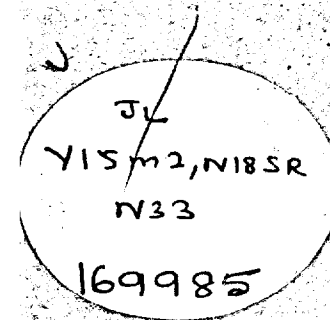
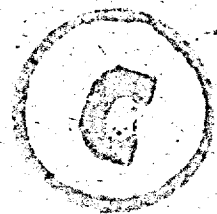


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STRI-DHARMA

MAY-1933



A New Harijan Colony in Madras

(THE WOMEN'S INDIAN ASSOCIATION HAS RENDERED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IN WORK CONNECTED WITH THE FORMATION OF THIS COLONY. ED. STRI-DHARMA)

The improvement of slums is an important aspect of social work for the uplift of the depressed classes, and by forming an ideal colony for such citizens, with provision for their economic and educational uplift, a small band of workers in Madras have led the way in a great work. Gokulam, the colony, has been formed in Krishnampet by Mr. P. N. Sankaranarayana Ayyar, Srimathis Bagirathi Ammal and Visalakshi Ammal.

The colony was formally opened by Kumararajah, M.A., Muthiah Chettiar of Chettinad, Mayor of Madras, on 9th April 1933. The Rt. Hon. V. S. Srinivasa Sastriar presided. Mr. T. R. Venkatarama Sastriar, the Rev. C. W. and Mrs. Ransom, Mrs. Sarangadhara Doss and Mr. T. M. Krishnaswami Ayyar, a prominent member of the Sanatanist group, were also present.

PURCHASE OF LAND

Welcoming the guests Mr. P. N. Sankaranarayana Ayyar gave an account of the growth of the colony. In 1929 Mr. Sankaranarayana Ayyar and a few others decided upon the scheme, and recently the Bishop of Madras sold to the workers the land on which the colony has been formed, at the comparatively cheap price of Rs. 2,000. Mr. Sankaranarayana Ayyar and his associates formed a Co-operative Society and the area was laid out under the advice of the Director of Town Planning. The colony is now occupied by 40 thatched houses, each belonging to one family. The land on which each house stands has been sold to the owner of the house for Rs. 50 which is recoverable in 40 instalments. Three Honorary doctors attend the colony and render medical aid, while slum workers give talks on hygiene, thrift, etc., conduct bhajana parties and help in the general uplift of the colonists. Mr. Sankaranarayana Ayyar and his associates have also introduced suitable cottage industries among the dwellers to help them to supplement their incomes. The dwellers have asked His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Kumbhakonam to build and endow a temple in or near the colony.

Mr. T. R. Venkatarama Sastriar, addressing the gathering, referred to the growth of the colony and expressed his appreciation of the services of Mr. Sankaranarayana Ayyar and his colleagues.

a large number of its servants have built houses. The co-operative house building societies have also been responsible for the construction of many houses.

THE CORPORATION.—Nor has the Corporation been idle in the matter. The Mambalam and Lloyd Road schemes have opened up a considerable area for building houses for the upper, middle and richer classes. Quite a large number of houses have been built in these areas. The Mambalam scheme has been very popular with certain classes of people. The Corporation has also built a large number of model dwellings for its menial employees, and has spent much money in carrying out improvements to certain slums. The Bogipalayam and Cochrane Basin schemes have both been experiments in slum abolition. In both these schemes the Corporation has sunk large funds. It is also learnt that the Corporation has on its hands just now about 4½ lakhs of rupees from loan funds to be spent on improvements to slums.

The introduction of the suburban electric train service, and the rapid development of Bus traffic have considerably relieved the congestion in some parts of the City.

4. HAS THE EVIL DECREASED?

In spite of all the improvements noted above, housing conditions are still far from satisfactory. About the miserable lot of the Cheri dweller, much has been said and written recently. But it must not be forgotten that the lower middle classes fare no better. The following facts may perhaps partially explain the present fate of affairs.

(1) Madras has had a steady addition to its population, and the number of dwellings has not increased proportionately with the growth of the population.

(2) There is a large labouring population which cannot pay the necessary rent to get housing accommodation.

(3) The new extensions have brought more houses into existence but have not reduced rents. The result is that the poorer classes are where they were formerly. It may be said without exaggeration that certain richer classes have been getting better accommodation while the lot of the poor has been growing worse.

(4) As observed before, 50 per cent. of the population live in rented houses. There is thus a steady demand for houses leading to an increase of rent. The house owning class has had the advantage of new improvements carried out by the Corporation and the growing demand for houses.

5. THE REMEDY.

A great deal has been attempted and done for improving housing conditions. But it has not been done wisely with a policy. The Corporation's frantic attempts now and then to spend a few lakhs on a slum or two, savours more of the actions of a man who in his last days wants to do something to appease his soul.

The several experiments undertaken have raised a number of problems which must be examined in the light of a policy designed to improve housing conditions all round. Mambalam has shown the advantages of a Municipal scheme of Town Planning. The introduction of the suburban electric train service has emphasised the importance of cheap traffic as a means of relieving congestion in the City. The question whether the poor classes should be enabled to own their houses or whether they should be kept on only as tenants is at the moment being keenly debated upon. Social workers have realised that welfare work among the poor is as important for abolition of slums as new housing schemes.

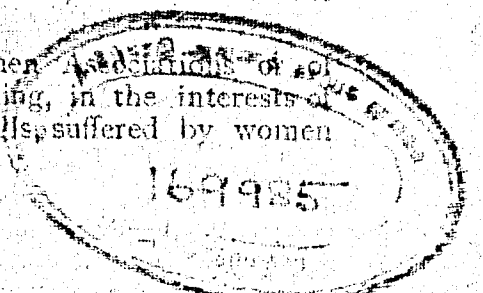
The Corporation is primarily interested in improving housing conditions and has a right to expect employers of labour in the City including Government and the citizens to come into line with any policy it may decide upon. The time has now come for the Corporation to gauge the extent of the evil and decide upon a sound policy.

Wanted for the Preparation of an Indian Woman's Welfare Directory

Thoughtful and humane persons, all over the country, interested in the cause of suffering humanity and of the suffering animals, are requested, for the sake of love of justice and mercy, to kindly assist the undersigned in the preparation of an Indian Woman's Welfare Directory, by supplying him with necessary information, cuttings from newspapers, or with pamphlets, together with any helpful suggestions in regard to the following:—

1. Names of books or periodicals published during the last fifty years on the subject of Kindness to Animals, as well as on the Emancipation of Indian women.

2. Names and addresses of Women Individuals that have worked, or still working, in the interests of Social Reform, or for the removal of social ills suffered by women and children.



3. Names and addresses of Indian poets, journalists and other writers, and of Sadhus and saints, who have given of their time and their gifts for the production of such literature with a view to awakening the public conscience to a realization of the suffering and unhappiness to which Hindu deserted wives are likely to be exposed, under the double standard of morality sanctioned and tolerated within the existing Hindu law.

4. Names and addresses of leading lawyers, judges and Members of Legislative Bodies, who have given of their life service for the purpose of instituting measures for social reform looking toward the remedying of social ills by legislation.

5. Names and addresses of public-spirited, wealthy men and women, who have patronised papers or persons, who have taken an active interest in the emancipation of Indian women and children.

6. Names of philanthropic Indians who have spent of their valuable time touring India on behalf of the spiritual freedom of their Indian sisters.

Any assistance or aid in collecting the information as indicated above will be gratefully accepted by the undersigned. All friends helping in this humane work will receive a free copy of the "Indian Woman's Welfare Directory" when it is ready for distribution.

BHAGAT RAM,

(Str. 5, Wakefield Ganj, Ludhiana, Punjab).

Social Legislation in Baroda.

Several interesting details regarding social legislation undertaken in Baroda State which forms one of the outstanding features of His Highness' administration, are contained in the Annual Report for the year ending in July 31, 1932 submitted by Rao Bahadur Sir V. T. Krishnamachariar recently. The administrative work relating to it is entrusted to the Nyaya Mantri (Legal Remembrancer) who is the Ex-Officio Member of the Legislative Assembly.

The year saw for the first time the operation of the Hindu Divorce Act. Of the 47 suits brought under the Act, 35 were for divorce, 21 for judicial separation and 8 for restitution of conjugal rights. 46 of these were filed by persons in whose caste divorce is permissive. In only one case was the application made by a person in whose caste the custom of divorce did not exist. The case was ultimately compromised. The Special Marriage Act applied to

the State since 1908 with a view to produce a form of marriage for persons who do not approve of forms of marriages either sanctioned by religion or custom of the caste but desire to treat them as civil contracts, was consolidated and modified in the light of amendments made in 1923 in the Act of British India.

Among other amending Acts special mention may be made of the Hindu Undivided Family (amendment) Act which aims at removing all doubts regarding the extent and nature of the right, title and interest a member of a Hindu Joint Family has over property acquired by him by means of his learning and providing a uniform rule application thereto, irrespective of the nature of such learning and acquisition.

Among the Bills published for eliciting public opinion during the year were a Bill to amend Hindu Marriage Act reducing the prohibited degrees of consanguinity in Hindu marriages so as to suit the present needs of society and to do away with the prohibition of 'Sagotra' marriage; and a Bill to amend Child Marriage Restraint Act so as to incorporate therein provisions preventing disparity of age in marriage as recommended by the Committee appointed by the Government to consider the question of preventing old men's marriages with minor girls. The application of the Christian Marriage Act of British India to the State with necessary modifications was under contemplation.

Two of the most important pieces of social legislation in the State are the Infant Marriage Prevention Act and the Child Marriage Restraint Act. The work of exercising general supervision over the operation of the Acts now rests with the Nyaya Mantri.

There were 17 applications for exemption from the operation of the first out of which 13 were granted permission by the Mahal and District Courts.

"Speaking generally," says the report, "the Act has certainly had educative effect. Marriages in contravention of it are less frequent among Brahmmins and other higher castes than among Kolis, Kumbis and other classes; even among these latter there is an increasing appreciation of the benefits of raising the age of marriage. A portion of the fines levied under the Act is spent on educative work among these people. Sanction to prosecute guardians of minors in cases where marriages were celebrated in foreign territories was asked for in 92 cases and given in 75 by the Varishta Court."

(Indian Social Reformer.)

India

Mr. Cousins has sent us a letter which we take pleasure in publishing:—

"Mrs. Cousins has asked me to write to a number of friends acknowledging letters which she has received in India, but to which she cannot reply personally at present.

"She was sentenced to a year's imprisonment in Madras on December 10th for declining to enter into a bond not to speak in public against the Ordinance Rule under which India is now governed, and particularly against the forcing of emergency Ordinances into the ordinary penal code by the British and official group in the Indian Central Parliament against the will of the elected representatives of the people of India.

"As the sentence was intended to be merely prohibitive and not punitive, it was made simple imprisonment, A class. Mrs. Cousins is therefore able to receive all communications and packets sent to her, subject to censorship for any references favourable to the Indian side of the political struggle; but she is only permitted to write one letter a fortnight." Her address is c/o The Superintendent, Presidency Jail for Women, Vellore, Madras Presidency, India.

"Mrs. Cousins has two cells, one as a private dressing room, the other as living room. She may supplement the prison food with extras at her own cost. She has her own clothing, bedding and additional furnishing. She is therefore relatively comfortable, and content in having done what she conceives to be her duty.

"She has planned work for a considerable time ahead, such as learning the Hindi language, and writing a book on music. As the political prisoners are permitted to meet during the day in their cells and a grassy open space, Mrs. Cousins has already formed the other twenty-four prisoners into a class for cultural study, most of them being highly educated. In the companionship of the gentle, brave and spiritually minded Indian women whom she loves and for whom she has worked for the past seventeen years, Mrs. Cousins is in her element. She will be visited by women magistrates, to whom she, as first woman magistrate in India, opened the magistracy. The humour of the situation will not escape her."

"On the motion of Mrs. Harriet Angelo, an Indian Christian member of the Corporation of the City of Madras, Corporation adjourned as a protest against the sentence on Mrs. Cousins.

"In accordance with our plans made in Geneva I remain here until the end of March, and shall then go to the Lower Himalayas for the summer, as suggested by Mrs. Cousins in a recent letter, the suggestion having been based on the possibility of an earlier reunion than December next. I should add that Mrs. Cousins was in excellent health according to her letter of 12th."

Yours sincerely,

JAMES H. COUSINS.

(Pax International-Feb. 1933.)

