion which keeps you suppressed. I do not know whether I should attribute it to the greatness of the religion or to your great power of suffering. But whatever it may be due to, I would ask you to be patient a little longer and to glorify the religion that you have adhered to through thick and thin. You can do so by purifying your lives, by internal and external cleanliness, by giving up carrion and drink if you are given to them, and by prayer to God. The name *Rama* has a miraculous power, if it is repeated from a faithful and pure heart. Untouchability will disappear in no time and you will soon have your place in the community. May God bless you!

—*Harijan* : May 4, 1935.

Be Steadfast in Your Faith

Not until untouchability is removed from Hinduism will the taint be removed from Harijans, no matter what label they adopt. Therefore, Harijans have it in their hands either to save Hinduism or to destroy it, as caste-Hindus have it in theirs. It is no doubt easier for Harijans to change labels than for caste-Hindus to change their hearts, but it may be easier for Harijans to rise superior to every earthly temptation and be consciously steadfast in the faith in which they have been denied by their fellows the most elementary human rights. It is no doubt difficult for anybody to resist the temptations to which Harijans are exposed to-day. It will, therefore, be a marvel if they prove true and cling to their ancestral faith with the determination to purify it by a conscious supreme effort. They can do this as they could not before, for they know that there is a growing body of caste-Hindus who are making common cause with them and making reparation for their own past wrongs and the continuing wrongs of fellow caste-Hindus.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 26, 1936.

81. TO HARIJAN SCEPTICS

FOR me, this untouchability is a sin that Hinduism commits against the untouchables. It becomes and remains a sin inasmuch as the *Savarna* Hindus consider the untouchables, whom I now call Harijans, as untouchable Hindus. Therefore, I can only call this a movement of reformation and purification in Hinduism. I become a debtor only to those who call them-

selves Hindus. I do not become a debtor to those who have nothing to do with Hinduism. You just now took me to the temple and there showed me everything including the worship that is done according to the Hindu traditions. If your form of worship is the same as mine, my heart naturally goes out to you. But if you say you are no longer Hindus and you have adopted some other faith, my obligation to you as Hindus ceases. My obligation to you as fellow-beings, of course, does not cease.

There is that fine and necessary distinction which you cannot get over. God has made Nature so that we are one in many. There are different faiths in this world. I believe them all to be true. But so long as there are different faiths and we belong to one faith, there are special obligations attached to that faith. That does not mean that I would not work for Mussalman fellow-men or Christian fellow-men or Parsis or Jews or any other. But I can realize unity with no one, if I loose my foot from the platform on which I am standing. I believe in God much more than I believe in the fact that you and I are alive and that I am speaking to you. I may give you an illustration of what I mean. In appearance, I am speaking to you and you are listening to me. In reality, your hearts and minds may be somewhere else. My heart also may be somewhere else and my mind may be in something else. Then my speaking or your listening would be a deception. Therefore, my speaking and your listening, though they are an appearance, may not be a reality. But my heart,

word and deed are pledged to the Being called God, *Allah, Rama or Krishna*. You will now easily recognize that it is true when I say that my belief in God is far more a reality to me than this meeting which I am addressing.

Untouchable by Choice

But I must not take you into deeper waters. The sum and substance of what I say is this. If I appear to you as a Hindu, I do so in order to discharge an obligation I owe to you. I am supposed to have been born in a *Savarna* family. As a *Savarna* Hindu when I see that there are some Hindus called *Avarnas*, it offends my sense of justice and truth, and it cuts me to the quick. It is an abhorrent thought to me that in the faith in which I was born and nurtured, there should be a single human being considered lower than myself. Therefore, I have become an untouchable by choice, and if I discover that Hindu *Shastras* really countenance untouchability as it is seen to-day, I will renounce and denounce Hinduism. As a student of Hindu religion and of comparative religions, I see no such warrant in Hindu *Shastras*. But Hindus to-day practise untouchability. Therefore, it becomes my duty to warn them against that evil. If, however, you embrace any other faith, or have no faith whatsoever, I can have no appeal for you. You cease to be untouchable Hindus. If you want to cut adrift from Hinduism, you are absolutely free to do so. I cannot hold you to Hinduism by force. I can only hold you by the force

of love. I may so endear myself to you by my service that you may feel that, although you have been classed as untouchables by certain Hindus, there is no untouchability in Hinduism. It may be in God's dispensation that I have come to you too late. But God will not punish me for that, because He knows that for the last fifty years I have rebelled against untouchability. Now, I think, you fairly understand what I stand for. The movement is not anti-Mussalman, anti-Christian or anti-Jew. It is anti-humbug. That is what I stand for.

The Word 'Harijan'

A concluding remark as to the use of the word 'Harijan'. It is not a word of my coinage. It was suggested by an untouchable. Untouchability is a hateful and detestable thing; but, so long as one has to talk of who are considered to-day untouchables, it is surely better to use an unoffending name than an offending one. I give you an illustration from life. In South Africa, Indians were not called Indians but *coolies*. I was called not an Indian lawyer but a *coolie* lawyer. To the Whites, the words '*coolie*', and 'Indian' were synonymous. I protested against the word '*coolie*', and I suggested that the word 'Indians' should be used to designate the inhabitants of India. So long as men were known by their countries, some name was necessary to signify the inhabitants of India. 'Indians' was an unoffending designation. Precisely in the same manner the word 'Harijan' is used.

'When the Mists Have Rolled Away'

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

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

*"We shall know each other better
When the mists have rolled away."*

—*Harijan* : Feb. 2, 1934.

82. QUESTION BOX

Why Harijan?

Q. Why have you adopted the name of 'Harijan' for 'untouchable'?

A. It is not name of my coining. Some years ago, several 'untouchable' correspondents complained that I used the word '*asprishya*' in the pages of '*Navjivan*'. '*Asprishya*' means literally untouchable. I then invited them to suggest a better name, and one of the 'untouchable' correspondents suggested the adoption of the name 'Harijan', on the strength of its having been used by the first known poet-saint of Gujarat. Though the quotation he sent me did not exactly fit the case he wanted to make out for the adoption. I thought that it was a good word. 'Harijan' means 'a man of God'. All the religions of the world describe God pre-eminently as the Friend of the friendless, Help of the helpless and Protector of the weak. The rest of the world apart, in India who can be more friendless, helpless or weaker than the forty million or more Hindus of India who are classified as untouchables? If, therefore, anybody of people can be fitly described as men of God, they are surely these helpless, friendless and despised people. Hence I have always adopted 'Harijan' as the name signifying 'untouchables'. I recoil with horror from that word and all it implies. Not that the change of name brings about any change of status, but one may at least be spared the use of a term which is itself

one of reproach. When caste-Hindus have, of their own inner conviction and, therefore, voluntarily, got rid of the present day untouchability, we shall all be called Harijans: for, according to my humble opinion, caste-Hindus will then have found favour with God and may, therefore, be fitly described as His men.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 11, 1933.

‘Harijan’ or ‘Haribhakta’

Q. Why do you use the word ‘Harijan’ in respect of us? Why not call us ‘Haribhakta’?

A. ‘Harijan’ and ‘Haribhakta’ are absolutely the same. Tulsidas always uses the word ‘jan’ in the sense of ‘bhakta’. I have given reasons for using the word ‘Harijan’. God is the Help of the helpless. The chosen of God are not the rich but the poor, the most persecuted. If we go to the *Bible*, it was said of poor Lazarus that in his lifetime he received evil things: but after his death he was comforted. Of the rich man it was said: ‘It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God!! The rich man could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but Lazarus could. After all, all India has to accept the word ‘Harijan’. If you don’t like it, don’t use it. It was given to me by a Harijan. There are monstrous castes among the so-called untouchables. They are like castes among slaves, some of whom wear iron chains and some gilded ones.

—*Conversations of Gandhiji*: P. 99.

Why Not Simple 'Hindu'?

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

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

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

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

--*Harijan* : March 11, 1933.

What is in A Name?

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

A. The name 'Harijan' has sacred associations. It was suggested by a Harijan as a substitute for *Asprishya* (untouchable) *Dalita* (depressed), or for the different categories of 'untouchables' such as *Bhangis*, *Mehtars*, *Chamars*, *Pariahs*, etc. The Government officers put them in a schedule and, therefore, called them the Scheduled Classes, thus making confusion worse confounded. Those who were not untouchables were classed among the scheduled, and the ones who could be so called were excluded. We have now arrived at a stage, thanks to the Government policy, when to

QUESTION BOX

be included among the Scheduled Classes is to be coveted. The Government have created a separate electorate agitating for seats in all elective institutions. I do not mind such ambition, if it carries honest merit with it. But it becomes positively mischievous, when seats are coveted irrespective of merit. The wish to be so educated as to be qualified for the highest post is to be appreciated and encouraged; the wish to be appointed to such a post on the basis of belonging to a caste or a class is essentially to be deprecated and discouraged.

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

—*Harijan* : April 14, 1946.

Unwilling to Mix

Q. Harijans seem to be unwilling to mix with caste-Hindus. Is it not a fact?

A. My experience is wholly different. I have talked with thousands of Harijans. They are eager to associate with the higher classes, if the latter behave themselves. What is true is that they distrust the higher classes, and where they do not distrust them, they are afraid of them. And there is this unfortunate additional fact that the notion of inferiority from birth has been so much injected into them, that they consider themselves doomed by God to eternal inferiority. This must be a matter of shame and humiliation for every thinking *Savarna* Hindu.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 2, 1934.

Breaking Caste Distinctions

Q. I represent a brotherhood which is out to break caste distinctions and to preach harmony between religions. Sree Narayana Guru advocated one God, one religion, one caste. What is your message for me?

A. I wish you all success. I do believe in harmony between all religions. I have myself worked at it in my humble way. Caste distinctions, in so far as they imply superiority of one over another, have to be abolished altogether. That is merely a phase or a grade of untouchability. But, in so far as caste in the sense of *Varna* fulfils Nature's law of conservation of human energy and true economics, it is good to recognize and obey the law. You may deny the existence of any such law. I can then only refer you to the few proofs I have given in the columns of *Harijan* in support of it. Belief in one God is the corner-stone of all reli-

QUESTION BOX

gions. But I do not foresee a time when there would be only one religion on earth in practice. In theory, since there is one God, there can be only one religion. But in practice, no two persons I have known have had the same and identical conception of God. Therefore, there will, perhaps, always be different religions answering to different temperaments and climatic conditions. But I can clearly see the time coming when people belonging to different faiths will have the same regard for other faiths that they have for their own. I think that we have to find unity in diversity. I need say no more about caste beyond this—that, in so far as abolition of distinctions of high and low are concerned, there is but one caste. We are all children of one and the same God and, therefore, absolutely equal.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 2, 1934.

A Conundrum

Q. You say that Hinduism must perish if untouchability lives. But Hinduism has continued to exist all these years in spite of the institution of untouchability, and there is no reason why it should be otherwise now or in future. Nor should you forget that it is Hinduism with its much-abused institution of untouchability that, on your own admission, has in the past brought you spiritual peace and consolation?

A. The slow disintegration of Hinduism one can see even to-day taking place under our very nose, mainly and principally in consequence of the curse of untouchability. Anyone who has eyes, can see it. A

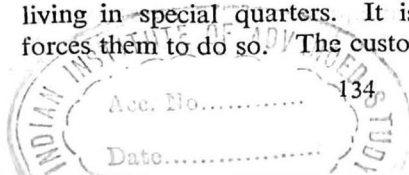
moribund, life-in-death sort of existence should not be mistaken for life; in fact, it is more distressing than death itself. If a person like me can to-day derive spiritual peace and consolation from Hinduism, it is because I have never regarded untouchability as an integral part of Hinduism. It may perhaps be objected that the term 'disintegration of Hinduism' which I have used is misleading since disintegration of Hindu society need not necessarily mean the disintegration of Hindu religion. The objection is based on a fallacy and is only partly valid. In mundane sense, a faith can have no existence apart from its votaries. It may personally console me even if I can bear witness to my faith as its sole surviving representative; but of what avail would it be to those millions who fell away from it?

—*Harijan* : Feb. 20, 1937.

How to Remove Untouchability?

Q. While removing the ban on temple entry and on use of public wells, giving scholarships for education etc. are all good in their own way, don't you think that the real way to remove all traces of the curse of untouchability is to abolish *cheris* and separate living quarters for Harijans?

A. It sounds well to say that untouchability will go by the board if Harijans are allowed to live wherever they choose. So far as I am aware, there is no general law in existence which relegates Harijans to living in special quarters. It is an evil custom that forces them to do so. The custom is breaking down but



QUESTION BOX

very, very slowly. Meantime, it is the duty of everyone to get rid of it. It is a question of moving the hearts of people. Supreme sacrifice can achieve the desired result. Has not Tulsidas said:

“ Through sacrifice *Brahma* created the world,
Through sacrifice *Vishnu* protects,
Through sacrifice the whole of creation is sustained,
Therefore, *Bhavani*, go and perform sacrifice.”

When one with that supreme gift is forthcoming, the taint will disappear and religion will be purified and saved.

—*Harijan* : Oct. 13, 1946.
