

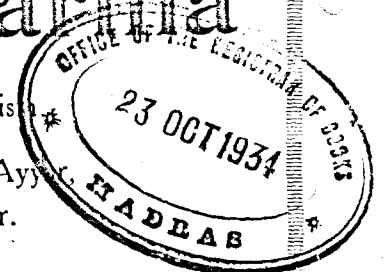
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THE Bharata Dharma

A Magazine of Liberal Hinduism

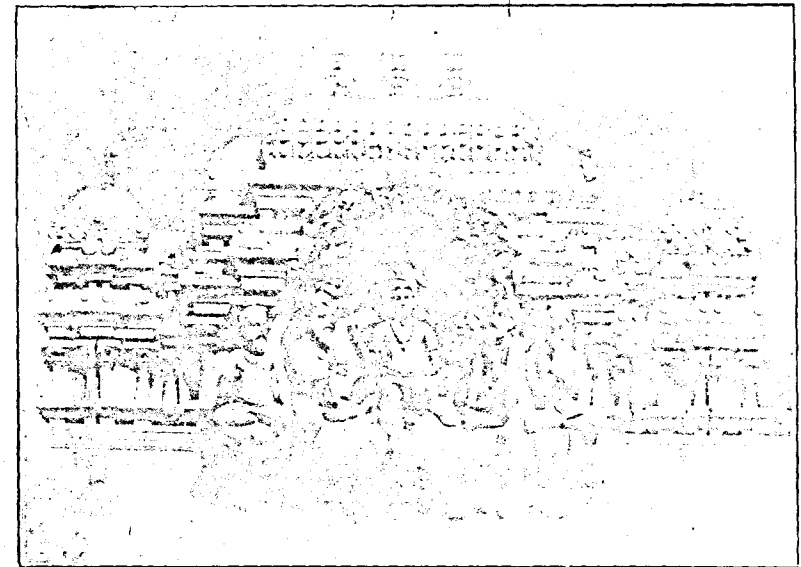
Honorary Editors : { C. V. Krishnaswami Ayyar
K. V. Sessa Ayyangar.



VOL. XII]

SEPTEMBER, 1934

[No. 6



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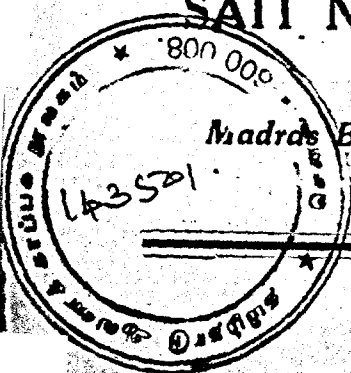
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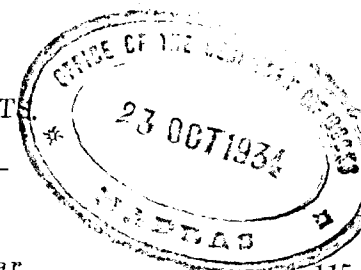
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1934]

THE BHARATA DHARMA

CONTENT



HAS THE SARDA ACT FAILED?

By K. V. Sessa Aiyangar

115

GRAVE DANGER TO THE HINDUS

119

IN THE LAND OF KUCHELAS

By K. V. Sessa Aiyangar

122

MARRIAGE SACRAMENT By T. V. Gopalasami Aiyar

124

TEMPLE ENTRY AND HINDU TRADITION

By P. B. Chakravarti

130

BIRTH CONTROL By T. R. Venkatarama Sastri, C.I.E.

134

EDUCATION AND CINEMAS By Sadhu Vaswani

135

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in some cases would have had a wholesome and deterrent effect. Their complaint is that the Government is weakly yielding to the protests and agitations of a vociferous and obstinate minority who persist in their agitation against it, more from a sense of prestige than from conviction, and that a more determined attitude on the part of the Government would silence all opposition. Some of them are inclined to accuse the Government of trying to placate the opponents to the Act by not enforcing it so as to bargain for their political support. A few go even further and suggest that the Act should be amended by invalidating marriages celebrated within the prohibited ages, and argue that if that is done society will implicitly follow the Act.

Whatever the merits of these rival contentions, it is difficult to accept the statement that the Sarda Act has failed. Wherein has it failed? It is undoubtedly true that the unfortunate postponement of the coming into force of the Act gave a chance to some of its opponents practically to create a panic in some sections of society and goad a number of people into marrying children of surprisingly tender years. It is also true that after the enforcement of the Act there have been marriages which are technically a violation of the Act and which have not been punished. It is also very occasionally the case that the contracting families to a marriage while contemplating the possibility of a prosecution and while performing the marriage with hesitation occasionally make bold to provide for such fine as may be imposed on conviction as part of the marriage expenses. As against this however there is the equally undoubted fact that all classes of society look upon the Act as part of the law of the land requiring to be obeyed. They understand that if they violate it they do so at their peril. It is difficult to over-estimate the moral effect of this attitude. All objections notwithstanding, the fact that it is the law does have a tremendous moral pull and even though it may not ensure absolute conformity with the requirements of the age limit it helps at least to bring the age of marriage considerably nearer the limit fixed in the Act than it would have been otherwise. Where the Act is technically violated the violation takes place with great hesitation and with a perpetually haunting fear of an impending prosecution. Numbers of people fearing the operation of the Act go outside British India to celebrate child marriages. The silent but steady pressure exerted by the Act in helping to raise the age of marriage is shown by the freedom and publicity with which even orthodox families who were not able to procure eligible bridegrooms in time, celebrate marriages beyond the age fixed in the Act, and by the tendency on the part of many families to give the

age of the girl that is being married as nearly fourteen years, even though there may be a substantial margin between the real age and that announced to the public. Though such conduct may not be a fulfilment of the purpose of the Act in all its implications, it is an acknowledgment of its validity and a proof that its sanctions are feared. There is no doubt that the Act has revolutionised the ideas of society on the age of marriage, that it has prevented many child marriages, and that it has effectively raised the age of marriage throughout the country.

To interpret the inadequate enforcement of the Act as its failure is to ignore the condition of the country during the last few years. The Government of the country whose duty it is to see that the laws of the land are obeyed was faced with an agitation which glorified the defiance of all laws, and threatened the very basis of law and order. Such a situation cannot but have an adverse reaction on the enforcement of a measure which rightly or wrongly was held out to the public as an obnoxious piece of legislation. Again, the so called reformers who included a large number of politically minded persons had other pre-occupations and were not in a position to furnish that co-operation by public propaganda and education which is essential for the effective fulfilment of the object of a measure like this. Further, the machinery for the enforcement of the Act necessitates an active and vigilant public opinion continuously functioning on the observance of the Act and ready to play the rather unenviable role of a private prosecutor for doing an act sanctified by ancient practice. It is not surprising that it has not been easy to get such prosecutors in large numbers. Nor are the conditions which those prosecutors have to satisfy conducive to their appearance in large numbers. The result has been that only the extreme section of the champions of the Act were available to set its machinery in motion. In spite of these discouraging features the operation of the Act has been real. In many cases where the violation was a gross one the Police have not hesitated to prosecute nor have the Magistracy shrunk from imposing a fine. Latterly and largely through the influence of Women's organisations, Sarda Act Vigilance Committees have been formed which have to some extent taken upon themselves to assist the Government in the enforcement of the Act. Above all the consciousness of society has definitely moved in the direction of the Act. Both public men and legislators have stood by the Act where its propriety and usefulness were challenged. The few persons who have continued to attack it have been more anxious to claim exemptions in specific cases than to attempt a repeal of the Act.

If we view the situation in all its aspects there is more reason for

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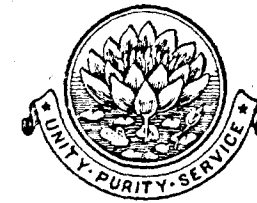
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VOL. XII]

SEPTEMBER 1934

[No. 6

HAS THE SARDA ACT FAILED?

By

K. V. SETHA AIYANGAR.

It is becoming quite a fashion for public men and legislators to remark that the Sarda Act has failed. Curiously enough the statement is made both by the opponents and by the supporters of the Act. But they speak from opposite points of view. The opponents of the Act want to emphasise the impracticability of its enforcement and the dangers that would ensue from a determined enforcement of the Act on a large scale. Their whole object is to point out that the country is not merely not behind the Act but is actively hostile to it, that it is resolved to take no notice of it in the celebration of marriages, and that if it comes to a question of being hauled up before a Criminal Court people are quite willing to pay the penalty. They are anxious to make out that the legislation is one for which the people are wholly unprepared and on a matter which society considers outside legislative interference and within the exclusive boundary of private belief and conduct. Some of them are prepared to go further and say that it is not even competent for the legislature to enact such a measure, that the Act is *ultra vires*, and that resistance to it is justified.

The supporters of the Act have a different object. They look upon the Act as one of the most beneficent pieces of legislation in recent times and one which can vitally transform the health and happiness of Indian Society. They are grieved at the indifference of the guardians of the law to its observance. They consider that drastic punishments

encouragement than despair. Time is on the side of the Act. The public opinion of the youth of the country is on its side. Time is needed for enabling the supporters of the Act to organise for its observance and to enable those who fear all sorts of social troubles leading to the dissolution of society to flow from the enforcement of the Act, to realise the baselessness of their fears. In a matter like this involving the social usage of millions of people it cannot be a cause for despair if the change is not achieved overnight. If we take into account the extent of the country, the magnitude and variety of the population, and their traditional attitude on the question of age of marriage, the result so far achieved cannot be said to be disappointing.

It might perhaps have been better if in the Act a lower age limit more generally acceptable had been fixed and a heavier penalty imposed. It might have been better still if on the basis of an unobjectionable age limit all marriages below that age had been declared invalid. Such procedure would have averted the present situation though it might have necessitated future legislation enhancing the age of marriage. It would have introduced the reform in stages, a course for which much can be said in the peculiar conditions of India. But the extreme position of "hands off the age of marriage" taken up on one side was not conducive to any compromise. The result has been that the Act was enacted as it emerged out of the recommendations of the Age of Consent Committee. However, there can be no thought of going back upon it now. This is not the first occasion in the legislative history of British India in which legislation has been enacted which was not acceptable to some section of the people but which the legislature decided to be in the interests of public welfare. Nor is it the first occasion when measures have been prescribed for the conduct of the public which assume a transformation in their civic and social habits. The Municipal and Health Laws of the country abound in regulations which even after several decades of their enactment have not come within the sphere of social observance. If only some of these well conceived laws had been obeyed or adequately enforced, our towns ought to be patterns of civic cleanliness instead of the ugly sights they present to us to-day.

It may be true that legislation and public opinion have to keep pace with each other. But that pace need not be that of the slowest social group. There is much to be said for the view that it ought to be that of the most advanced in a country like India. Legislative lead is not an unknown phenomenon in the West and it is almost a necessity in India.

GRAVE DANGER TO THE HINDUS.

SIR,

May I, as a Hindu, put the following points through your columns for the consideration of all Hindus, especially the Sanatanists?

Everywhere in the States ruled by Hindu Kings—I mean in Non-Mohammadan and non-Christian States—within the last five years, movements have arisen to destroy not only the power of the Hindu kings, but also the power of the Hindu subjects. In this movement they are vigorously supported by their co-religionists in British India. A study of Kashmir and Alwar will show that the movement against the Hindus were carried out with a clock-like regularity, with the same methods, with the same weapons and in the end practically gaining the same results. Kashmir, which was once a fair ancient Hindu Kingdom is now populated by 98% of non-Hindus. History tells us that when a ruler of the kingdom proposed to re-convert the Muslims to Hinduism the pandits opposed the same and the ruler yielded; and now the present day pandits have to suffer for the sins of their forefathers. Actually Kashmir is lost for ever to the Hindus. In Alwar also we see the same results though not to that great extent as in Kashmir. The examples of these States are being followed in Travancore, Cochin, Kaparthula and in many other minor states with impunity, and the Hindus are everywhere losing their hold. In British India also we find that Bengal, the Panjab, and Sind are slowly being lost to the Hindus. In Bengal there seems to be a well organised movement to kidnap Hindu women, especially widows, and for converting them to Mohammadanism. In other parts of India the same policy of conversion is followed but with non-barbarous methods such as open and peaceful conversions and by propaganda such as public holidays like Christmas and Prophet's birth days to remind the people of the Religions of Jesus Christ and Mohomed (May their souls rest in Peace). Have we got a single day in the year to counteract such a propaganda? A mere look at the report of the census of India will show that Christians and Muslims have tremendously increased in population in India.

Following Kashmir and Alwar, the Hindus in Hyderabad and Bhopal started similar movements which were nipped in their buds. Why? Is it because the rulers in these states are nobler than the Hindu Rulers of Kashmir and Alwar? Is it because the grievances of the Hindus there are not genuine? Is it because the Hindus are divided into water-tight castes? Or is it because the Hindus in British India were supremely indifferent to the fate of their brethren in these States? Answers to these questions will

show the sorrowful state of the Hindus all over India. We find that in these movements the non-Hindus are ever ready to "go beyond His Highness" supported by others in British India, who are ready to organise Kashmir, Alwar and other "Days" and take deputations to the Paramount Power. A casual observation will show that in addition to the Christian Raj already established over Hindus, a Mohammadan Raj is being established in many parts of India by giving more facilities to the Muslims as is the case by the award given by the Prime Minister.

What are we doing to stem this tide against us? We only show our hostility to our Harijans and drive them into the folds of other Religions. No doubt this continual conversion from Hinduism is due to other causes also. But we have done nothing to prevent it and on the other hand we have increased the tension by our narrow and literal views on religious rites and customs. If from a majority we are reduced to a minority in India, what will be our position, with the openly hostile religions against us? We at least are taught—to our present day great sorrow and danger—to think and feel from childhood onwards that all Religions lead to the same goal just as all rivers reach the ocean. I feel that when this proposition was taught by our forefathers in a generous spirit, they never thought of such Religions like Christianity and Mohammadanism, for the simple reason they were *not* born then. This broad aspect was given to those who were Hindus and who were divided into Saivites, Vaishnavites etc. However that may be, we find that the two other great Religions—Christianity and Mohammadanism—consider Hinduism as a Religion of Idolatry and the only thing that can be done to it is to destroy it root and branch.

Leaving aside for a moment our suicidal attitude against the Harijans, do we find unity amongst the caste Hindus themselves? Take any question affecting Hindus and we will find that a number of persons opposing the same. This is not the case amongst Muslims and Christians. When one thinks of this position and this mentality amongst the Hindus one is tempted to feel that there is something fundamentally wrong in Hinduism. The usual answer to these criticism is that of all the old Religions of the world, Hinduism only survives and the rest have vanished without leaving any vital traces of theirs, and Hinduism which has stood so many onslaughts will survive the present day attacks from other Religions and from within. But at present we find that Hinduism is being dwindled every day. To say that this will not be the case in the future is no consolation to us, who are living in the present day.

The other day an Englishman said that "Mr. Gandhi's Harijan movement is a shrewd method of increasing the votes of the Hindus". While denying that Gandhiji has any such idea I said "*I have joined the movement with that sole purpose of increasing the votes of the Hindus. It is a laudable object and one need not be ashamed of it. We only follow the example of our brethren the Christians and Muslims in this matter.*" The fact that a number of Muslims have come to consider Gandhiji as an 'enemy' of Mohammadanism shows that the Harijan movement is considered to be a check on the policy of conversion, which has been going on for many years in India. What is the use of Hinduism if its numbers are dwindled into a minority even in Barathakanda, its only home in this world? The Muslims and Christians, often to our shame, proudly point out that we have no home or country beyond India by naming the number of Muslim and Christian countries beyond India. We cannot do so. Our only hope is our Barathakanda. Even here we are being reduced to be non-entities by the increasing number of conversions and by the indifference and ignorance of the Hindus to the religion of their forefathers. We leave the pristine purity of our Religion and hold ourselves very sacredly to the excrescence and non-essentials. Dear Editor, will you kindly show the Hindus any way to get out of this GRAVE DANGER TO THE HINDUS?

'A Perplexed Hindu'.

[The question raised by 'a perplexed Hindu' is no doubt, an important one, but we are not sure whether, having regard to the history of Hinduism, even the fear of possible political inferiority, is likely to make it change. Not all the political advantages in the world will compensate the loss of the essentials of a religion and if the numbers of Hindus are to be kept high only by giving up any of such essentials Hinduism will, we think, rightly refuse even to look at such a proposal. The real question that has to be faced is whether untouchability is among such essentials. We think that it is not among them and would base our opposition to it on that ground and not on any political advantage its disappearance may bring, though we may welcome it as a bye-product. Though this is not the place to discuss the political aspect of the question we think also that "A perplexed Hindu" is unduly pessimistic about the political situation. The untouchables are not, in our opinion, very anxious to abjure Hinduism. Their leader, Mr. M. C. Rajah, struck the right note the other day when in the Legislative Assembly he said that they were not going to give up Hinduism but remain in it and get untouchability abolished.

Such conversions as there have been, are, in our opinion, due to causes other than religious or political. We would be glad if any of our readers would send us for publication any solution of the difficulty felt by "A Perplexed Hindu"—Ed.]

IN THE LAND OF KUCHELAS

By

K. V. SESA AIYANGAR.

One of the main causes that have contributed to the universal popularity of the Kuchela episode is that Kuchela to a certain extent represents the normal type of the believing Hindu. The hold of the episode over the popular imagination has been so great that even those whose conditions are utterly dissimilar to that of Kuchela are anxious to imagine a resemblance between them and Kuchela that they too may become the recipients of Divine Grace in a similar form. It is like the story of Mercury and the Woodcutter.

In one sense India is a land of Kuchelas, a land of ill-clad men, famished parents, and underfed children, a land of over crowded and destitute families, a land of high mortality and under average life. One can see them everywhere, in all varieties of distress, with growing family cares and vanishing incomes, with the idealism and the expectations of youth turning with the passing of time into disappointment and despair. Surrounded by difficulties on every side the only opening in their lives is in the direction of an appeal to God. Like Kuchela's wife many a household mistress groans under the weight of domestic burden trusting that the fostering care of God will bring her relief sometime in the future.

There is yet another interesting parallel. Like Kuchela the Indian people had the time when it walked in the company of the Lord. Many a time did He come down to this sacred Land and sanctify with His steps the towns and forests, the hills and streams of this ancient country. Like Kuchela the country has been walking in the traditional ruts of old social codes, oblivious to its conditions, oblivious to the misery, the ugliness, and the many defects that mar its life. All the time it has been steadily sinking in the mire of economic distress. The one hope of the people has been that God will not forsake His children and that what happened to Kuchela may happen in their own lives. Oftentimes in utter despair an unconscious cry escapes from

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their hearts. 'Where is the Lord of Lakshmi whom we have been worshipping?'

We are therefore tempted to make the enquiry in all humility, reverence, and faith, 'Is the Kuchela episode an illustration of a Spiritual Law or is it merely a myth?' If it is the latter it has no value to the country. If it is the former, it is priceless. When we come to make the enquiry the first feeling that we get is that the episode is an exception which proves the rule. Take the most prominent feature of the story, answer to prayer. Are human prayers always granted? Why then so much inexplicable suffering? As the Buddha said, 'Of sapphire are the skies, but when men cry famished, not a drop they give'. Direct Divine intervention for the relief for human suffering appears to be the abnormal rather than the normal. Was God then partial to Kuchela? Again, are riches a snare or a help to spiritual progress? Are poverty and misery always the devotee's lot? If so what becomes of the guarantee that has come down through the ages that to those who worship Him, He brings all the requisites necessary for 'Yogakshema'? Incidentally the interesting question arises whether parents are entitled to add to their family indefinitely after the manner of Kuchela trusting to miraculous Divine help?

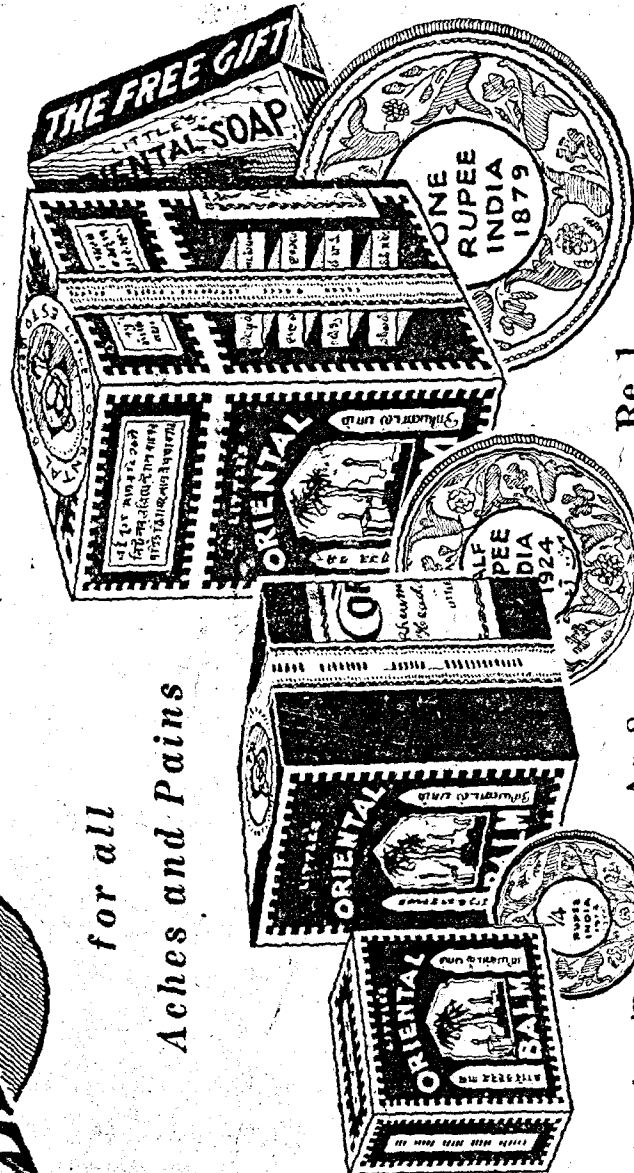
It is difficult to find a satisfactory answer to these questions. But certain general aspects may be noticed which help us to draw useful lessons for our guidance. What was the nature of the relation between Kuchela and Krishna? There was a quondam association in school life. But there was no blood relationship as in the case of Pandavas on whose behalf Krishna interfered on many a critical occasion. There was no communal association as in the case of the cowherds of Brindavana. There was no love-bond as in the case of Gopis, nor the higher self realisation which characterised the Rishis. There was not even that frequent and intimate personal association as in the case of Vidura, Akrura, and Uddhava.

What then was the peculiar characteristic of Kuchela that invested him with such value in the eyes of Sri Krishna? The answer is to be found in the fact that he was the 'Sakha' of Sri Krishna and that he was 'free from attachment to the objects of sense and possessed of control over his senses and of serenity of mind. He was a householder living on what he got by chance, Kuchela was a person in whom the lower self was conquered by the Higher Self and therefore the Higher Self had been realised as a 'Bandhu,' in the words of the Gita. Kuchela's additional claim to recognition was that he believed in Krishna. As the Divinity of Sri Krishna was not realised by many in his time Kuchela's perception of the reality must

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be counted as a merit. In this respect a special significance attaches to the quaint adventure that befell them during the Gurukula life in the hermitage of Sandipani. Sri Krishna and Sudhama were wandering in the forest hand in hand in darkness and rain with loads of firewood on their heads, and had to spend the night in the forest amidst the roar of waters on all sides. Sudhama was not a Kshatriya and it would not have been a matter for surprise if he had appealed for help to Sri Krishna as many others did in a similar situation. But it never occurred to him to do so. Why? Simply because he knew that in the company of Krishna fear cannot be. To fear was to doubt and to doubt was to betray the littleness of one's faith. Kuchela had no doubts. His faith was firm.

(to be continued)

MARRIAGE SACRAMENT

BY

T. V. GOPALASWAMI AIYAR.

(Continued from page 101, Bharata Dharma, August Issue.)

Let us consider what Manu Smriti, the oldest existing Smriti authority on Dharma Shastra, says; it is well-known that Manu lived many, many centuries ago, nay, even some thousands of years ago, when India was in her glorious days and long before Dharma began to decay; and the Smriti which now goes by his name is only supposed to contain his teachings. As these were recorded on cadjan leaves, there is no doubt, as one can see if the extant versions are read intelligently, that there are many additions to and subtractions from the originals, as Dharma declined and man became more and more selfish, and there were thus many versions of Manu Smriti written on cadjan leaves and the best that could be made has been made by some of the earnest scholars who attempted to edit the Smriti in the last century and have it printed. One of such editions is that by E. W. Hopkins, published in 1884, under the name of "The Ordinances of Manu", the translation being by the well-known scholar, A. C. Burnell. The quotations hereunder given are from that book available in the Adyar Library.

Ch. III, 23. The first six forms of marriage are for Brahmanas.

(Among these, the Gandharva form is included). Thus a Brahmana woman can marry a person of her caste, when she comes of age capable of understanding what marriage relationship is.

Ch. III, 55. Women are to be honoured and adorned by fathers and brothers, by husbands, as also by brothers-in-law, who desire much prosperity.

56. Where women are honoured, there gods rejoice; where they are not honoured, there all rites are fruitless.

Ch. IX, 89. Better that a girl, even if she has arrived at the age of puberty, should remain at home till her death than that one should give her to a suitor lacking in good qualities.

90. A girl, having reached the age of puberty, should wait three years (for a husband); but at the end of that period, she should herself choose a husband of like caste.

101. Let there be mutual fidelity ending in death alone; this, in a few words, should be recognised as the highest law of duty for man and wife.

The above Ordinances make it abundantly clear that a high place of honour has been given to women and they are not to be disposed of as chattel, when they are of tender age and are ignorant of the consequences of marriage union. They have to be well-educated and have to know the duties of husband and wife, and if a woman cannot secure a suitable husband, she can even remain a spinster for life.

His Holiness Sri Sankarachariar of Kamakoti Pith, Kumbhaconam, however, propounds a wonderful theory. This view of his, is quoted from a book: *Vide* page 389, published by R. Narayanaswami Aiyar and printed at the Law Journal Press in 1933; and it purports to contain the discourses delivered in Tamil by H. H. during his stay in Madras, in the latter part of 1932. An accurate rendering in English of the relevant part of the discourse is... "He (Manu) has given one kind of Upanayanam for Women. Marriage is Upanayanam for them. Upanayanam means 'taking near a Guru' as I have already said. Husband is Guru for women." H. H. does not quote the Chapter and Rule of the Smriti and so, the statement cannot be verified. As there are so many interpolations in the Smriti and one can find anything he wants, it may be that, in some version of the Smriti, this grotesque view may be found though even this is doubtful. Is there any logic in the view apart from the fact that this Ordinance is quite inconsistent with, nay opposed to, the Ordinances above quoted? H. H. builds thereon the following theory. "Now that Manu has said so, which is Samitadanam (for women)? Household dharmanushtanam (carrying on household dharma) is tending of fire (samitadanam). If so, when should girls be married? It should be done at the age when Upanayanam is

performed, i.e., during the seventh year. To do so will cause difficulties and troubles as it is against law. All have brought about a law to this effect. All should join and have it repealed. This should not be forgotten. Not even one of you forgetting, every attempt should be made to have it altered. Even though it may take one hundred years, attempt should be made to alter it." Is such a theory rational? H. H. the Sankarachariar of Puri takes credit that our Scriptures clearly and categorically say..... "Thus, Truth for its own sake and as arrived at by dispassionate reflection is the goal of our religion (the Sanatana-Dharma of the Vedas and other ancient scriptures of India). Other Religions too enjoin Truth-speaking and other virtues on their followers; but, as for themselves, they shelter themselves behind such expressions as "But I say unto you", claim to be beyond the region of reason and therefore—ultimately and in reality call for and depend on Pure Blind Faith! But Sanatana Dharma is unique in offering itself too to be tested by the absolute touchstone of Truth."

Will dispassionate reasoning show that the theory propounded by H. H. Sri Sankarachariar of Kumbhaconam is sound? Briefly, according to the Vedic injunctions, the Upanayana Samskara and the life of Brahmacharya following it for a period of about twelve years are for Vedic study &c. In the first place, is the girl initiated in Gayatri and other mantras, the first and foremost object of Upanayana? Is she taught what spiritual life is? Is the husband a Guru? Does he know anything at all about spiritual life? Is he an Acharya, qualified to teach her? Even boys and young men now-a-days know nothing of the life of a Brahmachari. Does the girl now go to her husband's house after her marriage to perform the daily agnihotra? Does H.H. think it humane to take away a girl of seven from her parents' home for good to make "samitadanam" in her husband's house under the supervision of her mother-in-law &c, while her husband is reading elsewhere in some school or college? It is needless to dwell at greater length on this absurd theory, which is, to use the mildest language, irrational. Marriage is for leading a householder's life, where husband and wife live together when they are adult and of mature age, the object being among others to have a *fine* progeny, to have *manly* children &c, as Vedic marriage mantras declare.

It is inexplicable that H.H. Sri Sankarachariar of Puri also who has propounded such a beautiful and rational view of Sanatana Dharma as above detailed should advocate early marriage and many other irrational and irreligious customs and the perpetuation of other lifeless traditions now prevailing in India. He presided over the All-India Sanatanists'

Conference held in Calcutta on July 12, and the Manifesto for the coming Legislative Assembly Elections, issued by the Election Board, by the order of His Holiness, published in the Hindu dated August 1, 1934, is couched in high-sounding words evidently intended to hypnotise the readers but, when it descends to the practical side, it is for perpetuating all traditional, irreligious customs and practices, which have sapped the life of the Indian Nation. One of such customs is infant marriage opposed to Sanatana Dharma, whose dreadful results have been described in the August issue of this Journal. H.H. is a strong supporter of the repeal of the Sarda Act among others. He thus stands in the way of India's regeneration. His preachings and practices are poles apart.

What was Sri Krishna's Avatara for? To show to the world by precept and example what Dharma was and how it should be practised. How was He welcomed by the Devas and Rishis when He incarnated?

"Thou whose vratam (vow) is Truth, whose life is Truth, who is Truth, past, present and future, who is the birth-place of Truth, who is the Truth of Truth itself, Truth and Eternal Law being thine eyes, Truth itself being thy swarupa (form), we take refuge in Thee and prostrate before Thee."—Bhagavatam, Skandha x, ii, 26. And He incarnated to establish Dharma which had decayed.—Gita, IV, 7 and 8. How was His marriage with Rukmini performed? Was it when she was seven years old? Kshatryas also had Agnikaryam (samitadanam &c.) They had also Upanayaham. How was the marriage of Subhadra with Arjuna performed? Surely, He was responsible for the marriage. No shelter can be taken under the fact they were Kshatrya marriages, for He himself says "He incarnated to teach Dharma not only to Kshatryas but to all, by precept and example." Gita, III, 21 to 25. He was an embodiment in human form of Truth and Dharma. Again Manu Smriti sanctions marriage after puberty for Brahmanas, the woman herself choosing her husband of like caste, and the Vedic mantras and Grihya Sutras are common to all the Dwijas. Neither those who were responsible for the custom of infant marriages, nor those who advocate it now have any idea of the Law of Karma. Any one who understands the Law, or even the general principles of its working will see the absurdity, the unlawful nature of the custom. What right have parents or guardians to dispose of girls while young, make for them indissoluble ties and Karmic links? It is the persons concerned that should be responsible for their actions and this can only be when they are of mature age capable of understanding the consequences of their acts.

Again, is it not a fact that in India there is a large percentage of

fit her for her duties as wife and companion of her husband and only when man and woman are so educated and trained to get rid of their slave-mentality and know how to bring up children properly and to be reverent to *all life* in whatever form the life may be manifest and have all the noble virtues above set forth and described as dharma and divine properties, only then there will be true Spirituality in our Motherland, (Bharata Varsha) and woman will give birth to Great Rishis, Yogis, Generals, Statesmen &c. India will then become free and once more a truly spiritual country, setting a noble example to the whole world. May that happy day come soon! Om!

TEMPLE ENTRY AND HINDU TRADITION

By

MR. P. B. CHAKRAVARTI, VAKIL, CHINGLEPUT.

Apart from isolated instances there is a whole tradition of Hinduism which has been labouring from at least 1000 A.D. to eradicate the ideology of Caste and Out Caste and give a democratic basis for spiritual salvation. I refer to that remarkable resurgence of Vaishnavism, which starts from before Ramanuja and which had a direct line of sages and teachers for almost half a millennium.

After Buddhism, the first great organised religion in the world and its challenge to the caste system as well as the several religious and philosophical systems of Ancient India, we have the Mahabarata and the Gita, which seem to imply a reconciliation of caste system with Swadharma of Yagas and Yagnas with preliminary disciplines of asceticism with a scheme of psychic power of Upanishads as the cream of philosophic thought with devotion as the path to salvation. From then till about 1000 A.D. except for Sankara, the pages of Indian History seem absolutely barren in northern India and this period synchronises with the revival of rigid Brahmanism and barren dialectics. It is the rise of the *Alvars* and the *Nayanmars*, who seem to have caught up the closing music of the Gita and Buddhism, that has given a definite lead to the powerful Renaissance movement in religion and literature that has swept over the whole of India.

Whereas the influence of the *Nayanmars* seems to have developed the anti-caste and anti-Vedic Lingayat movement and denied for them a broadening influence by such sudden radicalism, it lost also its power for good

by allying itself with the unemotional speculations of Sankara instead of with its helpful rival of Vaishnavism. Vaishnavism seems therefore, to have taken up alone the democratic call of Krishna's flute. We have a series of *Alvars* of all castes, both male and female who are acclaimed by Brahmin Acharyas from before Ramanuja as interpreting truly and unambiguously the quintessence of the teachings of the Ancient Rishis.

Ramanuja's immediate preceptors included a Vaisya. One of his brahmin preceptors Peria Nambi, had to fight with the ostracising Vaishnavite community for performing the last religious rites for his co-disciple a Panchama by birth and by no means a *tour de force* in the line of Vaishnavism—not a perfected soul like *Nanda* or *Tiruppanahwar* but only a devotee on the path. Next we have the instance of Ramanuja himself accepting the hand of a Sattani disciple of his every day while returning from the tank after his daily bath and ablutions. We know that he gave express rights to the Panchamas to enter the Melkote temple. Later comes Nanjeer originally a scholar and sage of the Shankara School, who in his comments on Nammalwar's passage, accepting as his Lord "The *Alvar* of even a Chandala devotee," adds the significant rider that though following the Saint's words may be revolting to *Laukika* practice, it will be satisfying to the noble heart of the leading Saint of Vaishnavism—meaning thereby that a radical move for accepting a pious Chandala was well within the thoughts and aims of Nanjeer as the true Vaidika or orthodox style. In fact the Acharyas that followed him have not been slow to broaden the basis of the democratic movement, for Pillai Loka Charya—he deserves that honorific of the "world teacher"—asserts in several of his Rahasyas that the more we emphasise Caste, the less true we are to the spirit of our great masters and the farther we are from God. However he might have reconciled himself with the system of caste in contemporary social life, the acme of Spiritual Endeavour, the climax of papannahood he kept open to persons of all castes and out-castes immediately now and here—It is not that they were allowed salvation in a future Brahmin birth; it is not that they are given some inferior methods of ascending the spiritual ladder; but the broad and open path of all salvation seekers is thrown open here and now to castes and out-castes alike. These ideas are expounded in his *Magnum Opus* "Sri Vachana Bhushanam" with a warmth and catholicity that would astound the modern reformer. It will be of interest to note that these natural deductions from the Creed of Vaishnavism did no doubt shock some of his followers, and the story goes that they complained to the God Ranganatha at Srirangam that

deaths of infants under one year old? Is not child-marriage the chief cause? Is not the average life of an Indian somewhere about twentyfive? Is not the large percentage of deaths of persons before they begin to earn their bread an economic drain? Can a custom which produces such dreadful havoc be Dharma?

I do not think there is any Samskrit Scholar or Vedantin who does not know the life of the Great Sayana Madhavacharya, an illustrious example of a true Brahmana, who was minister to the king of Vijayanagar—Bukka Raja—in the fourteenth century A.D., and later on, in after-life, Vidyaranya, the Samnyasin. The “Jivanmukti-Viveka” is a compilation of Vedantic teachings by this great Samnyasin after he renounced all concern with the world. What does he say? “Renunciation is mentioned in the Taittiriya and other Upanishads: Immortality is not obtained by acts, by off-spring or by wealth, but by renunciation, and *renunciation alone*”. Women also are entitled to this kind of renunciation. The Chaturdhari-tika of Mokshadharma, dealing with the controversy between Sulabha and Janaka, uses the word ‘Bhikshuki’ with reference to the lady in question and indicates that women may renounce *before marriage* or after the death of their husbands, and may go about as religious mendicants, may learn and hear the Shastras dealing with moksha and may meditate upon Atman in seclusion.....” page 3, of the Samskrit Edition, Anandasrama Series. The great Vidyaranya lived only about six centuries ago and gave the above teaching. How can women choose to become samnyasinis (Bhikshukis) before marriage, if they are married when very young and before they are old enough to *understand* what is samnyasa etc. What a contrast between the great Vidyaranya swamyjee and the modern Samnyasi Mathadhipathis !!! What a fall !!!

Jivatma is sexless and takes various upadhis (sheaths), incarnation after incarnation in male and female bodies. One who knows something of the Laws of Reincarnation and Karma will know why It does so and clearly see that both man and woman should be given the best possible opportunities for the evolution of Its upadhis and the unfoldment of its latent powers. Some of the divine properties which are deemed to be for liberation and which therefore a Brahmana and a Brahmani should possess are:—“Fearlessness, cleanness of life, self-discipline, austerity and straight-forwardness, harmlessness, truth, absence of wrath, compassion to living beings, uncovetousness, mildness, modesty, absence of fickleness, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, absence of envy and pride.

Gita XVI, 1, 2, 3.

If further proof was wanted to show what liberty was given to women, in the Vedic times of India, the readers will find that they were entitled even to marry after the death of their husbands, the same liberty men had and have. Hence it was that India was a great, spiritual and free Nation, ruling the world practically by her culture. The Vedic text bearing on the point is: “Following the old custom and wishing to obtain pati-loka (an inferior heaven), this woman has approached your dead body. Permit her to live in this world. Give her wealth and progeny. O, woman, you are lying with your deceased husband; get up from near the corpse; look at this living world; come and become the wife of him who wishes to marry you; from the hand of the corpse, take the gold that wealth, knowledge, light and strength may attend you; we with you in this world “will enjoy happiness, compete with each other and conquer our enemies.” Taittiriya Aranyaka, VI Prapataka, Anuvaka I, 3” Mantra.

The above facts and figures amply prove that only when boys and girls are well educated and trained as they were a few centuries ago that true Sanatana Dharma will be practised in our motherland, that there will be peace and plenty everywhere and great Rishis, Statesmen, Military Generals, Scientists, Philosophers etc., will be born as of old. A stupid, uncultured mother cannot bring up a great soul properly. In as much as both man and woman are now ignorant of “Sanatana Dharma” and only petrified traditions and lifeless superstitions exist, there are now few Hindu homes where such souls can be born. Anybody who knows the Laws of Reincarnation and Karma and how they work, should have no difficulty in understanding that Great Souls will be born *only in families where there are suitable surroundings and where the parents or guardians practise Sanatana Dharma*.

In order that the above object may be secured and that marriage may be a Sacrament and not a petrified tradition as at present where young girls are sacrificed at the altar of a cruel custom, both man and woman should at the time of marriage be of mature age able to understand the Vedic Mantras and should have been taught the essentials of Sanatana Dharma and they know that they are “friends and companions, uniting together, proposing together, loving each other, ever radiant in each other's company, meaning well towards each other, sharing together all enjoyments and pleasures, joining together in their aspirations, vows and thoughts” as Vedas teach. Only when woman's position is restored, as of old, to that of a true partner and friend of her husband, the position which the Vedas give her, only when she is given the education necessary to

Vaishnavism seemed to devour Varnashrama Dharma and got as reply his Divine support to these conclusions. It is no doubt true that a minority refused to follow him and beat a hasty retreat under the reactionary banner of the brilliant young poet Vedanta Desikar. But the main course of Vaishnavism continued to be led by Pillai Loka Charya his brother Alagia Manavala Perumal and later by Manavala Mamuni, who wrote extensive commentaries with citations from ancient texts on the condensed aphoristic notes of Pillai Loka Charya.

It is thus obvious that there is a regular line of tradition which holds the reforming attitude as the only orthodox view. Some of the present day Vaishnavas see clearly the implications of these sacred writings though surprised at their non-observances. I wish they were more expressive of their orthodox opinions than of their popular notions. If only the line of Vaishnava Acharyas had continued for a century after Manavala Mamuni's death with a galaxy of similar stars, "our reformers will find their occupation gone".

Some 50 years ago a pious and scholarly Vaishnavite of high orthodox status of the Chingleput Dist. by name Satvikacharya of Tiruvalisai, performed Samasraynam to a Panchama and braved the boycott of the total Vaishnavas and when the temple gates were closed at him he returned and made the pregnant observation "If the temples refuse to follow the principles of my Ramanuja, they do not deserve a worship therein". I have heard it said of the famous A. Govindacharya of Mysore, who so eminently translated several books of the line into English for the Journal of Royal Asiatic Society some decades ago taught the Panchamas the way of true living and sought admittance for them into a famous shrine. I do not know how far it is true. If there are Vaishnavas who are afraid to follow what they read reverently they are not true to their Acharyas—that is my humble submission.

It is surprising how between the dates of anti-caste Buddhism and equalitarian Vaishnavism the great system of Sankara which must have flourished contemporaneously with both found no scope for the application of its radical spiritual message of "Sivoham" to the daily needs of life, what with the distinction of Paramarthika and Vyavaharika notions and the emphasis on the doctrine of Adhikara. With the Vaishnavas the Jiva is a distinct entity—a part of what Goethe calls "the garment of God" but the entity must be purged of Ahankara and offered as a willing slave and servant of Narayana, as such he cannot muster so much egoism to deny any one entry into the temple.

The present policy of the Indian politician is the reclamation of a large body of neutral Indians into the main body of Hindu Culture at whose gates they have been knocking for so many centuries. To admit the Panchama into the temple is to admit him into the Heart of Hinduism which can still exhibit its vitality if only a chance is given. Some say "First admit him into your houses" or "let the supporters of reform go into their houses first". I will rather say "you may first pick up courage to admit him into the temple, just look at him as a fellow sojourner in this valley of life, a brother-worshipper. We shall think of further admission later on". Do you not take God's *Prasadams* in the presence of all castes in the temple though you do not feel yourself compelled to interdine with them out of it. Pick up courage in God's presence first; later in his absence. You may try. The temple may again go back to its ancient function of schooling society, show the Harijans into better ways and the caste men into a fresh study of their scriptures to broadcast the new entrants the saving graces of the True life. I foresee a renaissance in Temple cult even from the idol haters of a later-day reform. The temple shunners, if any, will harken back to the temple to seek the message of reborn Hinduism.

There is another point "By mercy, you must invite the Muhammadan and Xian also". I answer (1) you are actually inviting a Xian Governor to go into your Tirupati Shrine to open the electric installation; (2) next I will invite alien religionists even, with the hope of bringing them to the true life of Hinduism. Indeed the dross in our religion will have gone and the democratic urge will give a new zest to the noblest elements in Hindu culture and religion which is likely to sweep outright all the religious of foreign lands, if we willingly offer our religion to this world.

It is not right to say that we never were zealous propagandists of our Religion. While in fact the first proselytising religion in the world was the Buddhism of India, the Vedantic religions were equally ambitious to serve the people of narrower creeds by proselytism. Sankara converted several Buddhists. Ramanuja converted so many Jains and Adwaitis. We took so many Greeks and Bactrians of the Northwest into Hinduism. We have admitted even Villis and Vedans and Gramanis into our temple. I am sure if we are a strong and virile nation now we would have generously partaken of the fruits of our religion with a stranger to Hinduism by allowing him to come in. Not having the manly strength in our decadence, we are making fragile efforts to preserve our religion

for at least ourselves. The result is obvious. When Hinduism came into contact with Muhammadanism in Northern India, the lot of the Panchama and the fallen woman were made bearable by conversion or by disarming the "Hindu Spirit" where orthodoxy has remained petrified by the absence of contact with aliens, as in Malabar, the Panchamas are hounded out of sight and are largely embracing Christianity, to such an extent that most of the Indian Christians are of South India. Had we been virile in those two cases we would have welcomed the Panchamas and the foreigners into our fold. Prudence dictates that we now at least gain the support of numbers of Panchamas by giving them the unique privilege and glory of a true Hindu life.

If on the other hand you want to improve their economic condition leaving aside the spiritual, you may have to wait till eternity for raising the lowest stratum of a society, unless you are prepared to support a sort of communism. In short the only alternative to spiritual equality is revolutionary Bolshevism, if we mean to improve the lot of the untouchables.

BIRTH CONTROL

By

T. R. VENKATARAMA SASTRI, C.I.E.

The Indian Social Reformer pronounces birth control improper as it diverts the attention of the public and the state from the primary duty of finding employment for all the population. I hope this is a correct and not unfair summary. Taking the statement above it seems to me to be incorrect. It is like saying that a man who attempts to balance his budget and live within his means is doing wrong as that diverts his attention from improving his economic condition. For the State as for the individual it is not impossible to make efforts to improve the condition of those in their charge and at the same time calculate the amount of burden they can properly bear in their own interests, individual and collective.

In the old Henry Georgian style, it is maintained that every new birth is not only a mouth to feed but an additional pair of hands to work. We can starve on plenty as we now know it to our cost. The pair of hands may only add to the unemployed and the mouth that waters at the sight of food may never be able to reach it. With all the good-will of individuals and of the States there is just now no certain advantage from additional pairs of hands.

In any case how can anybody maintain that there may be limits to individuals' endurance of the ills of too frequent maternity but there should be no limits to the increase of population because the greater the population the greater is the advantage to the State. This is a calculation of advantage in the event of war which we propose to make certain by over population clamouring for space in other lands. We are not to set

our face against the careful calculation as to the population we should have because the foreigners are also interested in it for their own purposes.

If births decrease and death rate remains, then destruction will result. That is good arithmetic but the underlying assumption is wrong. The death rate will not remain. There is no use saying "in the illustrative case of a family which had 12 children of whom it lost 5, if 7 alone had been born and 5 of them had died there will only be 2". If 7 alone had been born the chances are that all would have been better and we would have had every chance of surviving. In any case five of them would not have died. "If the death rate remained" is a wrong assumption; the conclusion following on it need not be considered.

It is said that birth control is impossible for the lower classes. No one denies difficulties. But people who are out to secure perfection and are willing to do patient work to achieve their ends why do they plead that this is impossible when they are unwilling to recognise greater difficulties

EDUCATION AND CINEMAS.

By

SADHU VASWANI.

Education is an important social force; much of the education in our schools and colleges is a force which works on the wrong side. Money was a factor in life, but to make money the dominant aim was anti-social and was cruel to society. The *deti leti* as it was in Hyderabad was the worst form of social cruelty. Knowledge was power, said Bacon; but it must be *used*, not abused. Education was meant to be a light in a world of darkness. The deepest darkness was the darkness of selfishness. Not a little of our education was a form of educated selfishness. A revolution in Education is needed.

As to the social situation with reference, specially, to boys and girls, the cinemas as they were in this country were disintegrating influence. Many of the pictures in the cinemas poisoned the imagination of the young. Boys and girls naturally imitated what they saw. A boy recently confessed that he learned from pictures in the cinema the art of stealing. Many girls walked about streets and roads with naked arms. It was an imitation of a custom in the West reflected in pictures of the Picture-house. The West was suffering from nerve-fatigue after the war; the West was becoming more and more sex-mad. A cult of the naked was spreading in the West. Imitation of a sex-obsessed West could do no good to our girls. They must not forget the Hindu ideal of purity. Vaswani said he believed that the cycle through which the West was passing would be over and that a day would come when the West realise the value of the Rishis' teaching that in purity and simplicity was the secret of true beauty and vitality.

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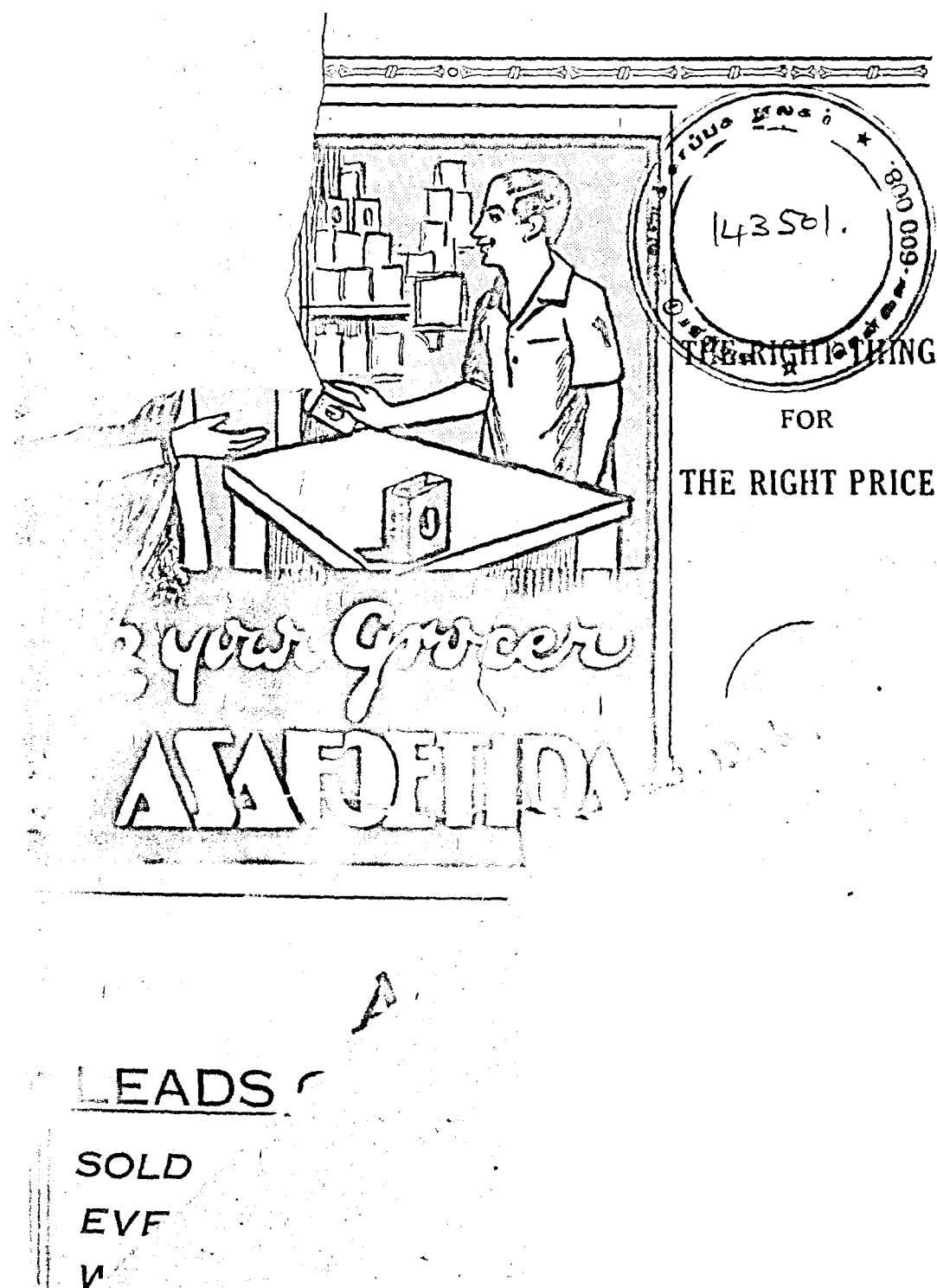
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