

## THE IDEAL BHANGI

( By M. K. Gandhi )

The ideal Bhangi of my conception would be a Brahmin par-excellence, possibly even excel him. It is possible to envisage the existence of a Bhangi without a Brahmin. But without the former the latter could not be. It is the Bhangi who enables society to live. A Bhangi does for society what a mother does for her baby. A mother washes her baby of the dirt and insures his health. Even so the Bhangi protects and safeguards the health of the entire community by maintaining sanitation for it. The Brahmin's duty is to look after the sanitation of the soul, the Bhangi's that of the body of society. But there is a difference in practice; the Brahmin generally does not live up to his duty, the Bhangi does willy-nilly no doubt. Society is sustained by several services. The Bhangi constitutes the foundation of all services.

And yet our woebegone Indian society has branded the Bhangi as a social pariah, set him down at the bottom of the scale, held him fit only to receive kicks and abuse, a creature who must subsist on the leavings of the caste-people and dwell on the dung-heap. He is without a friend, his very name has become a term of reproach. This is shocking. It is perhaps useless to seek the why and wherefore of it. I certainly am unaware of the origin of the inhuman conduct, but I know this much that by looking down upon the Bhangi we—Hindus Mussalmans, Christians and all—have deserved the contempt of the whole world. Our villages have today become seats of dirt and insanitation and the villagers come to an early and untimely death. If only we had given due recognition to the status of the Bhangi as equal to that of a Brahmin as in fact and justice he deserves, our villages today no less than their inhabitants would have looked a picture of cleanliness and order. We would have to a large extent been free from the ravages of a host of diseases which directly spring from our uncleanness and lack of sanitary habits.

I therefore make bold to state without any manner of hesitation or doubt that not till the invidious distinction between the Brahmin and the Bhangi is removed, will our society enjoy health, prosperity and peace, and be happy.

What qualities should such an honoured servant of society exemplify in his person? In my opinion an ideal Bhangi should have a thorough knowledge of the principles of sanitation. He should know how a right kind of latrine is constructed, and the correct way of cleaning it. He should know how to overcome and destroy the odour of excreta and the various disinfectants to render them innocuous.

He should likewise know the process of converting night-soil and urine into manure.

But that is not all. My ideal Bhangi would know the quality of night-soil and urine. He would keep a close watch on these and give a timely warning to the individual concerned. Thus he will give a timely notice of the results of his examination of the excreta. That presupposes a scientific knowledge of the requirements of his profession. He would likewise be an authority on the subject of disposal of night-soil in small villages as well as big cities and his advice and guidance in the matter would be sought for and freely given to society. It goes without saying that he would have the usual learning necessary for reaching the standard here laid down for his profession. Such an ideal Bhangi, while deriving his livelihood from his occupation, would approach it only as a sacred duty. In other words he would not dream of amassing wealth out of it. He would consider himself responsible for the proper removal and disposal of all the dirt and night-soil within the area which he serves and regard the maintenance of healthy and sanitary condition within the same as the *summum bonum* of his existence.

How may we have this ideal Bhangi? Only when we have produced an army of Appa Patwardhans. To clothe the Bhangi with the dignity and respect due to him is the especial task and privilege of the educated class. Some members of the class would first themselves master the science of sanitation to educate the Bhangis round them in the same. They would carefully study their present condition and the causes underlying it and set themselves to the task of eradicating the same by dint of inexhaustible perseverance and patience that never looks back and knows no defeat. They would teach them the laws of cleanliness. Our Bhangis do not today possess even good brooms or other suitable means for the removal of night-soil. The latrines themselves are wretched. The site round the Bhangis' quarters is no better than a cesspool of dirt. All this can only go if some of the educated class give themselves up to the task of redeeming the Bhangi from his present plight and thus redeeming society from its terrible insanitation. Surely this is work enough to satisfy the highest ambition of one who has the spirit of service in him.

[ Translated from Gujarati by Pyarelal ]

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## WEEKLY Darkness

To many a New  
replied this year  
"There is no festival  
for us when this confli  
riots is raging in fro  
could be measured by  
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bay, and have found m  
that I must make wha  
the solution of the qu  
my programme here in  
with the agony, there  
the problem is not insc  
at some length to the  
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Sunday morning with q  
practical interest: "Th  
ground for Hindu Musl  
the slightest doubt. Dur  
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suddenly our hopes seem  
to pieces. But was dar  
permanent phenomenon  
exist without light? Th  
nearer, I think, is the  
gloom the nearer is the  
light. The severest illne  
end. If not recovery,  
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ing its end. It is deep  
more keenly realized to  
the Khilafat agitation.  
its origin, it may perhap  
Today though the Hi  
wears an ugly face it  
the people, and therein  
permanent peace out  
violence. People must  
slaughter. In 1920-21 v  
glimpse of Hindu Musl  
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vanish completely, thou  
have come upon the surfa  
for the moment. Don't  
Muslim unity which was  
receded very far; you w  
hing about prohibition,