

APPENDIX—II

MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

“In another column will be seen an extract from Navajivan of a most disgraceful case of calculated inhumanity of a medical man towards the dying wife of a member of the suppressed class in a Kathiawad village. Sjt. Amritlal Thakkar who is responsible for giving the details of the case has withheld the names of the place and parties for fear of the poor suppressed class school-master being further molested by the medical man. I wish however, that the names will be disclosed. Time must come when the suppressed class people will have to be encouraged by us to dare to suffer further hardships and tyranny. Their sufferings are already too great for any further sufferings to be really felt. Public opinion cannot be roused over grievances that cannot be verified and traced to their sources. I do not know the rules of the Medical Council in Bombay. I know that in other places a medical practitioner, who refused to attend before his fees were paid, would be answerable to the Council and would be liable to have his name removed from the Council's list and be otherwise subject to disciplinary action. Fees are no doubt exactable; but proper attendance upon patients is the first duty of a medical practitioner. The real inhumanity, however, if the facts stated are true, consists in the practitioner refusing to enter the Untouchable's quarters, refusing himself to see the patient, and refusing himself to apply the thermometer. And if the doctrine of Untouchability can ever be applied in any circumstances, it is certainly applicable to this member of the profession which he has disgraced. But I am hoping that there is some exaggeration in the statement made by Sjt. Thakkar's correspondent and, if there is none, that the medical practitioner will himself come forth and make ample amends to the society which he has so outraged by his inhuman conduct.

READ, REFLECT AND WEEP

There is a school for the children of the suppressed classes in a village in Kathiawad. The teacher is a cultured, patriotic man belonging to the *Dhedh* or Weaver (Untouchable) class. He owes his education to the compulsory education policy of His Highness the Gayakwad and had been doing his little bit for the amelioration of his community. He is a man of cleanly habits and refined manners, so that no one can recognise him as belonging to the Untouchable class. But because he had the fortune or misfortune of teaching the children of his own community in a conservative village in Kathiawad, everyone regards him as an Untouchable. But unmindful of that he had been silently working away. There are some moments, however, when the most patient man living under intolerable conditions may give vent to agony and indignation, which are evident in the following letters from the schoolmaster. Every little sentence in it is surcharged with pathos. 'I have purposely omitted the names of the village and all the people mentioned in the letter, lest the schoolmaster should come into further trouble.'

Namaskar. My wife delivered a child on the 5th instant. On the 7th she was taken ill, had motions, lost her speech, had hard breathing and swelling on the chest, and her ribs were aching painfully. I want to call in doctor but he said, 'I will not come to the Untouchable's quarters. I will not examine her either.' Then I approached the Nagarsheth, and the Garrsia Durbar, and requested them to use their good offices for me. They came and on the Nagarsheth standing surety for me for the payment of Rs. 2 as the doctor's fee, and on condition that the patient would be brought outside the Untouchable's quarters, he consented to come. He came, we took out the woman who had a baby only two days old. Then the doctor gave his thermometer to a Musalman who gave it to me. I applied the thermometer and then returned it to the Musalman who gave it to the doctor. It was about eight O'clock, and having inspected the thermometer in the light of a lamp, he said: 'She has pneumonia and suffocation'. After this the doctor left and sent medicine. I got linseed from the market and we are applying linseed poultice and giving her the

medicine. The doctor would not condescend to examine her, simply looked at her from a distance. Of course I gave Rs. 2 for his fee. It is a serious illness. Everything is in His hands !

The light in my life has gone out. She passed away at 2 O'clock this afternoon.

II

Comment is needless. What shall one say about the inhumanity of the doctor who being an educated man refused to apply the thermometer except through the medium of a Musalman to purify it, and who treated an ailing woman lying in for two days worse than a dog or a cat ? What shall one say of the society that tolerates this inhumanity ? One can but reflect and weep.

A. V. Thakkar,

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