

**SPEECHES OF**  
**Mata**  
**Rameshwari Nehru**  
*The Illustrious Woman of India*

Reproduced from the Book  
“GANDHI IS MY STAR”



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**SPEECHES OF**  
**Mata Rameshwari Nehru**

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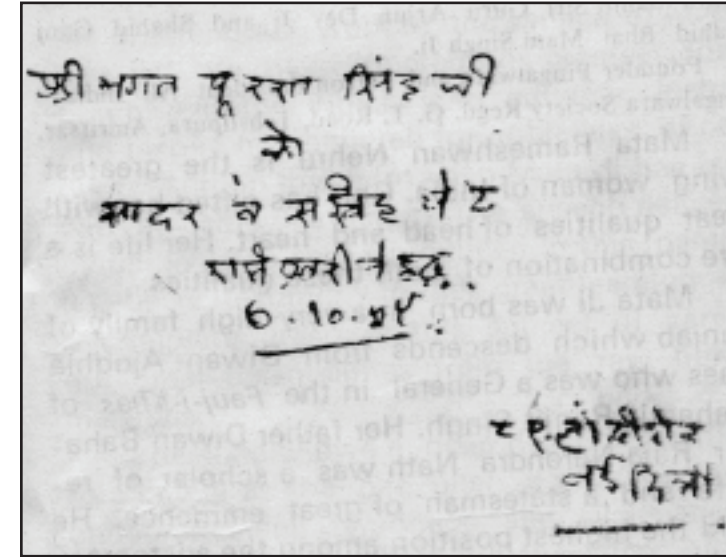
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Shri Bhagat Puran Singh Ji,  
Presented with affectionate regards.

**Rameshwari Nehru**  
8-A, Lodhi Road, New Delhi  
6-10-59.

## Foreword

Mata Rameshwari Nehru was indeed an illustrious woman of India who was ahead of her not only contemporary woman, but also many men who mattered a lot. The present book on “*Speeches of Mata Rameshwari Nehru*” a collection of essays and speeches delivered by Smt. Rameshwari Nehru. In all her speeches and writings she has tried to encourage and motivate women to come forward and participate in all activities, they were not hitherto participating. She has expressed her views about an ideal home where all the members are performing their duties of their own and woman of the house given deserving position. She laid more stress on education of the women in India and also compares Indian women with their European counterparts. The women in new social order had multiple roles to perform in addition to her routine household duties. As president of All India Women Conference she called upon the women to spearhead the women’s movement and take additional responsibilities in district boards municipalities’ education committees, legislatures and in govt. cabinets. The social evils and old customs like purdah and early marriage should be done away and many reforms like widow remarriage, abolition of dowry system, equal moral standards

Speeches of Mata Rameshwari Nehru/5

for man and women and economic independence of women were advocated on a very strong footing. She also stressed upon on involvement of people in making temple entry campaign of Harijans a great success.

According to her, this can be achieved without using force, bloodshed and any fights among the communities. Through this, she conveyed a strong message to the society that movements involving people are irresistible and are bound to be successful. She explained to the people with all niceties that the Hindu castes belonging to all the four Varnas, are performing their duties without conflicting interest and they can exist harmoniously.

Though the empirical data used is quite outdated and is irrelevant today but concepts and ideas are worth emulating. If the concerns expressed by Mata Rameshwari Nehru are addressed properly, these can go a long way in improving and modernising the Indian society, especially the plight of women. The compilation makes a good reading and takes the reader to those hard and testing times but certainly gives an account of conditions prevailing at that time.

**Dr. Rajesh Kumar**

*Principal*

D.A.V. College, Amritsar

## PREFACE

Majaji was born on 10th Dec. 1886. She died on 18th Nov. 1966. I wrote the preface in the year 1962 when Mataji was still alive.

Mata Rameshwari Nehru is the greatest living woman of India. God has gifted her with great qualities of head and heart. Her life is a rare combination of both these qualities.

Mata Ji was born in a very high family of Punjab which descends from Diwan Ajudhia Dass who was a General in the *Fauj-i-Khas* of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Her father Diwan Bahadur Raja Narendra Nath was a scholar of repute and a statesman of great eminence. He held the highest position among the aristocracy of his times.

Mata Ji occupies a very high position by birth and also by her marriage to a man who rose to a very big position in Government service; but Maja Ji does not love ease, decoration or luxury. She passes her life struggling day and night for the emancipation of the down-trodden and the poor. She is the grand old woman of India and is revered and admired not only throughout the length and breadth of the country but also abroad. She has earned the title of Mata (mother) from her countrymen on account of her deep devotion

to the amelioration of the down-trodden and the poor.

Mata Ji has no doubt to her credit a long life of strenuous work in the service of humanity, yet she never ignored the greatest function of a mother which is to educate, instruct and inspire her children for nobleness of conduct. And on this front also Mata Ji has fared with enviable distinction. The speech delivered by her in 1935 bears testimony to her great learning and a complete grasp of this subject of carving out great personalities from the raw human materials.

I personally owe a deep debt of gratitude to Mata Ji as she has been a source of great encouragement, patronage and sustenance to me in my undertaking of the task of the organization of the huge medico-social work of the Pingalwara movement which I have been carrying on in spite of my resourcelessness as an obscure social worker. She is counted among the great patrons of the Pingalwara movement to which her contribution has been most invaluable.

Someone has said, "*There have been many men who were great and there have been many men who were good but there have been very few men who*

*were both good and great*". Mata Ji is great as well as good. May God grant our Mata Ji many more years of life to hear the grievances of the people day by day and redress them as this is her only pleasure and avocation in life. I wish every Indian girl to keep the great model of Mata Ji before her eyes while starting the journey of life to glorify womanhood.

***Bhagat Puran Singh***

*Formerly social worker for 24 years at Lahore upto 18th August, 1947 under the patronage of Gurdwara Dehra Sahib Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji and Shahid Ganj Shahid Bhai Mani Singh Ji.*

*"You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation."*

*Brigham Young*

**Sita**

Ideal of Indian Womanhood.

Rama and Sita are the ideals of the Indian nation. All children, especially girls, worship Sita.

The height of a woman's ambition is to be like Sita, the pure, the devoted, and the all-suffering!

When you study these characters, you can at once find out how different is the ideal in India from that of the West.

For the human race, Sita stands as the ideal of suffering.

The West says, "*Do! Show your power by doing.*" India says, "*Show your power by suffering.*"

The West has solved the problem of how much a man can have; India has solved the problem of how little a man can have. The two extremes, you see.

Sita is typical of India—the idealized India. The question is not whether she ever lived; whether the story is history or not, we know that the ideal is there.

There is no other *pauranika* story that has so permeated the whole nation, so entered into its very life, and has so tingled in every drop of blood of the race, as this ideal of Sita.

Sita is the name in India for everything that is

good, pure and holy; everything that in woman we call womanly.

If a priest has to bless a woman he says “Be Sita! ” If he blesses a child, he says, “Be Sita !” They are all children of Sita, and are struggling to be Sita, the patient, the all suffering, the ever-faithful, the ever-pure wife.

Through all this suffering she experiences, there is not one harsh word she said against Rama. She takes it as her own duty, and performs her own part in it. Think of the terrible injustice of her being exiled to the forest! But Sita knows no bitterness. That is, again, the Indian ideal.

Says the ancient Buddha: “*When a man hurts you, and you turn back to hurt him, that would not cure the first injury; it would only create in the world one more wickedness.*”

Sita was a true Indian by nature; she never returned injury.

**Swami Vivekananda**

*(From the Bhavan’s Journal, March 19, 1961.)*

## **Smt. Rameshwari Nehru**

Smt. Rameshwari Nehru was born on December 10, 1886, in a well-known and progressive family of the Punjab. She started the *Mahila Samiti at Allahabad in 1909*, the objective of which was to awaken Indian womanhood to the social needs of the day. She edited a magazine *Stri Darpan* for 16 years, through which she served the cause of women.

In 1928, she was a member of the *Age of Consent Committee* appointed by the Government of India to suggest amendments to the law on the subject. She stirred public opinion on the issue of child marriages and made a number of suggestions in her note.

During her visit to England in 1930, she addressed many women’s meetings there about welfare problems of India women. She became the *President of the Indian Women’s Association* and *Vice-President of the Committee on Women’s Affairs*. Between 1931 and 1937, she visited a number of European countries, Russia and Australia and explained Indian social, economic and other problems to their people.

Since 1934, Smt. Rameshwari Nehru has dedicated herself to the service of Harijans. As Mrs. Margaret Cousins said: “*She was Gandhiji’s right-*



*hand woman in the Harijan Sevak Sangh.”*

Mrs. Nehru was one of the *founders of Delhi Women's League* and its President for several years. She was elected *President of the All-India Women's Conference* in 1940.

She founded the Children's Aid Society in Lahore, under the auspices of the All-India Women's Conference, in October, 1940 and was its President up to 1947. In 1942, a *social survey of juvenile institutions* was made under her chairmanship in Punjab, as a sequel to which a *Children Bill* was introduced in the State Assembly. Since 1947, she had been the President of the Children's Aid Society. She took an active part in the Kasturba National Memorial Trust Fund collections.

She was Honorary Director of the Women's section of the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, Government of India, and served the interests of refugee women.

When in 1943, famine cast its gloomy shadow on the country; Smt. Rameshwari Nehru organized relief committees and took a prominent part in the distribution of relief.

Since 1948, she had been connected with the United Council for Relief and Welfare and had also

been the President of the *Association of Moral and Social Hygiene* in India. Smt. Nehru was associated with and took an active part in a number of welfare associations in the country. She has been awarded *Padma Bhushan* by the President.

The Afro-Asian solidarity movement was started in Cairo in the last week of December 1947 and Smt. Rameshwari Nehru was elected Vice-President. Since then, she had continued to be the Vice-President. A national committee for this work was started in India of which she had been the President since its inception.

*She started the first rescue home in Lahore.*



*Smt. Rameshwari Nehru ji with  
Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru*

## **Introduction**

### ***To the Book "Gandhi Is My Star"***

I am asked by the learned editor to write a foreword to this book. I do so with pleasure but not without some diffidence.

In the early days of British rule, a class of reformers came into prominence. The inequalities in the social and economic structure in the Hindu polity attracted their attention and a campaign for the removal of those inequalities was started. Caste distinctions and women's disabilities were the first major problems on which the social reformers concentrated. The cause of the depressed classes, backward classes and the aboriginal tribes was championed by a certain section of political reformers. Their plea was in the nature of a preliminary effort to attract the attention of the powers that be and the enlightened public also. But almost all these well-meaning reformers came from the educated section of the upper classes of the people and not from the suffering classes. It took some time for such leaders to come from the sufferers. The movement of reform to secure justice to the women was patronized and sympathized with by a very large section of the educated classes. Stray efforts were being made to introduce some reforms like abolition

of Sati and widow remarriage, etc. But for all these years, the movement had somewhat of an academic character. But it gradually became a dynamic one when Indian women's cause was championed by the women themselves. Their conferences were no longer meetings of a few enlightened and advanced reformers but mammoth meetings, attended by thousands of women coming from every strata of society. The decisions of the women's conferences, held under the leadership of Indian women, found ardent and enthusiastic champions among the legislators. A number of bills regarding marriage and women's rights of inheritance and maintenance, etc. were introduced in the old Central Assembly and there was a fairly favourable support from the general body of the representatives in both the Houses.

Among those talented Indian, women who took a prominent part in bringing about this great change in the public opinion, Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru is one of the foremost. The collection of her writings and speeches in this volume can give the readers a fairly comprehensive idea of the various activities she has participated in, during the last forty years.

Although Mrs. Nehru treated the Indian women's problem as a part of the worldwide labour



and socialist movement, her outlook is not entirely economic or material. In her long association with Mahatma Gandhi and his constructive programme for the uplift of Harijans, she has caught his spiritual idealism.

Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru is respected throughout India and abroad, not merely for her manifold social services but for her adherence to the ancient ideal of Indian womanhood, which is represented in her domestic and private life. She feels that the Indian womanhood will attain to its full stature if the Indian woman is emancipated. The shackles have, according to her, dwarfed her growth and rendered her almost a liability instead of being an asset to the community so far as the public life of the country is concerned.

Indian Rishis have definitely allotted a very high position to the women in the social and communal life:

*“God feels happy at the place where women are honoured”.*

In the modern democracy, the responsibilities of citizenship have to be shared by men and women alike. Every effort that adds to the strength of those who are weak, disabled and crippled is welcome. Mahatma Gandhi, in his inimitable way, drew a large

section of the Indian women for public service and volunteer work. An age-old custom like Purdah has been discarded by thousands of ladies belonging to the aristocratic families under his inspiration.

Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru has played a very important part in this great awakening. She is like a skylark, to use language of the poet Wordsworth.

*“Type of the wise who soar high but never roam,  
True to the kindred points of heaven and home.”*

*M.S. Aney*

Governor of Bihar

Patna

May 5, 1950

*Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth... these are one and the same fight. We must connect the dots between climate change, water scarcity, energy shortages, global health, food security and women's empowerment. Solutions to one problem must be solutions for all.*

*Ban Ki-moon*

## Ideal Home

The home has a big place not only in the life of an individual but also in the life of a nation. Just as it is said that civilization can be measured by the position it gives to its women, so it can be asserted without fear of contradiction that the culture of people can be judged by the condition of its homes. *Homes are the cradles where nations are nurtured.* It is there that the average man and woman, young and old, have their roots. Just as good and healthy soil is necessary for the growth of a tree, so a good and healthy home is needed for the growth of man. No society can flourish unless its homes are sound. The home is the foundation on which the structure of society is built. It is, therefore evident that it plays a great part in the evolution of man and no people can afford to neglect it.

Indian homes at present are in a state of great disintegration. There are no set standards or rules to regulate or govern households. During this age of transition when the old order is breaking down, households are in a state of a chaos, as the new order has not yet taken its place. From the orthodox to the ultra modern, we have a whole range of men and women who build our homes, and give them life and shape. As their ideas and values differ, there is

a perpetual clash which has resulted in the breaking down of old traditions, customs and practices without giving place to new established ways. The result is a stale-mate. On the one side, we have homes which are cheap, second-hand copies of the west and on the other we are still living in the Vedic or pre-historic times. In between the two extremes a whole conglomeration of all sorts of ways and practices are noticed which have no outside rules to govern them except the sweet will and pleasure of those who indulge in them. Thus every home or rather every individual is a law unto himself and there are no patterns or regulations to follow. This state of things may give scope for the exercise of originality but it leads to a lack of homogeneity which divides the people. Uniformity of ways, manners and customs amongst people is a cementing force which unites and binds them together. It leads to a better mutual understanding and sympathy. Dissimilarity of ways, customs and manners on the other hand acts as a wedge which divides people and makes them feel like strangers even though belonging to the same country.

Thus the disintegration of our homes has brought in disintegration of our society, which has made our lives particularly drab and dreary. We lack common ties and in many cases live individual lives.

Not only that this defect is reflected in our national life where the lack of cohesion and discipline are daily felt. We have therefore, to pay great attention to our homes, if only to remove our national defects. If we want to become a nation with a place of respect in the community of the nations of the world, we have to reform our homes and put them on a sound national basis.

In this work of reform, we must always remember two things. Firstly, that growth and change is the principle of life. No nation can live which refuses to change with the changing spirit of the times. We can neither stagnate and keep still, nor we can go back. We cannot bring back the ancient Vedic times and live it once again. We must not therefore resist all change. On the contrary, we should gladly welcome it, adapting ourselves to new conditions and circumstances. Secondly, blind imitation is suicidal to life and growth. No people can build their lives on the foundations of mere imitation. That way we can only turn ourselves into cheap copies of other people. Borrowed plumes can never help one soar high. Instead it dwarfs and stunts evolution. We should therefore, give up altogether this habit of copying everything western.

We have to bring about a synthesis between

our own past and the present West. With that goal in mind, we should always be alert to find out the best in the West and should always be ready to adopt it. At the same time, we can never afford to forget that we can best express ourselves through our own genius. The soul, of a nation is as much a living entity as the soul of an individual. Like the individual soul, it can never shed itself of its previous "*sanaskaras*". In other words, there is continuity in life; the present is made out of the material of the past. We cannot change completely over-night. Any attempt to do that, are bound to meet with a disastrous failure resulting in the degeneration on the whole national life. Our history and traditions, therefore, must continue to play an important part in the formation of our lives and homes. At the same time there must be room for the inletting of the new light and life.

Every home is an expression of the spirit of the men and women who make it. Their innermost ideas and feelings are involuntarily reflected in the surroundings of the home. To produce a model modern home, one has to bring one's mind in conformity with the growing national life in a liberal spirit.

You can never make a home look beautiful by stocking it with a lot of foreign machine-made

articles, however expensive. *Simplicity and harmony must be the governing spirit of the home.* If there is peace, harmony, co-operation and co-ordination, love and understanding amongst the members of the family in the home, the atmosphere is surcharged with those qualities which the house radiates. It is home like this in harmony with the outside world which breeds real good citizens who make the nation.

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*Prejudice is sinful. All blood flows red. And the most harmful and foolish kind of prejudice is prejudice against yourself. Every woman is your sister, and every woman needs her sisters. So try to give other women the courtesy of your compassion, respect, and forgiveness. Love yourself despite and because of your flaws.*  
*Jewell Parker Rhodes*

## Happy House Wife

A successful home is a happy home and the woman who can pervade the atmosphere with cheerfulness is a successful home maker. It is not in one's power to be always cheerful. You may say, it depends on the circumstances and the temperament of those with whom you live. It is true to some extent but we should never forget that to a large extent we make our own circumstances. Cheerfulness like most other qualities can be consciously cultivated. The idea prevalent amongst many people that discontent is a concomitant of intellectuality is a wrong idea. A happy and contented life is in fact synonymous with a good and godly life. The purer the heart, the more the happiness. One of the qualities of God is supposed to be happiness and as God created man after His own image, it is in our nature to be happy. If we are unhappy, it is the result of some unnaturalness, some maladjustment somewhere. There is a great deal of self-imposed unhappiness in the lives of most educated people which can be avoided. Unhappiness comes from unfulfilled desires and it may be urged that it is natural for a young heart to have desires. Often we entertain desires, which in their very nature are incapable of fulfillment. They have; therefore, to be brought

under control and with reason the impossible ones mercilessly cast off. Our faulty education, our social system and ignorance mostly tend to arouse those desires in us which result in unhappiness. Young, healthy men and women, provided that they are not crushed with abject poverty, have no reason to be unhappy. According to Bertand Russell '*happiness can be conquered if one made a reasonable effort to conquer it.*' We find the same idea in our shastras, in fact in all religions. But the religious way of attaining a happy state of the mind is different and more difficult, although I am sure, one eventually leads to the other. In this little article, I want to deal only with the worldly way as our object in the Modern world is to find ways and means of making our life in this world, happy.

A narcissist or a megalomaniac can never be happy nor a person who considers himself a sinner says Bertand Russel in his very useful book "The conquest of happiness". The words Narcissist 'megalomaniac' and 'sinner' need an explanation. 'Narcissist' is one who is always admiring himself and therefore, longs to be admired by others. The desire of woman to get compliments is an exhibition of this frame of mind. A megalomaniac also has too high a notion of himself

wanting power over others. He therefore, longs to be central figure everywhere and never satisfied as his desire for power is always more than what he can get. A sinner is one who has set much too high an ideal before him. Compared to the ideal, he always finds himself unworthy. He is therefore, constantly blaming himself and fighting against his own personality. This is a personality divided against itself. He cannot attain the heights, he desires to attain and consequently is always unhappy.

All these defects of character arise from a faulty training, from a faulty objective in education. For our education and training does not so much concentrate on teaching us how to live a happy life as in teaching us how to be successful in the struggle of life. It is inevitable in a society which has its foundations on the basis of competition. The individual has to make an effort to liberate himself from the shackles of early training and society.

Unfulfilled desires lead to self-absorption which is one of the chief causes of unhappiness. Constant thought of the self gives a wrong perspective. Exaggerated expectations from others arouse a desire that they should conform to your own way of thinking. When that is not done, it is nursed as a grievance and

leads to bickering and unhappiness.

To avoid all this, one has to be always on one's guard, checking and correcting one's self, cultivating for bearance, toleration and charity. I shall now give a few positive suggestions which in my opinion are conducive to make life happy.

*“Work”*. It is the most essential factor for making happy life. But it must be constructive and productive work. All occupation is not work and has not the same results. I am of the opinion that most women of the well-to-do classes, whether educated or not, are suffering from want of work. The old productive occupations like spinning, grinding, pounding, churning, sewing and various others like that have been discarded without being replaced by new ones. The result is worklessness, ennui and boredom. Cinemas and social parties are an easy escape from this boredom and that is why they are so popular in the modern world. Rushing from place to place in search of occupation and pleasure is most exciting but it is not happiness and betrays a shallow and empty mind. It is the duty of every house-wife, therefore, to keep herself usefully employed so as to be able to keep cheerful and make the house-hold happy.

“Impersonal Interest”. This gives great zest

of the work in hand; the drudgery of its details wears off. The faith in the cause gives something outside the personal self to live for. Such work connects the individual with the outside world and with the world of the past and that of the future. Whether the work is in the sphere of art or poetry, literature, political or social, it at once makes you a part of the great army, which has lead mankind towards a civilized existence. “In individual, mind is concentrated whatever of value the known universe contains and a man who mirrors the world becomes as great as the world,” says Bertrand Russell.

*“Selfless service”*. It is an inexhaustible spring of peace and happiness. This is one of those very few qualities in which a modern young girl is much behind her older forbears. The women of the older generation were capable of giving much more selfless service than the educated girls of today. The lack of it vitiates all education. If education does not teach us to give disinterested service, it is not worth having. Sense of rivalry, envy, competition and jealousy, which is a great source of irritation, is eliminated if disinterested service is the only motive of our actions. Work is then a pleasure and a source of great joy.

*“Chaste love”*, Love and beauty and God are



*said to be the same.* Love is called divine. But only that love is divine which makes one forget the self; which urges one to merge the identity with the object loved. Such love raises one above this mundane world to divine height. The heart rejoices because of the very fact that it loves. It wants nothing in return, it expects nothing. Its only joy is giving and the privilege of loving and serving. That is real love which is worthwhile. When that is perfected all struggle, pain and sorrow melts, all that remains is peace, joy, love and happiness. The worldly love is often narrow, possessive, and selfish. It gives rise to fear and jealousy. The person loved gives a sort of security and protection which the lover values. It narrows and causes unhappiness. The love of most wives for their husbands and even the love of some mothers for their children is of this variety. All efforts should be made to purify love and make it of the divine variety.

*“Happiness is of two kinds” says Bertrand Russell, “Plain fancy or animal and spiritual.”* Cultured people cannot be satisfied with plain or animal pleasures alone. They are of the body. But men of culture need something more than that. They need the satisfaction of the spirit and the intellect. The duty of a modern house-wife therefore, does not cease

with the care of the brute in the man. She has to cater for the spiritual and intellectual needs of the family. Such satisfaction, she can give best by engaging herself in useful work, by cultivating impersonal interest and the qualities of selfless service and chaste love. The more she purifies herself and the more she perfects herself, the happier will be the family of which the wife and the mother is the life and centre.

\*\*\*

\* *“Better to be strong than pretty and useless.”*

*Lilith Saintcrow,*

\* *“As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world.”*

*Virginia Woolf*

## **Home and Society**

I like the idea of looking upon the home as a castle, well-fortified with the armaments of love and mutual understanding to repel the onslaughts of the struggles of life. But for that purpose it need not be exclusive. Communication with the outside world is essential for the spiritual, intellectual and physical well-being of the home. The love of the family may not be so absorbing as to leave no room for others. True love has a great capacity for expansion. It should be given an ever wider scope with the ultimate object of bringing the whole world into its orbit. Charity and unselfish love for others should, therefore, be consciously and constantly cultivated. There is no fear of the home ties getting slack on that account.

The more the home unit is consolidated the stronger will be the link binding the individual with the nation and humanity at large. Our ideals of home life in the past have been somewhat exclusive. There has been an over-emphasis on family loyalties. The play of emotion was confined, to the circle of the family so that every family got centered in itself. Sympathies and interests became narrow. A disinterested aloofness to witness to what happened in the country and the world became the habit of men and women. The affairs of the country were left to a few individuals with whom

no one else had any concern. This selfish mentality of aloofness is pathological. It causes the disintegration of society as it has done in India. We would never have been reduced to the present condition of degradation, if that had not been the guiding philosophy of our life. Moreover, human civilization and our country have reached a stage when such aloofness is no longer possible. There is so much of interconnection and interdependence that no one can live an isolated life in the modern world. A reconciliation has to be brought about between the family and the outside world and both have to be saved and conserved as both are equally needed by the individual. This reconciliation is not very difficult except in rare cases where the demands of the outside world on the individual are so pressing and numerous that they begin to interfere with family life. But we have to deal with average men and women.

I make a few suggestions which if carried out faithfully, would enable every young house-wife to serve the country effectively without interfering with her household duties. A determination should be made:

1. To make exclusive use of swadeshi, with preference to khadi. This should apply not only to cloth but to other articles of domestic use as well.

2. To make at least the domestic servants and their families literate. Wonderful results can be achieved if one hour a day is regularly given to this work.

3. To give 10% of the income for charitable purpose. For those whose income is below Rs. 500 a month, the percentage may be a little less. But those getting five hundred and over should decidedly be able to give 10%, if not more.

4. To spin the charkha regularly for half an hour a day.

These are very simple things to do, very easy if one has the will, very difficult if the will to do them is not there. But they are earnest of the bona-fides of the modern girl. If her education is true and if she has really benefitted by what has been taught to her in school and college, she ought to find no difficulty in adopting the above suggestions. By following them she will be making a great contribution towards solving some of the very grave problems of the country. This quiet work at home will be more valuable than much of the noisy work which finds cheap publicity in the newspapers. It will also bring peace of mind and satisfaction of conscience.

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## **Duties of Educated Women**

I felt happy at the sight of so many young women belonging to all communities gathered together to receive their certificates of graduation, particularly when I know that those whom I see before me are only a small part of a much larger number who pass through the Universities every year. On an occasion like this, I cannot help comparing the conditions of today with those of my young days when a woman graduate was a novelty and the education of women was still a controversial subject. Sending a young girl to school was considered to be a dangerous venture and an educated woman was supposed to be an insurgent animal whom it was difficult to fit into the surroundings of the home. Specters of homes breaking up and of families disintegrating arose in the heated imaginations of those who were afraid to give education to girls. Serious discussions took place in homes where individuals discussed the subject threadbare and debates took place in public, in the press and on the platform. To educate woman or not to educate her was the great question. The last two decades have brought about a complete transformation and the education of women is no longer a controversial subject, particularly among the urban higher and middle

classes. In spite of the many defects of our educational systems, the desire for women's education is so overwhelming that the tide of the numbers of school and college going girls is constantly swelling.

It is admitted on all hands that the education provided for our women is not of the best type. Without any plan or fore-thought they have simply been thrown into the cast prepared for men and we all know how miserably that system has failed to satisfy the needs even of men. I will not tire you by enumerating the many defects with which this system is bristling. They are too well known to bear repetition here. I shall nevertheless make a few constructive criticisms with suggestions.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that practically all educationists and parents are dissatisfied with the present system and that educational reform is engaging the attention of most of them. As a result some improvements have been made, but a thorough overhauling of the system is needed before it can be expected to fulfill its purpose.

The purpose of education, as I conceive it to be, is two-fold, first, to equip the individual with the necessary training to get the best out of life and secondly, to fit him to be a useful member of society.

I shall deal with the first object now.

It has been said that living is an art and needs learning before one is able to make the best use of the brief span of life granted to each one of us. For that purpose, inherent latent qualities have to be drawn out and developed so that they lead to the perfect evolution of the individual. The inborn qualities of a child have to be unfolded to enable him to use his senses in order that he should see and hear, observe and think, and work properly. This cannot be done by reading books, passing examinations, memorizing facts and theories. It can be achieved gradually by the constant exercise of the senses, by practice and experience. Learning, therefore, far from being divorced from life has, to be of real and of any practical use, be closely related to it. It has to be directed towards the attainment of the object in view, viz, as stated above, of teaching individual to live a full, useful and rich life. The present day education is sadly lacking in many of these essentials. Many highly educated people are misfits in life. Unemployment among graduates resulting in great unhappiness and discontent is also to a large extent due to this system of education. To avoid this maladjustment and subsequent worries every child should be thoroughly trained in the profession, he has

to adopt in his life. I am therefore, of opinion that a vocational bias should be given to the education of each child early in life and even advanced college education should have a bearing on it. Subjects chosen pointlessly and haphazardly, merely with a view to get marks in examinations, are of no practical use to the individual in after life. The elements of study should be such as will serve as a preparation for the work to be undertaken later on.

It is as necessary for a woman to have a profession as it is for a man. Without that women's economic independence cannot be achieved. The present education qualifies young men for government jobs, both clerical and administrative. But the only occupation that general education opens out for women is teaching. That line of work is fast getting over-crowded. Moreover, those who enter it do so without adequate preparation. The generality of our women does not desire a profession. Some of them take to teaching merely to pass the intervening period between the finishing of their education and the time of their marriage. This is neither fair to the organization under which they work nor to themselves. I feel that women should take their work more seriously and must adopt some profession or another as their own,

for which they should get adequate training. To avoid inefficiency teachers in the college classes should have specialized knowledge of their subjects.

I know it is difficult for a woman to harmonize marriage with profession. But an adjustment is possible and, by the mutual cooperation of husband and wife, such an adjustment has successfully been made in many cases. Although I am strongly of opinion that every woman should be trained to a profession so that she may be able to earn her living if need arises. I do not hold that every married woman should necessarily take to work. Home making is no work of a mean order and those who choose to devote their full time to work in the home are as usefully employed as those working outside. Marriage is a vocation by itself and every woman in addition to her own profession should be specially equipped with a training to fulfill the obligations of married life. A new syllabus as comprehensive as life itself, will have to be formulated for that purpose. It is a matter of satisfaction that domestic science, physical training, sports and athletics, music, drawing, painting and mother-craft, nowadays, figure prominently in some of the women's educational institutions. But the number of such institutions, which lay special emphasis to these subjects, is very

small. They deserve much more study and attention that is given to them at present. However, a beginning, though humble, has been made. But successful home-making requires knowledge of many more subjects than those mentioned above. Mere efficiency in house-keeping, though necessary, is not sufficient by itself to make a home. Feed the brute man, if you want to keep him in order, is an often repeated dictum. But man does not live by bread alone is another, which should also be remembered. The material surroundings of a house, the delicacy of its dishes, the quality of its furniture, the colour of its curtains, the cleanliness of its surroundings are of great importance but if the spirit of understanding and co-operation does not exist, the home is not a home but a dead picture, which is beautiful to look at but devoid of life. It is the women's business to infuse life into the home which is the creation of a spirit of mutual understanding and co-operation among the members of the household. It is this which fills the home with radiant joy. Love is a powerful factor in breeding that atmosphere, but that again is not all. An understanding of human nature and the motive force of human action, knowledge of dealing with people, a habit of mutual give and take, are essential qualities for this purpose. And they can all be acquired by

study and practice. I, therefore, suggest that a study of human psychology, of child psychology, of sex life, of how to deal with fellow beings, should form a part of women's education as a preparation for marriage. This aspect of women's education has received very little attention in India. The change in the conditions of life and the growing freedom of women have prominently brought to the surface the need for such an education. Many times, a home breaks or is unhappy because of lack of knowledge of how to adjust mutual relationships. I would recommend to all educated women, a study of psychology and more particularly of psychoanalysis.

In former days, with all the drawbacks, the joint family had the one great advantage that it taught to women a great deal of give and take for the sake of adapting themselves to the ways of the family. It also formulated, early in life, habits of giving unselfish service to the family which were a great asset in later life. Good advice and guidance from the elders was also available in times of difficulty. Now that families have become smaller, girls have to depend on their own resources. Hence, the need for special training is much greater than before.

I would now like to make a few remarks about



education of the individual with respect to the life of the group or the nation. No one in the world can or should live an isolated life. We have reached a stage in civilization when even nation isolation is not possible. An individual bears to the nation the same relation that a protoplasmic cell bears to the physical body. The well-being of the smallest cell is necessary for the whole body. Each has its own life but the two lives of the part and the whole are so closely interwoven that they are one for all practical purposes. The cells while living their separate lives alone, combine to live a common life for the welfare of the body. Each cell subordinates itself to the common good of the whole, for the safety and protection of which it often sacrifices itself. Human organizations are built on the same pattern. Individuals have their personal family lives as well as common group or national lives. In a well-organized society, the consummation of the life, one should live for the good of the other. In the absence of such an adjustment, disorder creeps into the body leading to death. From this point of view, group or national life is even more important than individual life and it is evident that all steps should be taken to build it up. There should, necessarily, be provision in the educational system to train children for the common life. Unfortunately

our current educational system fails us grievously in this respect. Our national life would have been much healthier if our schools and colleges had discharged their duties in this connection. Education which fails to produce good citizens fails in its primary objective. Our national life is expanding; self-government is developing, common responsibilities are growing. The need for good and responsible citizens is greater at this time than at any other time in Indian history. If at this time of our need, educational institutions continue to fail us, they do not deserve to live.

The question of language in my opinion is intimately connected with good citizenship. Without knowledge of the mother language, one is incapable of imbibing the spirit and the nature of one's own culture and civilization. Identification of the masses become difficult and the power to serve diminishes. This lack of knowledge of the mother tongue creates a barrier between the educated classes and the ignorant masses which it is difficult to cross. I need hardly to say that so far our universities have neglected the claims of the languages of the country. It is a sorry sight to see our young graduates refusing to speak or write in their own language, simply because they cannot do it. I would suggest that Hindustani be given a high status

in the syllabus with the ultimate object of making it the medium of all education. I am glad to see that some universities have now taken to teaching Indian languages.

I have often suggested, and *I repeat the suggestion that social service should be started in all schools and colleges*. Some of the men's colleges have made a beginning. But in women's institutions, it is conspicuous by its absence. Various activities like literacy work, making garments for poor children, visiting Harijan quarters, reading out news to illiterate people, giving them talks on various subjects, organizing games or clubs for them can, with the guidance of their teachers, be easily taken up by girls. I go so far as to suggest that degree certificates should not be awarded to graduates till they have put in at least six months, whole time honorary social service in one department or another. The deplorable lack of public workers among women cannot be removed unless some such means are adopted. Social service is a great counterpoise for the numerous defects of the present educational system. It helps in the formation of character. It enlarges human sympathy, gives inner balance and understanding and above all inculcates a spirit of selfless devotion.

I would like to make special mention of one or two points which in my opinion are grave defects of modern education. The tastes of educated girls have become very expensive. Their standard of living has become higher than can be justified in a poor country like ours. The love of luxuries, the desire for comfort and a distaste for manual work have become common characteristics of educated girls. As a result, in spite of our having advanced on many fronts of knowledge, efficiency and self-confidence, we have gone back in one very important respect and that is the spirit of unselfishness. Modern educated women have decidedly become more self-centered and more selfish than their predecessors, which is a very serious loss. Everything should be done to counteract this growing evil. The environments of our educational institution should be such as to encourage and teach simple living. *We must prepare ourselves to be able to manage with small incomes*. In the near future the incomes of what are now the richer classes in India are going to decline and as long as the grinding poverty of the masses lasts, we should not be sorry for this change. We should, therefore, learn to live within limited incomes, and habits conforming to these should be acquired during days of student-hood.

I now want to say to you, my young friends, that you are much more fortunate than the women of my generation. You have had better chances of receiving education. You have more freedom and less restrictions. Take care that you take full advantage of the opportunities offered to you, with greater rights do greater responsibilities. Freedom will be yours, more and more in the days to come. Remember, it is a hard mistress. It is most exacting. You get it only if you rise up to it and you maintain it only if you work hard to deserve it. *Learn to bind yourself so that you may be free. Create your own limitations so that you may rise to unlimited heights. Obey so that you may be able to command. Live a disciplined life. Do not allow yourself to be carried away by mere catch phrases and enthusiasm. Think before you act and when you do act see that you have the courage of your conviction and are prepared to stand by it.*

One last word and I finish. It is a common practice in our country for men and women to plead for communal unity, to exhort the people to promote amity and goodwill among different communities. To me these exhortation and pleadings seem undignified and I feel humiliated when I hear such things said. I feel hurt at the expression of these sentiments as I

would if somebody asked me to live at peace with my own brother and my sister. I look upon the different communities living in India as members of the same family, children of the same motherland. Racially and culturally they are the same. Their interests are identical. But unfortunate differences have arisen among some of them which cannot be removed by mere exhortations but by working for the removal of the causes thereof. I ask you to devote yourselves seriously to the removal of these causes. Achieve Hindu-Muslim unity not by talking on it.

You Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and Christian girls have all lived and studied together. You have made friends with each other. I dare say you love each other as you would your own sisters. See that you are loyal to each other's community as much as to each other individually. Study the question and devote yourself to the cause notwithstanding any difficulties that may come in your way. The work of preparing India for the new life is yours. Do all, you can make it a mighty united nation living a righteous life of amity and goodwill, at perfect peace with one another, an example of solidarity for others to follow.

## **Woman in the New Social Order**

*Invited by the R.S.D. College, Ferozpur, in 1940, Mrs. Rameshwari Nehru delivered an extempore talk on the above-mentioned subject. The College authorities took notes of her speech and printed it subsequently in the present form for distribution. Mrs. Nehru outlines the work of the Women's Sub-Committee of National Planning Committee, of which she was a member. The bulk of the talk is divided into four heads: educational, social, economic and political position of women in the present and the new social order, forming altogether a compendium of information on women's movement in India. Mrs. Nehru arguing against sex discrimination observes that principles of freedom and equality should be applied to women as much as they are sought to be applied to men.*

You have asked me to speak on "The place of woman in a planned Society". I shall try to confine my remarks within the four corners of the title, although its nature is such that it is difficult to do so. My difficulty arises from the fact that what 'Planned Society' means is not defined. It can be interpreted in different ways and is being interpreted in many ways by different people. The term 'National Planning' has come into vogue during the last several years. Russia was the first

country which used this word and made its plans for the development of the country. Later on the word and the idea was taken up by other countries. Germany, Italy, America and others who followed Russia in making their national plans and executing them with vigour. Lately the idea has been taken up by India, and as you are aware, a National Planning Committee has been formed and has been working strenuously for nearly a year now. The work of Planning for India is more difficult than it was in other countries. For a while, other countries like Russia, Germany and Italy planned certain accepted ideologies, those of communism, Nazism and fascism, and had the support of the people behind them, India has no such preconceived ideology. The Indian people as a whole or the Indian National Congress are not committed to any of the "isms" of the west for the promotion of which the Planning Committee could work. It has therefore; set before it the aim of finding ways and means of raising the general standard of living in the country. In that noble task, it has the support of the whole country.

But the question of raising the general living conditions of the masses is not an easy one to deal with. An adequate handling of it may necessitate fundamental changes in the whole framework of

society. It is true that it is principally an economic question. But economics cannot be dealt in isolation from other spheres of life. Social and even religious problems have to be tackled before achieving any real success in raising the standard of the masses. It is because of this interdependence of all aspects of life that the planning committee had to extend itself till it seemed to cover life itself. It has 29 Sub-Committees dealing with different subjects relating to all phases of national life. Women being the integral part of the nation could naturally not be left out. They were to be deeply affected by any suggestions the Committee might make with a view to lay the foundations of the new order of society visualized by it. They had, therefore, to be consulted and their wishes ascertained. It was with that object that the women's Sub-Committee was appointed to make recommendations as to the role women were expected to play in the planned society of the future. The Sub-Committee was asked to make recommendations for the removal of all disabilities of women whether legal, social, economic or political, so as to bring their status on an equal footing with men. The Sub-Committee therefore, had to deal with all the questions which were under the consideration of different Sub-Committees. Thus its scope became

wider and its work more comprehensive and difficult than that of any other Sub-Committee.

The principle which this Sub-Committee adopted for its guidance was that of securing perfect equality with men in all aspects of life. In one word, therefore, the position of women in a planned society as visualized by this Committee is that of an equal partner of man who will share his sorrows and his joys, his duties and his rights with her. Indian woman is no longer in a mood to tolerate an inferior or a subordinate position. She may have to suffer hardship for the achievement of this objective but as far as I can see, she is prepared for all the sacrifices needed for it.

I say in parenthesis here that the views I am expressing before you this afternoon are my personal views and they have nothing to do with any organization. But I may also tell you that they are main principles, upheld, by most women's organizations and by all advanced women in the country. I am sure that I have the backing also of most of the ladies present here this afternoon.

I shall divide my talk into four main heads: education, social, economic and political. I shall try to show you the present position of women in all these spheres of life and then make suggestions based on the

principle of sex equality.

Women's education no doubt has made great strides in India recently, yet it is far behind that of men. In all grades, from the primary to the university stage number of girls is much smaller than that of men. The literacy figures in India as a whole are 2% for women and 6% for men. The amount of money spent also both by Government and the public, is much more on men's education than on that of women's. Although among certain classes in urban areas women's education is valued, it is yet considered a bad investment. Even among the advanced sections there is a lack of enthusiasm where women's education is concerned. In rural as well as in urban areas, masses are still opposed to the idea of educating their women folk which they consider not only as unnecessary but as bad and harmful. We have, therefore, to work hard to change the idea of the common people, also to persuade the Government and the people to spend much more money to bring women's education at par with that of men. Much leeway has to be made before we are able to achieve equality in the sphere of education.

I might say a word in connection with the kind of education to be given to women. I am not an admirer of the present system of education prevailing

in the country; it is all the more unsuited to women. The only change ordinarily demanded is that woman should be taught her duties as a mother and wife. A sort of atmosphere is created in which it is forgotten that she is a human being and a citizen also. All that is remembered is that she is a wife and a mother. It breeds a complex which dwarfs the mental and ethical growth of the women; a sort of 'lady-like' education is given to her which is artificial and superficial. I, therefore, do not want separate syllabus for women. The only difference which I advocate in the education of the two is that home-science and mother-craft should make compulsory subjects in women's education. In any other way, a woman's education should be as wide as that of man. She should be given equal opportunities for training to adopt any profession she likes and must be given a free choice to follow her own path in life.

To me it seems an un-rebuttable fact that women occupy a much lower status in social life than men. But there are men who refute this axiom and who say that it is only due to a perverted aggressive view engendered by Western ideas that such assertions are made. In their opinion, Indian women have nothing to complain of. Their status in the home and society and the country is enviable. In support of their opinion



they quote much that great writers and renowned poets of olden days have written books about women. But these good-intentioned people while indulging in the hyperboles of poets overlook the facts of life.

I shall first draw your attention to the unequal marriage laws prevailing in society. Marriage is a sacrament amongst Hindus. The marriage tie is eternal which even death cannot break. It is a good idea! But it has lost all its value owing to its one-sided observance. While it is binding on women, it leaves men absolutely free to do as they choose. They can marry as many times as they like and there are many who take advantage of this freedom. Even the restrictions which were formerly observed, have lost their force. According to the "SHASTRAS" men were allowed to remarry only in case they did not have a male issue and that also with the consent of their wives. Now-a-days the sweet will of man is sufficient to give him a right to remarry in the life-time of his former wife and in the presence of any number of children. The wives' position is further deteriorated owing to the fact that often the second wives postulate before marriage that the former wife will not stay in the house. Thus the poor deserted wife's, condition is pitiable. She not only

loses her home, husband and children but often has to forego even her maintenance allowance to which she is legally entitled. In many ways, she is in a worse position than a widow. No one should imagine that such cases are rare. Even amongst the educated and the wealthy people such marriages are taking place every day. And what is worse and more regrettable is that many educated young women succumb to the temptation of marrying wealthy, well-settled men even though they are saddled with families. It is a great shame that such cases are tolerated in good society and not a word of protest is raised. In the face of these facts, who can say that the eternal tie idea of the sacramental marriage is truly observed by the Hindus?

While men are free to treat their living wives in the manner indicated above, women, even virgins, have to undergo enforced life-long widowhood in memory of their dead husbands. The number of virgin widows in India is appalling. Custom and prejudice deprive them of all the amenities of life. They cannot eat well. They cannot dress well. They cannot take part in the gaieties of life. They are considered inauspicious.' Their only part in life is service to the family. The idea of service is good but it should be voluntary, to be of any value. Enforced service is no better than slavery.

Propaganda is being carried on in the country to remove the prejudice against widows for a few scores of years. That great philanthropist, the late Sir Gangaram, was a great friend of the Hindu widows. He placed large sums of money to be spent on bettering their conditions. With his money some societies for the protection of widows and for promoting their remarriage have been started. I have been in touch with the work of one such society. After hard work of nearly 20 years and after spending large sums of money that society was instrumental in getting only 600 widows remarried. Considering the labour spent, we do not feel that it can be considered a great achievement. The widow Remarriage Act validating widow remarriage is there but very few marriages take place in spite of all the propaganda done in its behalf.

For the removal of injustice perpetrated in this sphere, I suggest the replacement of the present unequal marriage laws by a monogamous marriage law and by the grant of divorce in hard cases with safe-guards, for the maintenance of the divorced wife. This right of divorce under specified conditions has to be granted to avoid possible immorality which might result in the wake of enforced monogamous marriages.

We have to do a great deal of propaganda

against the double moral standard maintained in society. We judge the right and wrong of actions not according to the merits of the case but according to sex of the agent. While it is considered only natural that young men should sow their wild oats, any slip on the part of a woman regardless of the difficult conditions in which it may occur, is sufficient to condemn her for life. How many cases of such occasional errors, many or which take place owing to ignorance or for want of experience, cost young girls and widows a whole life's misery? Even parents are hard-hearted enough to throw girls out into the streets in such cases. Every day Hindu girls in such predicaments are either becoming Muslims or are swelling the ranks of the prostitutes. There is no other alternative left to them. The existence of the DEVADASI system and commercialized vices are also due to the same double standard of morality prevailing in society. I suggest that both men and women should be judged with the same standard and in the case of both the moral standard should be high. A great deal of suffering can be removed and the evil of prostitution can be abolished only if the moral standard of men is raised.

The laws of the guardianship of children place women at a disadvantage. In cases of separation the

father is considered to be the natural guardian of the child. Male relatives, especially in rich families, are given preference over widowed mothers. All that is very unjust. A mother, who gives birth to the child and makes sacrifices for it, ought to have some right of guidance and control over the child in the eyes of the law. I suggest that the mother should be considered the natural guardian of the child and should be deprived of her right only in cases of proved inability.

The economic dependence of women has been more or less a world-wide question. But few countries in the modern age can beat the Hindu woman in her lack of rights over property. From birth to death, she depends on her relatives for maintenance. Without going into the intricacies of the Hindu Law which is very complicated indeed, I can say without fear of contradiction that in actual practice she has no right over the family property except that of maintenance. In her maiden state, in addition to the right of maintenance from the parental property, she has the right of dowry on the occasion of the marriage in the married state she has unlimited right over the STRIDHAN and can claim maintenance from the husband in all circumstances. In the widowed state, under certain conditions, she has a limited right over the property but in actual practice

she seldom has full control even on the income of her property. It is not possible for me to go into the details of this vast subject in the short time at my disposal. Suffice it to say that the laws of inheritance are unfair to the Hindu woman from the beginning to the end and require a thorough overhauling. People's attention is sufficiently drawn towards this injustice and various measures are being taken to make the laws more equitable. But all that is being done is half-hearted and does not meet full requirements. My suggestion is that husband and wife should be made co-owners of each other's property and earnings with equal legal rights and responsibilities. It may be the practice already followed in some cases but unless it becomes legally binding, the status of women will not improve. The miseries of the deserted wives and widows which are so common today, will be considerably mitigated if the above suggestion is embodied in law.

I would like to point out that all my remarks about marriage and inheritance concern the Hindu women only. In both these matters Muslim women fare much better than their Hindu sisters. Their laws especially the SHARIAT laws are much more equitable.

Apart from the inheritance question which

applies to a very limited number, it is most essential that women's right to earn money should be recognized. Even in the most advanced circles, today a woman following a profession is looked upon with disapproval. It is considered to be subversive to the family well-being. But while these ideas are entertained by high and middle class people, it is forgotten that a very large percentage of our women are forced to follow economic pursuits out of sheer necessity. They have to engage themselves in work outside their homes for inordinately long hours just to find food for the hungry mouths of their children. They are indeed needed at home, but owing to grim poverty, they can make no arrangements for the looking after to their little children. I think we ought to be more concerned about the well-being of these women and their families than that of a well-placed educated woman who chooses to adopt the unfrequented course of earning for herself.

I would, therefore, repeat once again that there should be absolutely no ban to a woman's following any profession she chooses. Owing to her different physiological make-up, she will naturally be restricted in her choice but no legal or social limitations may be put in her way. On the contrary, all facilities should be provided to her to attain economic independence.

In the political field, Indian women have achieved a very good status without much effort or exertion. Women have the right in franchise and have representation in the legislatures of the country. According to the new Constitution of 1935, the voting qualifications of women are not the same as those of men. The women of India as represented by the All India Women's Conference and other women's organizations, protested against the individual distinction based on sex and urged complete equality. The wifehood qualification according to which wives of qualified voters were entitled to vote, was especially objected to. Women are given reserved seats in all the legislative bodies, both Councils and Assemblies. As a result of this the number of our women legislators is very large say, 54 or 55 which is more than any one country can claim to have. Women have also been given responsible position in autonomous provinces under the constitution and everywhere they have discharged their duties well. We have had two women ministers, one in U.P and the other in Bihar, 2 Parliamentary Secretaries one in the Punjab and one in Bombay, 2 Deputy Presidents of Legislative Assemblies. Moreover, there are number of women municipal councillors, members of Educational Advisory Boards

and various other executive and advisory bodies. Women's work in all these bodies has been universally acclaimed and it is admitted on all hands that everywhere their work has made a rich contribution towards the progress of the nation.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that in Punjab, even in the year 1940, women were deprived of the right of municipal franchise. It is a great blot on the fair name of our otherwise progressive province. Men and women should both make an effort to remove this anomaly. The Punjab Branch of the All India Women's Conference has put forth the demand in a resolution passed a few months back. I hope it will have the support of all and soon our Province will come into line in this respect with the other advanced provinces of the country.

I have tried to show you as best I could in the short time at my disposal, what our present position in society is and what we want it to be in future. We may not forget that the question of women's emancipation is only a part of the larger question of emancipation of submerged and suppressed humanity. Old notions have got to be discarded; deep psychological changes have to come before women can achieve the objective, they have placed before them. For a full realization of their

aspirations, the whole framework of society may have to be changed. Human freedom is inherent in women's freedom and those who are working for the later cause are automatically promoting the former.

There may be a few vacillating souls amongst us who may doubt the wisdom of the course adopted by the women's movement and who may also doubt its practicability. But it is only lack of faith which raises such doubts in the mind. Freedom and equality are principles which are universally accepted as good for the human race. India is also a great devotee of these golden principles. We must therefore, make sure that they are applied to women as well as to men and that the mutual relationship of the sexes is regulated in strict accordance with them. To my mind, there is not the slightest doubt that a new world of love and freedom, of peace and happiness, of mutual appreciation and helpful co-operation will come into being when women obtain an equal status with those of men in actual practice and live as equal partners with them. The beauties of such life can only be realized by experience. I therefore, appeal to all to discard their fears, to have faith and to work for the day when men and women may live and love and work together as equal companions of one another.

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## Women's Conference

### Presidential Address

I wish I could address you in Hindustani today. We have been advocating a common language for the country and our organization has recognized the claims of *Hindustani* as the "*lingua franca*" for India. In a women's assembly of an All-India character, Hindustani is the only and the most suitable medium of expression. But, unfortunately, the time for its usage on an occasion like the present has not yet come. I still have to labour through a foreign language to make myself understood. I beseech your forgiveness for the flaws in my language and hope that before long, we shall be relieved of this handicap, and Hindustani will be generally understood and spoken even in the South.

The All India Women's Conference today completes fourteen years of its life. Much cannot be expected during fourteen years as after all it is a very short time in the life of people. But in these abnormal times when scientific inventions have so accelerated that it defies all human calculations, living organisms are keeping pace with the machine. And so the progress of Indian women during this period, even measured according to the present standards,

is not disappointing. I remember those days of the late twenties. We had just started agitation on various social problems concerning women. Till then, the work of women's educational and social advancement was mainly carried on either by men or under their direction. Women generally were unfamiliar with these problems and their conferences on an All-India basis were a novelty. Women's participation in public work was rare and, although there existed hundreds of woman's societies in different parts of the country, there was no co-ordination or co-operation between them. The picture today is different. Among the well-to-do classes, the number of highly educated women has grown enormously. "Purdah" is fast disappearing, the age of marriage has been considerably raised, there is more freedom of movement and larger contacts all round. The number of women interested in public affairs is much larger. The women's movement is directed and guided solely by themselves. They are found working in many spheres of life. In the district boards, municipalities, education committees, legislatures, in the government cabinets, in the national movements, though still in small numbers, they are making their contributions creditably. I do not attribute all this progress to the Women's



Conference. Various forces have been at work. Religious and social reform agencies, political and constructive work of the Congress, contact with the outside world, the spread of education and last but not least, the spirit of the times have all contributed towards this emancipation. And now we see a new life pulsating through women, who are thinking, planning and agitating for the removal of their wrongs. The desire for change, which was so far more or less confined to the educated sections of society has gone beyond them and is affecting the comparatively backward classes of women also. The success of the Marwari Women's anti-Purdah Conference, held in Calcutta, the other day, initiated and organized by themselves, is an instance in point. The spirit of defiance shown by the 'zanana' women who came out to organize their procession leading it on horseback, was something to be marveled at. It is a sign of the times and shows how imperceptibly the women's movement is penetrating into and transforming the various strata of society.

The special contribution of our Conference to the women's movement is the definite shape and colour that it has given to it. It has focused public attention on women's problems. It has created machinery for

the formulation of authentic views on such questions. It has consolidated and presented women's demands to the public and the various authorities. It has decidedly succeeded in bringing under its banner a large number of women than any other all India women's organisation. Its annual sessions bring into contact women workers from all parts of India. It has certainly established a spiritual family relationship between them which in itself is an invaluable gain. It has inculcated in women the habit of tolerance of differences of opinion, of appreciating each other's good points, of working together. It has given them their first lessons in democracy which, from the success achieved, seems to me more suited to the feminine temperament than to the masculine. The annual conference held in different branches and sub-branches, particularly in small towns, create a stir among women, draw them together, make them think and form opinions on different subjects. This has created a great awakening among women.

The expansion of the scope of the conference from merely relationship has given it a new life. It is not possible for any organization, even though it be of women, to live only on making demands for feminine right. A living organization needs growth and

no narrow limits for its self-expression are possible. It was, therefore, a natural evolution of the growing life of our organization. I need not point out that our main field of work is social and educational and in our resolutions we have dealt with these questions exhaustively. It is evident that all the reforms advocated by us were not capable of being achieved in a short span of time by any agency, government or private. They are too much to mention here. I shall mention only a few by way of examples.

In the sphere of education, we have laid great emphasis on free and primary compulsory education both for boys and girls and we have advocated more expenditure on women's education. We have demanded better sanitary conditions, trained teachers and various other reforms for schools. Some of our suggestions have been taken up and acted upon. Fine arts, advanced domestic science, provincial languages are included as optional subjects for college courses by some of the Universities. Women's hostels have been started by others. These matters repeatedly formed the subject matter of our resolutions. Some of our own branches enthusiastically took up the work of the removal of illiteracy and achieved good results. Others are running Hindustani, English, Sewing, Music classes, of which

hundreds of women are taking advantage.

The Lady Irwin College of New Delhi stands as an outstanding example of our efforts for giving domestic science a respectable place in the curriculum of women's education.

In the social sphere, we have made a humble contribution towards the removal of evil customs and the obliteration of unjust laws. Among the many reforms that we have urged include the removal of 'Purdah', early marriage, widow remarriage, abolition of the dowry system, equal moral standard for men and women and economic independence of women. Our methods of work have been propagated by means of meetings and conferences, but some of us have urged the necessity of legal enactments for the removal of these practices. I personally feel that conversion is a surer and better method of reform than compulsion. Compulsion even with the best of motives leads to bad result. In the matter of reforms, the law can be used only as an aid, helping the reformers to press in their points where unnecessary obstinacy is displayed. Had the Child Marriage Restraint Act been backed by intensive and widespread propaganda, its success, in spite of all other drawbacks, would have been ensured.

We have advocated radical changes in the

personal laws particularly of the Hindus, and have demanded that the law with regard to inheritance, marriage, guardianship of the children and other matters should deal equitably with the rights of women. We want that polygamy should be abolished by law and divorce on specific conditions should be introduced among the Hindus. Bills embodying these reforms have become a normal feature of our legislatures but few have been destined to bear the test of the anvil and become the law of the land. A more drastic method of dealing with these unjust laws is indicated. I agree with the suggestion made by some of our members that an equitable comprehensive law based on the equality of the sexes should be enacted even though its adoption by individuals in place of the present divergent laws of the community may be voluntary.

Acts for the suppression of immoral traffic, for the protection of children, for the abolition of the Devadasi system and for various other purposes of a similar nature have been demanded by us and are now on our statute books. We have tried to do some investigation and organization work among working women and have embodied their demands of better housing, antenatal and prenatal maternity benefits, crèches, nursery school etc., in our resolutions.

From what I have mentioned merely by way of the nature of our work, it is evident that the scope of our work has become as extensive as life itself. Necessarily, therefore, practical work was done only in a very few instances. Most of our work consisted of preliminary opinion investigations and consolidation and focusing on these subjects. This has exposed us to criticism from many quarters, which we must determine to live down by devoting ourselves afresh to the task before us.

Among the subjects chosen for discussion at the present session and for work during the coming year, I would like to offer a few remarks on untouchability and communal unity from the social group and cottage industries and housing from the economic group.

Removal of untouchability is my own subject and I can say from experience that work in that sphere is most purifying. It brings us nearer to the realization of "Ahimsa". It helps us to see ourselves in the true perspective as perpetrators of terrible injustices on a vast community for which each one of us is individually and collectively responsible. Harijan service, like the worship of God, lifts one morally to a higher plane. It is like the redemption of a crushing debt which relieves the soul of its heavy burden. A little contribution

made towards the removal of untouchability, a little effort made to bring light and cheer into the dismal lives of these victims of our oppression will lift us as individuals and as a nation to a higher level. I invite all sister delegates present here and for them, women of the whole country to make the experiment and test the truth of my assertion. This is not the place for me to give practical suggestions for work. I have been making suggestions for decades. Not much direction is needed when the heart is given. It knows how to make its own way. I therefore, make a general appeal for women to take up this work as their own. Some of our branches are doing a little in that direction, and I am grateful to them. But much greater effort is needed and I am sorry to observe that women's contribution to the work is not striking to be proud of. We may not forget that the achievement of our freedom is impossible till we have rectified this great wrong. The awakening among the Harijans is growing very fast with the education they are receiving, but the prejudices of the caste Hindus are not dying out with the same rapidity. This breeds a resentful attitude among rapidity. This breeds a resentful attitude among the Harijans which weakens the growth of the whole nation. Even from the point of view of national freedom, untouchability must go.

Communal unity is another allied chosen subject of the year. Its achievement for our national advance is as fundamental as the removal of untouchability. The nature of this problem bears affinity to the problem of untouchability. Nothing perhaps is more acute and requires more delicate handling. It is a mixture of political, economic and religious elements made complex and difficult of solution by the presence of a third and interested party. But we may not put the blame on the third party and seek absolution of responsibility for ourselves. The very fact that the third party succeeds in creating or augmenting schisms among us shows our weakness. For the removal of that weakness, ways and means must be found. The Women's Conference has done a considerable amount of work to bring the women of all communities on a common platform. I can vouch for the fact that among us there are no distinctions of caste or creed. We do not even remember which religion or community we belong to. On the platform of the Conference, we are just women serving the cause of women and the Motherland. But we have not yet been able to take this amity and goodwill farther than the boundaries of our conference. We ought to make an effort to do this. One point which I would like to bring

to the notice of the delegates is that the number of our Muslim members and delegates is very small. Greater attention should be paid to increase their number and I request my Muslim sister delegates to make it their special concern for the next year. Without their earnest co-operation this work cannot be accomplished. The end of the year must show a large increase of Muslim members on our registers. That in itself will bring the two sister communities a step nearer.

From the economic group one of the subjects that I have chosen for comment is "Cottage Industries." We may not lose ourselves in academic discussions on the comparative merits and demerits of cottage versus large-scale industries. We may only remember that under the present conditions, cottage industries in India are a necessity. It is through them alone that the starving millions can get their daily bread. Our time should, therefore be spent in devising means for their promotion. The starting of training centres, of sales depots, propaganda and several other ways are open to us, but the most effective way is personal patronage. Khadi, of course, is the centre of all village industries. There are not many Khadi wearers among our members. I appeal for a respectable place for Khadi in their wardrobes. Khadi is an acquired taste

and its beauties can be perceived by cultivation. Even its roughness has a charm. It is life-giving to the poor and peace-giving to the rich. An assembly of women, dressed in pure white Khadi is a feast to the eye. Khadi is a symbol of our love for suppressed humanity. It is an expression of our will to be free. Members of a nationalist organization like ours should consider themselves morally bound to wear "Khadi". And closely connected with Khadi is spinning. Sacrificial spinning is as ennobling as Harijan work. Every turn of the wheel and every thread that is spun brings one nearer to the masses. It breeds a mentality which smarts under the injustices of the current social and economic system and strengthens the determination to change it by non-violent means. I therefore, appeal to our members to take to daily sacrificial spinning which will automatically make them supporters of Khadi and of village industries.

Now I come to the last subject, housing. The paucity of houses in India is astonishing. In a country of nearly four hundred million inhabitants, the poor have hardly any houses to live in. Only those, who have travelled widely in the interior of the country, and have closely studied the question, can have an adequate idea of the sufferings caused to men and women on

account of lack of houses. Over-crowding in cities is particularly deplorable. Hundreds of thousands of people spend their lives cramped up in hovels called houses by courtesy. It is not within our scope or power to make up for this deficiency. But we can do something in rousing social conscience against this evil. We can remind the governments and local authorities, the rich and the educated classes that it is their responsibility to take the dumb toiling millions out of this veritable hell. Lack of money should make no excuse. The need is so imminent that if no other means are available, money should be borrowed for building purposes by governments and local boards, co-operative housing societies should be promoted by the people themselves and the rich should be persuaded to invest their money in housing schemes. House rents should be regulated by law to prevent the worst type of exploitation. I have seen landlords taking enormous rents ranging from Rupees 4 to 8 for tiny dingy one-room tenements without any amenities. This sort of exploitation must be stopped forthwith. Owners of agricultural lands should be compelled by law to give decent houses to their tenants. The duty of our Conference is to bring these facts before the public and to persuade them to rectify this great wrong.

I must now say a few words about non-violence in which we have repeatedly declared our unflinching faith. An Indian women's organization could do nothing less. Nonviolence is inbred in an Indian woman. She carries its impress on her soul. The traditions in which she is brought up, the deprivations she has to go through in life, the '*sanskars*' with which she is born or her inherited genius all make her a suitable medium for the expression of non-violence. But that which has been so far latent has to be made patent. At present, an Indian woman's non-violence savours of the non-violence of the weak and the helpless. As such it is worthless. It requires a conscious training to turn it into the non-violence of the strong, without which it cannot acquire the power to resist vice and violence. In the practice of non-violence in life, Mahatma Gandhi expects more from women than from men. Let us by constant effort at self-purification make ourselves worthy of this trust. The best training centres for non-violence are our own homes. But a searchlight has to be turned ever inwards and a constant watch kept on ourselves to make sure that from day to day, the boundaries of our family are extending and the mother's heart is constantly getting bigger to bring within its compass the whole of humanity.



Our responsibility is great. We should never forget that lip service to a cause is worse than no service at all. It weakens us as well as the cause. *Truth and honesty demand that we practice what we preach.* I, therefore, commend it to our members to give serious thought to the ways and means of realizing non-violence in their individual lives. I would suggest a serious study of Gandhian literature. The extension of non-violence from the individual to the group, its application to national and international matters is a new experiment with a technique evolved by Gandhiji in the laboratory of his life in which all through he has experimented with truth. It is a glory and a privilege to be born in his time and be his contemporary. We must do all in our power to deserve that privilege.

One last word and I have done. To those of my brothers who do not agree with the policy of the women's Conference, who see danger in our demand for freedom and sex equality, I say cast off these fears and have trust in us. We shall not fail you nor lose our balance. And even if we do momentarily, I say, to err in freedom is better than to keep straight in slavery. The spectres of disintegration, of disorder, of sex war that haunt some of you occasionally are phantoms of the imagination. There can be no war between the mother

and son, between the father and daughter, brother and sister, husband and wife. And if there can be no war between them, there can be none between man and woman. We have no bitterness in our movement. None is likely to come in. All that we want is to establish equity and fair play in the relations of man and woman as well as man and man. That is the only foundation on which a stable structure of civilized society can be built.

To my co-workers and sister delegates, I want to say this last word that more service is demanded of us, more dedication is called for. Work from where you stand; where destiny has placed you. *Do your best to finish with the old world of tyranny and exploitation and lend your helping hand to bring in the new era of peace and goodwill.*

## **Social Service in Education**

It gives me great pleasure to come into the midst of India's youthful daughters who in ever growing number are flocking to our schools and colleges today. In my early days a gathering of so many promising young ladies engaged in the pursuit of high education was a sight rarely to be seen. A few solitary women, coming from the most advanced sections of society, could, perhaps, be seen here and there, who in their homes or in schools were given a smattering of modern education and formed the only swallows of the coming spring. Who in those days, could have thought that in comparatively so short a time the number of young ladies getting higher education would grow to such large dimensions and that our universities would turn out women graduates with such great speed. The sight, therefore, gladdens my heart.

But, while women's education is growing fast in quantity, we must make sure and see that its quality also keeps pace with it. For, even more than quantity, it is quality that matters. We must be certain that every step that we take is in the right direction, and that our efforts are worth the energy, labour and time that we spend upon them.

Of late, our educational system in general has

been the subject of great criticism. Experts in education and the leaders of the nation are not satisfied with its results and products. Women's education is, of course, a part of the general whole. It follows the general pattern and is open to the same criticisms. These criticisms at the present day are engaging the attention of the educational authorities all over the country and are thrashed out in all their details in their meetings and conferences. I do not propose to deal with any of those criticisms today. My object in this address is simply to draw your attention to the high position occupied by social service in education.

To show the importance of social service in education, it would have been better if I could have explained to you the purpose and object of education. But it is not easy to say, in a few words, what that object is. Education has so many facets and such varied aspects, its strands are so closely intertwined with those of life itself, that it is almost as difficult to give a true definition of the purpose of education as that of life. Leaving that aside, therefore, I shall deal with the various points of view which I consider social service, to be an essential part of a student's life.

Firstly, from the standpoint of intellect. To understand the significance of things, to realize their

importance and to grasp them from all points of view, it is essential that a student should come into contact with real life as early as possible. The Montessori and Kindergarten methods of teaching are not necessary for small children only; the necessity and importance of the basic principles of these systems subsists throughout life. The eyes are the most effective instruments to work upon the mind. As the shape of an island or a river or a lake or a gulf is more impressed on the mind of the child if he sees them in real life, than when it is given a mere verbal definition, so the affairs of human life are understood much better if one comes into real contact with them. If it is necessary for a student of science to learn his subject with the aid of practical demonstration, it is equally necessary for a student of politics, economics, history, psychology and sociology, to see how the principles that are enunciated by him, work out in every day practice, how the pure theory that he studies is twisted and truncated and rendered almost unrecognizable through the myriad modifications that have to be made in it before it can be applied to the actual facts of life. However clever a teacher may be in explaining things, however interesting and exhaustive a book may be, they can never take the place of a little practical object lesson. Things never sink into the mind

so well as through a visual demonstration. We may learn to say “No taxation without representation”, or, ‘Civic freedom is the birth-right of all human beings’; we may be able to argue on the theories of free-trade and protection; we may be able to repeat the facts of the Industrial Revolution; we may learn the dates and names of kings and wars. But all this learning will be something outside us. It will be a mere collection of facts and figures and we shall never imbibe it and make it a part of our being till we see its application in life. Why is it, that there should be no taxation without representation? Why do men want democratic government? How these things affect human life and how happiness can only be understood when we have seen human life in its various aspects; and that can be done to a very large extent through social service. In ordinary daily life, our normal activities bring us into contact only with men and women of our own class. Even in schools and colleges we associate mostly with the same strata. As our society is constituted today, class divisions are becoming sharper than before. Along with progress of Western education, classes are fast taking the place of castes in our country and the two classes of the educated and the un-educated are developing so as to divide the nation into two different sections, each with its distinct joys and sorrows, pleasures and

pains, with different tastes and outlooks on life. That division has even now become so great that, because of lack of contact, our knowledge is confined more or less to our own class and we do not know, nor do we understand, the condition and circumstances of those who are unfortunately situated below us in the scale of society. Our knowledge is thus limited and unreal. Social service is a great cure for this defect. It gives us chances to come into contact with a wider circle of human beings and thus enables us to study humanity in its manifold variety. Our understanding becomes mature and our knowledge real, while the judgment gets sounder and more stable. For our intellectual development, therefore, social service is even more necessary than books.

Secondly, from the moral or spiritual point of view it is also necessary. We hear a great deal now-a-days about necessity of moral training and character building. No amount of dogmas and formulae can help in the formation of character to the same extent as a little bit of social service. We may know the stories of our religious saints and rishis by heart, we may memorize their teachings and be able to sing hymns. But they can never be such powerful agents in converting our hearts to righteousness as a little contact with a fellow human being and a little service rendered to him in

his hour of need and suffering. A helping hand given to a sick person, a little advice and direction given to one in darkness, sympathetic touch and a little kindly feeling of affection towards those, we come across, go a longer way than any books or lectures on religion and morality. The more we come into contact with people, the more we understand them, the more we work for them, the more we begin to love them. Thus our hearts become larger and our sympathies wider.

The habit of serving others must be cultivated from early childhood. In former days in India, when households were big and work of all kinds was done at home and girls had nothing else to do except to help in the house, they got used to service from their very infancy. It became a habit with them which persisted throughout life. At the present time, conditions of home life are rapidly changing and as households are becoming smaller and a great deal of the house work is done by experts and servants, girls do not have the same scope for service in their homes. Besides, there is a general tendency in modern mothers to exempt their school and college going girls from household work, fearing that it might interfere with their education. Thus, under the modern system, if social service does not take the place of the household service rendered by girls in former days, there is every fear of the girls

becoming narrowly self-centred. Indeed, in certain parts of India, the fear has already materialized, and the greatest criticism leveled against the modern system of education is that it results in making girls selfish and incapable of rendering selfless services. This is not an insignificant danger. If not countered it is apt to nullify all the good which otherwise education might do. We must take care to contend against this tendency as the easiest way of doing it is to get the girls into the habit of service from the early days of their student life.

Thirdly, I shall deal with this question from the utilitarian point of view. With the changed conditions of the world, the ideals of education are rapidly changing. The education of women is no longer looked upon merely as an ornament, or as an accomplishment to adorn or to beautify, so that they may be able to shine in greater brilliance in the delicate settings of their drawing-rooms. That was an old fashioned idea, of Victorian age in England, and in India too it belonged to the last generation. The whole outlook on education has undergone a fundamental change. Even in men's colleges, the objective is no longer merely to turn out learned scholars who can spin fine phrases, use big words and make eloquent speeches. The objective is more to produce useful citizens, capable of serving their country. That is why so much stress is being laid

on vocational and manual training, and that is why Indian colleges have lately developed the teaching of such subjects as industrial chemistry.

Our aim must, therefore, not be only the acquisition of knowledge. Unless we can use it, knowledge serves no useful purpose. It is a locked treasure, the only key to which is practice. We should therefore, make it as much our aim to acquire the key as the treasure, and social service is a very apt and handy means of acquiring that key.

Women must aim to be as good citizens as men. They must try to fit themselves in with the growing life of the country and take their due share in the movements of the world. They cannot successfully do this merely by study. While study will point to them the way, it can never supply them with the motive force for action. For that force is supplied only by the emotions, and emotions are brought into play only by contact with life. However much of your mind may be convinced of the truth of a certain theory, you cannot bring yourself to act for its promotion and adoption in life unless your heart is touched, and your heart can be touched only when you live and move and freely fraternize with the victims of the evil which your theory seeks to cure. Social service brings you those contacts, and therefore, will bring into play those forces of your

being which, in course of time, will compel you to act, and will end in making you a good and useful citizen. From the view-point of utility, therefore, it is equally necessary that you should start social service as early as possible. It should, indeed, form a part of your curriculum, and must be given more importance than the study of books.

Now, there are various ways in which you can undertake to do service to your fellow-beings. The abject poverty of India, its mass illiteracy, the disintegration and desolation of its villages, the insanitary conditions around you, the enormous infant mortality (much of which is due to the ignorance of mothers), all these call for your service and supply you with a wide field for your activities. With the help of your teachers here, you may not find it difficult to apply yourselves to any of those fields of work. If all of you undertake to teach, reading and writing to five poor illiterate men and women or boys and girls every year, think of how many you will succeed in making literate. In the same way, if you form yourselves into groups and visit adjoining village, say once a week, and spend a good long time with the villagers, fraternizing with them and cultivating their friendship, think of the number of dark and dirty homes into which you will bring light and the message of cleanliness, sanitation, and

better living. By thus moving with them, gaining their confidence and cultivating their friendship, you can help them in cleaning their streets, homes and persons and assist their women by teaching them a little sewing or reading. You can talk to them, tell them stories, and give them a little information about the affairs of the wider world into which they have no access. If you will do that a few times in the right way, you will feel yourselves, how you will get a place in their lives and how as a consequence of that, you will enrich your own lives and make them fuller. There are several baby clinics in your town. You can go to them regularly and serve and make friends with the little babies who come there daily. Then there are many Harijan Bastis round, not far from you. If you go to them, you will find how little children and women there need your help and care. Befriend these neglected women and children; look after their needs, give them a little of your love and bring the message of their tale of woe to the men and women of your own class.

You must always remember, my young friends that the education you are receiving is paid for by the tax-payer. The very hall in which we are sitting today, your beautiful Maharani's College, your lecture rooms, playing fields, your laboratories and your libraries you enjoy at the expense of the poor and



neglected peasants and Harijans who pay for them with the sweat of their brow. You are, therefore, under a debt to them which you must pay, and because of the very education you are receiving; your debt is greater than that of the ignorant. You cannot take from life and give nothing in return. The measure of your education is the measure of the debt you owe. See that you are not a defaulter and that your debt is truly paid.

Indian expects her daughters to do their duty. Indian women have always been known for their loyalty and devotion to duty. See that you keep the torch burning and hold the standard high. The very fact that you are privileged to be educated makes greater the burden of the duty that you have to discharge. Social service, therefore, is not merely the most important part of your education, but it is also a debt and duty which you owe to your mother country. The sooner you set yourself to discharge that debt and duty the better for you and the country.

*Speech delivered by Mata Rameshwari Nehru in Maharani's College, Mysore in 1935.*

## **A Message to Children**

*Dear little children of Sind,*

Meeting you was my greatest pleasure during my tour to your province and I am fortunate to be able to say that I met you in thousands. I met you in your classes, in your school premises at drill, in gatherings of Balkan-ki-wadi where you had collected in hundreds to give welcome to two old workers, the humble servants of your country. I do not know what you felt like when you met us but I can tell you, I felt highly exhilarated. Each time, I met you, I felt I was torn away from you, before I came near enough you, I wanted to linger among you a while longer but the moving hand to the clock was always there pointing to the next engagement which claimed us. But however scrappy the contact, it will always be cherished in my memory as its richest treasure.

Those of you who read these lines will perhaps remember me. What I want to tell you just now may be a little different from what you have been accustomed to hear from your elders. Perhaps you have heard them say that little children must not bother about matters which are not their concern. Perhaps you have had it impressed on your mind that your books, examinations and playground should claim your whole attention. But I feel it is a great injustice to children to limit their vision in that manner. I think they should revolt at this differentiation. A child has as much individuality

as a grown-up person and should have as much right to learn about and take interest in things which are happening around him. They affect him as they affect others. He should, therefore, not only be allowed but encouraged to take part in constructive movements which are building up his country. It is done in other lands and it can easily be done in our country also. Little children can take up various kinds of works. Removal of illiteracy can be one of them. Chinese children have done it and our little children can do the same. They can also add to the wealth of the land even by spinning and weaving. They can help the poor by weaving Khadi, they can support industries of the country by the exclusive use of village and Swadeshi articles. Last but not least they can remove untouchability and promote communal unity by fraternizing with the Harijans and befriending boys and girls of all communities.

Where service is concerned, there should be no barriers between children and grown-ups. The children have as much right to serve as the grown-ups. They should, therefore, assert their right and start serving the country in a constructive way from as early an age as possible. All children should remember that their identity is not separate from that of their country. They rise and fall with it. Therefore, they must throw in their lot with it, cultivate the desire to serve it and be in search of opportunities for doing so, from the very early days.

## **A Tribute to Mahatma Gandhi**

Mahatma Gandhi is the personification of the spirit of the ancient Hindu Dharma. In the everyday detail of his life, he practices all that is taught in the Bhagvad Gita. He is a lover of all humanity with whose welfare he has identified himself. The message of his mission is not only for India but for the whole world. But the centre of his work, naturally, lies in India, the place of his birth. Millions worship him in this country and there is not a single individual whose respect he does not command. He is the best known and the most loved man in the whole world. The doctrine of Ahimsa which is the guiding principle of his life is the secret of his success. That is the Guru Mantra he has to give to all who seek his advice. It is an ideal much too high for an ordinary individual to achieve in its entirety. That is why, compared to the millions who give him their love and worship, there are few who in their conduct can reach the standards laid down by him. The path he shows may be difficult, long and arduous but that is the only sure path to the goal of peace and the only cure for this aching world of strife, struggle and suffering.

In India, with its centuries-old traditions of peace and good-will, it ought to be easier for people to understand him and follow him. Unfortunately, even

in this country there exist a few men of little faith who doubt the efficacy of his leadership. They will do well to remember on this day the 71st year of his birth, that it is he who has led India to the present stage of its progress and it is under his banner alone that India can hope to reach its goal of freedom. He is the greatest uniting force in the country. He knows best how to bring about a synthesis between the different clashing interests, keeping in view the well-being of all.

I hope that India will prove worthy of his great leadership on which Hindus and Muslims, Zamindars and peasants, capitalists and workers, can equally rely. In his hand the justifiable interests of all are safe. May he live for years more to bring back to India its lost greatness and glory.

## **Castes !! in Hindu Society**

The work of breaking up the caste system is essential for galvanizing the Indian people into one harmonious Indian nation. It is of prime importance and has to be accomplished before our hopes of having a united Indian people can be realized.

I would like to make here few observations on the subject of caste and its effects on the social structure of the Hindus.

It is a general belief that castes in their origin were the trade guilds formed with much the same objectives as the trade unions of the present day. That belief is confirmed by the professional names which up to present day most castes bear like Teli, Jolaha, Lonia etc. But with the passing of time the main objective of the caste organization was forgotten and although the professions of men within the caste changed, its indigenous nature developed. It got so crystallized that inter-dining and inter-marriage became strictly forbidden. Birth and not profession now became the determining factor of caste. The life of the individual merged into the caste which claimed his loyalties and restricted his horizon. No doubt a beautiful life of mutual help on the widest co-operative basis developed within the caste but it created so many self-contained

groups which had no social connection with other groups outside their own. That limited the sphere of their sympathies. Even this separate grouping would not have been so harmful, if ideas of high and low were not associated with it. It was the association of these ideas which vitiated the whole system. A very strong caste hierarchy developed which recognized the vicious principle of high and low birth. The whole gamut of those hundreds of castes, of which it is difficult to have a complete record had their own notions of high and low. Each had its own place and it was impossible for them to exchange positions. This gradation of position was not confined to the four broad Varnas. Each Varna again had its own gradations. There were Gaud Brahmins and Saraswats and Chitpavans and lyers and lyengars, one over the other. The same was the case with the other three Varnas all of which had their own strict codes of precedence. Last of all but not the least came the Panchamas the Harijans, who were not behind anybody else in fixing their own scale of respectability. It is amusing to see the pride of the Bhangee in his feeling of quasi-superiority over the Sansi and of the Mochi over the Chamar. The whole idea has been reduced to a science and it is impossible to find one who can authoritatively assign each caste

to its proper place in this vast hierarchy.

The whole spirit of the caste system as it is practiced today, is unrighteous and undemocratic. It militates against the idea of equality which every religion including Hinduism teaches, and which moreover is the governing idea of the present age. It was natural, therefore, for the leaders of thought, modern as well as ancient, to raise their voice against it. In its historical perspective, a no-caste campaign can be traced in India from the historical times. It started with Bhagwan Buddha and was taken up by many saints and Rishis later on at different periods of Indian history. All men of religion looked upon the pride of caste as sinful. Tukaram, Chaitanya, Eknath, Guru Nanak, Kabir and scores of other saints preached against it. All reformers of the Hindu Dharma, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda Saraswati advocated its abolition. In this way the work of the Jatpat Torak Mandal is only a sequel to what has preceded. It only follows lead of the greatest men of history. Unfortunately as everything else in India, this social custom has assumed a religious garb and religion being most highly valued in our land, it is this fact which has established the caste roots most firmly in the country. People mostly do not exert to think nor do

they investigate. They blindly believe what has been taught them from childhood. Pride of caste has been instilled into them from the day of their birth. So it has grown with them as part of life. But I have no doubt in my mind that not only it has nothing to do with religion but it is irreligious and unrighteous. It has given rise to such ugly practices as untouchability. It denies the very essence of religion which is the perception of the self in others, and the regulation of conduct in accordance with that perception and the cultivation of love and fellow feeling. And in the realm of love, there is no room for distinction of any kind based on birth or otherwise.

It is an admitted fact that caste has no justification on the basis of the Shastras but there is reference to the Varna Ashram Dharma in several of our ancient books. The Bhagwad Gita also contains such references. The difference of opinion arises in the interpretation of the term. A growing body of opinion recognizes Varna Ashram not on the accident of birth but on “Guna, Karma and Swabhav’— natural propensities, profession and temperament. According to this view, Varna is inter-changeable. Without taking the accident to birth into account, one can be a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra, according

to one’s temperament, profession and nature. It thus becomes only a recognition of an existing phenomenon or fact, a scientific classification of human society as observed by our ancient great men. But Varna Ashram as it is practised today, is only a travesty of the ancient idea. Guna, Karma and Swabhava or profession, temperament and natural propensities have nothing to do with it. The determination of Varna today lies solely on birth. That is why we see every day Brahmins working as cooks and menial servants and Shudras acting as professors and judges. Varna Ashram, as it is practiced today, is most comic, had it not been also so tragic in its consequences. Our Shastras supply us with innumerable examples of fact that Varna Ashram in olden days was not based on birth. Instances of inter-marriages can be quoted by the score. But I shall leave all that for the learned Pandits to deal with. What concerns me is the fact that firstly, caste and Varna as practiced today have no Shastric sanctions behind them. Secondly, they are unrighteous and unjust. Thirdly, they hamper our growth as a nation and, last but not the least, that they are unnatural.

I have already referred to the first two. The assertion that it is incompatible with the idea of one Indian Nation requires no proof. Instances are coming

up every day when communal feelings are alleged to distort the minds and judgments of individuals in times of elections and even day-to-day administration. Such allegations may be exaggerated. But they are not entirely baseless.

One must never forget that humanity is one family and all artificial barriers that divide people on the basis of creed, colour and community or classes are wrong. Life is one. It needs unrestricted flow. Like light, air and water from which it draws its substance it can break no artificial barriers. All these divisions of caste and Varna are, therefore, unnatural. Every effort should be made to remove them.

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*After women, flowers are the most lovely thing God has given the world.*

*Christian Dior*

## **Hell in Ajmer Harijan Basti**

I had often heard and even talked of India's poverty but had never known it from close quarters. My work among the Harijans during the last three years has brought me in touch with it and I can now understand what is meant by the term starving millions. It is not possible to forget them once a contact is made with them. Their lean and worn-out bodies and dejected faces, their hungry looks and hope-forsaken eyes, their bare and cheerless huts, their ill-clad and uncared for children, once seen, haunt one's day and night. These are the people who form 90 per cent of India's population. Their needs are India's needs. In any solution of India's problems it is they who have to be consulted first and foremost. Their hunger has got to be appeased, their bodies have got to be clothed, their habitations have got to be cleaned, their little children have got to be saved from disease and infantile death. In short, they have to be lifted from their conditions of dirt and filth and slavery and must be given the right to live human, self-respecting lives. This ought to be and is India's objective today, and towards the achievement of this objective, all efforts should be directed.



## **The Harijan Movement**

In education, Harijans are behind all other communities, their literacy throughout India being 2.35 per cent. One of the reasons for their educational backwardness is their disability to attend common schools, and this disability uptill now has been very common in some parts. In spite of this, a few highly educated Harijans are to be found in all parts of India, some of whom occupy high positions.

Their occupations are many and varied. The majority of them, of course, work on the land, mostly as labourers. All the so-called "dirty work" is entrusted to them by society. They remove dead cattle, prepare articles made of leather, weave cloth and mats, and make ropes, baskets, brooms and other sundry articles of everyday use. Some of them are masons and majority are workers on roads or fields on paltry daily wages.

They are undoubtedly most useful members of society and on whose labours it rests. Its whole edifice would come down with a crash, if their work was withdrawn for even a short time. Yet Hindu society has failed to recognize their services, and for centuries they have been terrible victims of prejudice.

More or less, such injustices prevail in all

countries and in all societies but untouchability is a form of prejudice peculiar to India. I do not think its equivalence can be found anywhere else in the world.

History throws no light as to the beginning and cause of this abominable custom. Many secular theories have been launched, but none of them are convincing. The popular mind, backed by a few orthodox pandits, associate the custom with religion. But a large number of very learned Brahmins whose number is growing daily, have proved it to the hilt that this evil practice has no sanction in the "Shastras". On the contrary, the preachings of all the Hindu "Shastras" lay great stress on the cultivation of the practice of treating all human beings as equals, regarding them as the manifestations of the one and the same God, from whom all draw their sustenance.

By ignoring this great truth, Hindu society has done indescribable harm to its religion. This damage has not been confined to religion alone, but has spread out to other fields, which have stunted the growth of the whole nation.

## **Temple Entry Campaign**

The temple entry campaign carried on in Tamil Nadu during the months of June and July, 1939, was the most stimulating piece of work, I was ever engaged in. The world knows how pregnant it was with result. The success which met the humble efforts of the workers was beyond all expectations. That which seemed difficult of attainment only a little while ago was an accomplished fact even within one month of the starting on that campaign. The wonderful co-operation of the masses who gave their willing consent to the reform, of the workers and representatives of varied organization with different objectives, of individuals belonging to all castes, not excluding Brahmins, was suggestive of the change that time had brought on the minds of the people. It was evident that public opinion was already ripe for the change. All that was needed was a little mobilization of the already existing public opinion and someone to make a start. That need was supplied by the campaign and with the grace of God; the greatest reform of the present age was brought about. It looked like an easy achievement. But there was no strategy or diplomacy behind it. No underhand methods were adopted and everything was done openly in the full light of the day with the full consent of the

temple worshippers. I can never forget the enthusiasm displayed at the conferences and public meetings, where Brahmins and non-Brahmins, Archakas and Trustees, old and young, vied with each other in giving their support to the cause. It almost looked superhuman and as I watched the men who took part in those great meetings, I could not help feeling that it was God's will which was silently working this revolution in the hearts of men.

Surely the great God could not allow the ancient Hindu Dharma to die. Once again its dormant spirit, the heritage of generations, which lay latent in the blood of its followers, was brought into action. The spirit came out to purge it of the sin of untouchability and all its demoralizing effects. In the long history of Hinduism, such things had happened before. It had seen many ups and downs and each time in its adversity something had happened to give it a new lease of life. Every time it emerged out of its difficulties with vitality all its own. In our age, it would certainly have crashed against the bedrock of untouchability if the latter was allowed to live. At this critical juncture, under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi temple entry of the Harijans was destined to be achieved, which will certainly revive Hinduism.

Out of this episode, emerge two striking facts. One is demonstration of the power of the combined will of the common people which is the only sanction behind all human concerns, and the other, the possibility of the Hindu ideals, supplying to the world, the secret of making democracy effective. The fact that an established custom of centuries broke in the twinkling of an eye, without the pressure of law or police force, without untoward incident or bloodshed, is a proof of the fact that the co-operative will of the people can work wonders. It has the power to bring about any change it desires. It can move mountains and do anything it likes. The power of the man in the street was fully demonstrated by this incident. Although many people, big and small, worked for the cause, it was the common man who achieved it. Mahatma Gandhi, Rajagopalacharya, Dr. Rajan, Vaidnath Iyer and others no doubt laboured hard but their labours would have been set at naught if they did not find favour with the people.

An objection was raised in certain quarters that democratic methods were pressed into service by the promoters of temple entry to bring about a change in religious practices which was outside the scope of democracy. I would make no attempt to controvert

the suggestion made in the objection. On the contrary, I am proud of the fact that the great change was accomplished by democracy and not by the exercise of any authority.

The scope of democracy is much too wider to be restricted. Everything comes within its compass. It covers all aspects of human life. The relation between democracy and religion is very close. Its roots lie in the field of religion where its ultimate sanctions are to be found. It would have no *raison d'être*, had it not been for the religious belief that all human beings are the manifestation of the one and same God, that they all equally derive their sustenance from him and therefore, are equals of one another. It is this belief which supplies the vital force of life to democracy. In my humble opinion it is not right to say that religion is beyond the scope of democracy.

The truth that all men, good, bad or indifferent have a portion of the same divine essence in them is very forcibly brought out in our religion, the realization and recognition of which is enjoined in the Bhagwad Gita. This is the one and essential theme not only of the Bhagwad Gita but of the Upanishads and the Puranas as well. I would therefore, call our religion a democratic religion.

In spite of caste and untouchability, the ugly customs which have somehow found their way into the framework of Hindu society, it has an honoured place for democracy to which it gives great sanctity. This noble ideal of equality may not yet have found expression in political social democracy but no system of political democracy can be stable without a background of this religious ideal.

Human society cannot build its foundation on rights alone. The emphasis of western democracy is on rights. Political parties, trade unions, and workers' and peasants organizations are all formed on the basis of rights. Their approach to questions is from the point of view of rights. The mentality which is fostered in this atmosphere is not amenable to smooth working. It, therefore, inevitably results in perpetual clashes. The present state of the western world is a proof in point. In spite of the unprecedented achievements in the world of science and organization, we are witnessing today the destruction of its civilization which is crumbling down like a house of cards. It is being crushed under its own weight. Its wonderful discoveries, its great energy and activity, which if rightly used, ought to have made it impregnable, have like a boomerang turned against itself, and are instrumental in annihilating it. That

democracy for which so many battles were fought and so much blood was shed, is today shamefacedly retiring in the background. Every child knows that democracy in the western world has failed miserably. It is so because its basis is not secure. With us, the approach to the problems of life is different. The very basis of our society rests on the ideal of Dharma or duty. Every child is taught to do its duty and not bother about anything else. The conception of the Varna Ashram Dharma, even the organization of caste, rested on this idea of one's own duty. It eliminated clash and competition. It nurtured a mutuality which knew how to give, how to serve and how to co-operate. It facilitated the smooth working of society. In such a society, other people's rights are more sacred than one's own. People organize so that they see to it that they do not allow themselves to tread on other people's rights. When society is built on this sacred basis then alone it can be truly democratic and stable.

It is true that in spite of these noble ideals Hinduism has fallen on evil days. There are many practices allowed in Hindu society which are not consistent with its theories. Man is made to err. His weaknesses are born with him. It is hardly ever that he can perfectly follow the ideals, he has placed before

him. If, therefore, Hindu society has its faults, it is only following the common fate of all humanity. But we may not forget that our civilization, has stood the test of time much more than the western civilizations. Comparatively the western civilization is a child of yesterday and it is already crumbling down to pieces. But our civilization with all the defects of old age, of hardness and rigidity is still alive. Its outer covers have become old and worn out, unfit for the use of the new age but its inner soul is as young and bright as ever. That is immutable and everlasting.

It was this spirit which I saw coming out of its old and rotten shell manifesting and asserting itself when masses of people came to put their weight on the side of temple entry. They assembled there to give their support to the rights of others which they themselves had wrongly taken away. Such enthusiasm on behalf of other people's rights could be displayed only by those, in whom the ancient ideal of the all-Pervading Dharma was still working, though perhaps unconsciously.

And so this reform of temple entry has great potentialities. It has set in motion a powerful wave of the purification of Hinduism. With its impurities purged, Hinduism is yet capable of holding the torch of light to an aching world and succeeds in dispelling

the surrounding darkness. It can show the path of knowledge, of love and co-operation. It can lay the foundations of a sound and stable democracy in which the rights of one individual are as sacred as the rights of another and in which all are equal and there is no room for high or low. With a little adaptation of its hoary principles to new surroundings, the object can be achieved.

It is, however, sad to see that a few orthodox Brahmins are still opposing the reform. This opposition has grown with time. But fortunately it is limited to very small sections of the population. This is evidenced by the fact that although certain people are abstaining from going to temples, the number of temple worshippers is constantly increasing. With time this number is bound to increase still more. The entry of the temples must help in the purification on the temples. Arrogance, separativity, all-embracing love and co-operation. It cannot but bring conviction some time or the other even to hearts of those who are still clinging to their own interpretation of the Shastras. I beg to remind them with all humility that they have adopted a view of things which if followed will frustrate their own object, namely, the preservation of Hinduism. There is one thing, however, which the reformers cannot afford

to forget and it is that the temple entry reform has placed a great responsibility on their shoulders. The duty of consolidating the reform is theirs. The entry of the Harijans into the temples is only beginning of a series of reforms which are needed. Many corrupt practices have crept into the mode of temple worship. Many of the temples today lack that atmosphere of purity which should necessarily pervade a temple. In many places even physical cleanliness is wanting. We have to see to it that all these deficiencies are removed. The purificatory force which has been released by this reform can acquire momentum to the extent to which we can put work into it. Constant effort is needed on this behalf to bring to fruition the work that has been started.

We have also to see that the change is made much more far-reaching than the mere fact of the entry of the Harijan into the temples. If we leave it, it will crystallize and lose its potentialities of bringing in vaster and deeper changes. We have to see that this reform ushers in a renewal of the whole life of the nation. It means a complete reversal in the attitude and life of both of the Harijans and the chaste Hindus. To the Harijans, it ought to mean, education, culture self-respect, cleanliness and a disciplined life. To the chaste

Hindus, humility, love, devotion, co-operation and a better realization and practice of the tenets of their own religion. It should thus altogether raise the moral standards of the people. But these results cannot come by themselves. Conscious effort will have to be put in to enable the nation and humanity to reap the fruits of the seeds that have been sown. If proper cultivation is lacking the seed will not fructify. It will die out even before it sprouts into life.

I would, therefore, remind my co-workers particularly women that they cannot rest on their oars till they have seen that the reform is fully consolidated, that its lessons have been so burnt into the lives of the people that they may not be easily forgotten. It is to that end, we have to devote our energies henceforth. May God give us the strength to rise to the occasion and do what is expected of us.



## Looking Forward

Friends, as chairman of the Women's Committee of the Common-wealth of India League, under whose auspices we meet this afternoon, it is my pleasant duty to welcome you all. As an Indian, I feel especially happy and honoured to occupy this post which gives me a chance to express on behalf of India her sincerest gratitude to those who stand by her in her time of need. To me, the assemblage of such a large number of delegates representing various women's organization in this country, is a symbol of those great bonds of fellowship and love which transcends all racial or class interests. Above all, it is a sign of that deeprooted love of justice and fair play so abundantly found in the hearts of women. The very fact that such large numbers of women's organizations support the objects of this Conference, is proof of their willingness to do unto India as they would like to be done by. Such auspicious omens make one rejoice and feel happy.

The resolutions bearing on the Indian situation, as drafted by the Women's Committee, are already in your hands. Able and illustrious women, whose names are all-ready so well known to you, will present them for your deliberation and decision. The principles of liberty and equality, for the vindication of which they have dedicated their lives, sufficient guarantees that

the representation of the Indian case is safe in their hands. I, therefore, do not propose to say anything on the resolutions but would say a few words on the situation in India as it stands today.

During the last few months, public interest has been much aroused, but it is not yet sufficiently keen to enable it to realize that never before in the history of the British connection with India, has the situation been so critical. We stand at the parting of the ways and the decisions of the next few months will make history. It is said that Lord Irwin and Gandhi have saved India for the Empire. They have certainly paved the way for it; whether their efforts will finally be fruitful, time alone will show. At present the position is most intricate. There are certain outstanding ideas in connection with the deliberations of the Round Table Conference, such as the federated states of united India, full responsibility in the central government and safeguards. Only a rough skeleton outline has been drawn, so that all the details have still to be filled in. None of the conclusions are definite and no parties, not even the delegates to the Conference, have been committed to any views, except the further carrying on of the work of the Round Table Conference to this, as we all know the Congress has also committed itself, as a result of the Irwin-Gandhi pact. The real work,

therefore, of finally drafting the Indian constitution will begin when the next Round Table Conference meets Mahatma Gandhi as the sole delegate of the National Congress Party. He has been given discretion to adjust minor matters but he comes with a clear mandate from the nation itself, that nothing less than the substance of Independence will be acceptable to India. The federation must be a federation of free and self-governing units, the transfer of responsibility to the centre must be thorough and complete; safeguards must be reduced to a minimum and definitely proved to be solely in the interests of India. It is here that true fight will begin.

Although there is now much interest in Indian affairs here in England, the change that has come over the Indian mentality has not yet been fully recognized by all sections of the British public. A spirit of haggling and bargaining is still found in many quarters. I was much stuck by a phrase of Mr. Churchill's in the House of Commons recently. He said very forcibly that the Nationalists (in India) were trying to squeeze out of the British Government as much as they possibly could and the British Government, in its weakness, is allowing itself to be thus squeezed. Such a remark shows that the real spirit of the Indian movement has not yet been understood. India is not out to bargain.

She is determined to be the mistress in her own house without further delay. Those who fight will do so to the bitter end. They have repeatedly said that having burned their boats, there is no going back for them. No sacrifice is too high for the goal they have set before them. Mahatma Gandhi has designated this the last battle of his life. He will either achieve freedom for India or die in the attempt. Last year's happenings are sufficient proof of the solemn determination of the Indian people. To believe that India will be satisfied with anything less than complete self-government is entirely false. All efforts, therefore, should be directed towards a peaceful solution of the Indian question and this can only be done by conceding to India the right of self-determination.

The general public is reluctant to take the Indian problem seriously. It has no time for it, and therefore, there is a tendency to leave the matter in the hands of those who are supposed to understand the question. India is thus above party politics and is a national concern. No party can afford to take a strong stand on the Indian question nor can they allow a split amongst themselves on that ground. Necessarily, therefore, the machinery which deals with the Indian problem moves heavily and slowly. But slow movement and caution are incompatible with the present mood of

India and may indeed prove disastrous, if steps are not taken to mend matters.

Who can supply the impetus for greater understanding and magnanimity more than the women's organizations? I have great faith and confidence in women. They are out to use their great faith in recently acquired civic powers, to chance the whole scheme of life, re-moulding it nearer to the heart's desire. Let India merit their serious thought and support!

I shudder to think of what would happen if the next Round Table Conference does not find a peaceful solution. The fight on the part of India is bound to be renewed. What form it may take is difficult to foretell, but it does not require a prophet to say that the greatest suffering, torture, bloodshed and dislocation of commerce and trade, are bound to follow. As the population of India is one-fifth of the human race, the reactions of such a movement must be felt by the whole world. England cannot remain unaffected. Providence has brought the two countries together. Let us make a united effort to bring into being a relationship on the basis to love and freedom which alone can endure.

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## **Woman in the Eyes of the Eminent Men of the World.**

\* A beautiful and chaste woman is the perfect workmanship of God, the true glory of angels, the rare miracle of earth, and the sole Wonder of the World.

*Hermes.*

\* Next to God, we are indebted to women, first for life itself, and then for making it worth having.

*Bovee*

\* Contact with a high-minded woman is good for the life of any man.

*Henry Vincent*

\* Kindness in women, not their beautiful looks, shall win my love.

*Shakespeare*

\* God has placed the genius of woman in their hearts; because the works of this genius are always works of love.

*Lamartine*

\* Purity of heart is the noblest inheritance, and love, the fairest ornament of woman.

*M. Claudius*

\* If we would know the political and moral condition of a state, we must ask what rank women hold in it. Their influence embraces the whole of life.

*A. Marten*

\* A handsome woman is a jewel; a good woman is a treasure.

*Saadi*

\* “Woman !” With that word, life’s dearest hopes and memories come Truth, beauty, love, in her adored, and earth’s lost paradise restored, in the green bower of home.

*Halleck*

\* The greater part of what women write about women is mere sycophancy of man.

*Mad. de Stael*

\* A woman’s greatest glory is to be little talked about by men, whether for good or ill.

*Pericles*

\* Woman is quick to recognize genius, and to listen when wisdom speaks.—She may chatter in the presence of fools, but knows and appreciates the value of earnest, sensible men.

*C. H. Dall*

\* A woman has this quality in common with the angels that those who suffer belong to her.

*Balzac*

\* Women for the most part do not love us. They do not choose a man because they love him, but because it pleases them to be loved by him. They love

of all things in the world, but there are very few men whom they love personally.

*Alphonse karr*

\* O what makes women lovely? Virtue, faith and gentleness in suffering; an endurance through scorn or trial; these call beauty forth, give it the stamp celestial, and admit it to sisterhood with angels.

*Brent*

\* Woman is like the reed which bends to every breeze, but breaks not in the tempest.

*Whately*

\* Women are the books, the arts. The academies, that show, contain, and nourish all the world.

*Shakespeare*

\* I have often had occasion to remark the fortitude with which women sustain the most overwhelming reverses of fortune. Those disasters which break down the spirit of a man and prostrate him in the dust seem to call forth all the energies of the softer sex, and give such intrepidity and elevation to their character, that at times it approaches to sublimity.

*Washington Irving*

\* Tis beauty, that both oft-make women proud; tis virtue, that doth make them most admired; tis modesty, that makes them seem divine.

*Shakespeare*

\* Women govern us; let us try to render them more perfect. The more they are enlightened so much the more we shall be. On the cultivation of the minds of women, depends the wisdom of man.

*Sheridan*

\* Virtue, modesty, and truth are the guardian angels of woman.

\* The foundation of domestic happiness is faith in the virtue of woman.

*Landor*

\* Love, which is only an episode in the life of a man, is the entire history of woman's life.

*Mad. de Steal*

\* Of all the men I have known, I cannot recall one whose mother did her level best for him when he was little who did not turn out well when he grew up.

*Frances Parkinson Keyes*

\* O woman! In ordinary cases so mere a mortal, how in the great and rare events of life dost thou swell into the angel!

*Bulwer*

\* To feel, to love, to suffer, to devote herself will always be the text of the life of a woman.

*Balzac*

\* Women have more heart and more imagination than men.

*Lamatine*

\* She is not made to be the admiration of all, but the happiness of one.

*Burke*

\* Even the most refined and polished of men seldom conceal any of the sacrifices they make, or what it costs to make them. This is reserved for women, and is one of the many proofs they give of their superiority in all matters of affection and delicacy.

*Willmott*

\* Win and wear her if you can. –She is the most delightful of God's creatures –Heaven's best gift—man's joy and pride in prosperity, and his support and comfort in affliction.

*Shelley*

\* All the reasoning—of men are not worth one sentiment of women.

*Voltaire*

\* Let men say what they will; according to the experience I have learned, I require in married women the economical virtue above all other virtues.

*Fuller*

\* Men have sight; woman insight.

*Victor Hugo*

\* The test of civilization is the estimate of woman.

*G.W. Curtis*

\* Women have more good sense than men. They have fewer pretensions, are less implicated in theories, and judge of objects more from their immediate and involuntary impressions on the mind, and therefore more truly and naturally.

*Hazlitt*

\* Some are so uncharitable as to think all women bad, and others are so credulous as to believe they are all good. All will grant her corporeal frame more wonderful and more beautiful than man's And can we think that God would put a worse soul into her better body?

*Feltham*

*(All quotations have been reproduced from 'New Dictionary of Thoughts' by Tryon Edwards.)*

## PINGALWARA DIARY

(UPTO NOVEMBER, 2017)

Services rendered by Pingalwara Institution for the service of the suffering humanity are:-

### 1. Homes for the Homeless

There are 1809 patients in different branches of Pingalwara now a days:—

(a) Head Office, Mata Mehtab Kaur Ward, Bhai Piara Singh Ward	359 Patients
(b) Manawala Complex	876 Patients
(c) Pandori Warraich Branch, Amritsar	99 Patients
(d) Jalandhar Branch	39 Patients
(e) Sangrur Branch	228 Patients
(f) Chandigarh (Palsora ) Branch	115 Patients
(g) Goindwal Branch	93 Patients

**Total 1809 Patients**

### 2. Treatment facilities

(a) **Dispensary & Laboratory:-** Pingalwara has a dispensary and a laboratory for the treatment of patients. It has an annual expenditure of about Rs.1 crore 30 lakhs. Medicines are also distributed free of cost to the poor and needy people.

(b) **Medical Care Staff:-** Experienced medical staff like Nurses, Pharmacists and Laboratory



Technicians are available for the care of the Pingalwara residents.

- (c) **Blood-Donation Camps:-** A Blood Donation Camp is organized on Bhagat Ji's Death Anniversary every year. The blood is used for Pingalwara residents and road accident victims.
- (d) **Ambulances:-** Ambulances with basic Medical aid are available for victims of road accidents on G.T. Road, round the clock and provide facilities for taking Pingalwara patients to the hospital.
- (e) **Artificial Limb Centre:-** There is an Artificial Limb Centre at Manawala Complex, dedicated to the memory of Bhagat Ji which provides free of cost Artificial Limbs to Polio-effected and amputee cases. 8757 needy people have benefitted till November 2017.
- (f) **Physiotherapy Centre:-** A Physiotherapy Centre equipped with State-of-to-art equipment is functioning in the Manawala Complex since June 2005. On an average 80 patients are treated everyday.
- (g) **Operation Theatres:-** There is a well equipped Operation Theatre in Bhai Piara Singh Ward Amritsar for general surgery and A Micro Surgery Operation Theatre in Manawala Complex where Cochlear Implants and major operations are carried out.

- (h) **Dental, Eye, Ear & Ultrasound Centres:-** These Centres have been set up to provide these services to Pingalwara residents, sewadars and their families.

### 3. Education

Pingalwara Society is running five Educational Institutions for the poor and needy children.

- (a) **Bhagat Puran Singh Adarsh School, Manawala Complex:-** This school provides free education to 771 students from the poor and deprived sections of the society. They are provided with free books and uniforms. Children being brought up by Pingalwara Society are also studying in this school.
- (b) **Bhagat Puran Singh Adarsh School, Buttar Kalan (Qadian):-** This school is dedicated to the sweet memory of Bhagatji. 461 students are getting free education under the able guidance of well qualified teachers. The school also provides financial help to students who have finished their school studies and are aspiring for higher studies.
- (c) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education, Manawala Complex:-** This school is providing Special Education to 169 Special children.
- (d) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for the Deaf:-** Bhagat Puran Singh School for Deaf Children is functional at the Manawala Complex since May 2005. The

sary. Each year trees are planted in various schools, colleges, hospitals, cremation grounds and other public places. These include Amaltas, Kachnar, Behra, Champa, Arjun, Sukhchain, Chandni, Zetropa and Kari-patta etc. These were distributed to different institutions.

- (b) **Nursery:-** Pingalwara has its own Nursery where saplings of various plants and trees are prepared. Every year, the aim of nursery is to grow more than 54 different kinds of saplings.

#### 6. Social Improvement Related Activities

- (a) **Awareness:-** Pingalwara has played an important role in spreading awareness about the evils in the society. This has been done by printing literature on religious, social and environmental issues at the Puran Printing Press Amritsar and is being distributed free of cost. Annual expenditure of printing and publicity is about 1 crores 50 lakhs rupees.
- (b) **Puran Printing Press:-** The Printing Press has been updated with an Offset Press.
- (c) **Museum and Documentaries:-** A Museum, and a number of documentaries have been prepared on Pingalwara activities as well as on zero budget natural farming. The C.D.s are freely available from Pingalwara.

A feature film produced by Pingalwara Society, Amritsar on 30 January 2015, EH JANAM TUMHARE LEKHE (Punjabi) on Rev. Bhagat Puran Singh Ji, founder Pingalwara and his struggle not only for selfless services of wounded humanity but for Environment Crisis also, will prove a beacon for the generations yet to come after us.

7. **Help to the victims of Natural Calamities:** Pingalwara makes an effort to provide succour to the victims of natural calamities like floods, earthquakes and famines. Aid was sent for the earth-quake victims in Iran, Tsunami disaster victims, Leh landslide and flood affected areas.

8. **Cremation of unclaimed dead-bodies:** Pingalwara cremates unclaimed dead bodies with full honour.

#### 9. Dairy Farm

180 cows and buffalos at Manawala Complex provide fresh milk to the Pingalwara residents.

#### 10. Old Age Homes

Old age homes at Sangrur and Manawala Complex of Pingalwara caters to the needs of elderly people.

11. **Expenditure:** The daily expenditure of Pingalwara is more than 6.5 Lakh.

#### Other Details:

- a) All India Pingalwara Charitable Society is a Registered Society, registered by Registrar of Companies vide letter No. 130 of 1956-1957 as amended vide No. A-28/4540 dated 07-07-1998.

- b) All donations to Pingalwara are exempted under Section 80G of Income Tax-II Amritsar letter No. CIT-II/ASR/ITO (Tech.) 2011-12/4730 dated 11/12 January, 2012.
- c) PAN Number of the All India Pingalwara Charitable Society is AAATA 2237R
- d) FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) 1976 Registration No. of Pingalwara is 115210002

Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa

Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh

**Dr. Inderjit Kaur,**

President,

All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.),

Tehsilpura, G.T. Road, Amritsar. (Punjab).

Details of Banks for sending Donation through Online/ Cheque/Draft may be sent in favour of: 'All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar' (PAN No.: AAATA 2237R) (The donations made to Pingalwara are exempt from Income Tax under Section 80G of I.T. Act. 1961)				
S.No.	Name of Account	Name of the Bank	Account No.	Swift/IFS Code
<b>(FOR FOREIGN CONTRIBUTORS)</b>				
	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Oriental Bank of Commerce, Sharifpura, Amritsar.	01562010002890	ORBCINBBASR
<b>(FOR INLAND CONTRIBUTORS)</b>				
1.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Oriental Bank of Commerce, Sharifpura, Amritsar.	01562010003720	ORBC 0100156
2.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	State Bank of India, Town Hall, Amritsar.	10978255668	SBIN0000609
3.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Bank of India, City Centre, Amritsar.	630510100026147	BKID0006305
4.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Axis Bank Ltd., City Centre Amritsar.	685010100009799	UTIB0000685
5.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Punjab National Bank, Hall Bazar, Amritsar.	0018002100097336	PUNB0001800
6.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	ICICI Bank Ltd., Lawrence Road, Amritsar.	006601012522	ICIC0000066
7.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	HDFC Bank Ltd., Mall Road, Amritsar.	01151000246510	HDFC0000115
8.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	HDFC Bank Ltd., Ghanta Ghar, Golden Temple, Amritsar.	13131000082013	HDFC0001313

9.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Punjab & Sind Bank, Hall Bazar, Amritsar.	00011000096048	PSIB000A001
10.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Bank of Baroda, Town Hall, Amritsar.	01010100015572	BARBOAMRITS
11.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Oriental Bank of Commerce, Sec-47 C, Chandigarh.	12332011000560	ORBC0101233
12.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Punjab & Sind Bank, Sangrur.	00671000012150	PSIB00000067
13.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	State Bank of India, Patiala Gate, Sangrur.	33530846863	SBIN0001759
14.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	Punjab & Sind Bank, Gole Market, New Delhi.	07621000007388	PSIB00000762
<b>(IN UK)</b> <b>S. GURBAKHS SINGH</b> 63 Peacock street, Gravesend, Kent, (U.K.) DA12 IEG, Ph. 1474568574		<b>(IN CANADA)</b> <b>BIBIABNASH KAUR KANG</b> (Pingalwara Society of Ontario (Regd.) 124 Blackmere Cir, Brampton, ONT., L6W 4C1, Canada Ph: 905-450-9664, 416-674-3341 Email-abnash6@yahoo.com	<b>(IN USA)</b> <b>JASWANT SAWHNEY</b> <b>CHARITABLE TRUST</b> In Association with All India Pingawara Charitable Society (Regd.) 7713 Toburk CT, HANOVER, MD 21076-1643 U.S.A. <b>BIBI JATINDER KAUR DUSAJ</b> Ph. 410-551-8010 E-mail-kaurg 2004@yahoo.com	

- \* Preserve natural resources.
- \* Service of the poor and destitutes is the service of God.
- \* Plant trees to save environment.
- \* Wear Khadi clothes to lessen unemployment.
- \* Simple living and high thinking is a bliss.
- \* Use less of diesel and petrol.
- \* Exercise restraint in your living habits.
- \* Don't forget to plant trees. They are the sign of prosperity of a nation.

—Bhagat Puran Singh

K.M. Munshi writes that Matsya Purana says:  
 “One who sinks a well lives in heaven for as many years as there are drops of water in it. But to dig ten such wells equals in merit the digging of one pond; digging of ten such ponds was equal to making a lake; making of ten lakes was as meritorious as be—getting a virtuous son but begetting ten such virtuous son had the same sanctity as that of planting a single tree.”