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KAMALA V. NIMBKAR

Mr. Shanker

\*Mrs. Kamala V. Nimbkar is the founder and Editor-in-chief of the quarterly 'Journal of Rehabilitation in Asia'. She is one of the leading pioneers in the field of rehabilitation of the handicapped. Her journal has, over the last ten years, served to focus the attention of the public in India and other parts of Asia on the problems of the handicapped and has proved to be a valuable guide to the workers in the field as well as the handicapped themselves.

A Quaker American by birth, Mrs. Nimbkar became a Hindu and an Indian citizen after her marriage with Mr. V.R. Nimbkar, one of the earliest American - educated engineers in the country, who had been associated with the freedom movement since the days of Lokmanya Tilak. After coming to India in 1930, Mrs. Nimbkar had the opportunity of meeting some of the leading figures in the freedom movement and spent about three months in Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram at Sabarmati (Ahmedabad) in the same year (1930).

To start with, Mrs. Nimbkar gives her recollections of the well-known national leader, the late Syed Husain, with whom she came into contact in 1925 when he was on a lecture tour of U.S.A. to acquaint the Americans about India's freedom movement, and her cultural background. Mrs. Nimbkar will also give her impressions about the reactions in America to the publication of the book 'Mother India' by Miss Katherine Mayo.

PART I

Mrs. Nimbkar

It is one of my happiest memories of the time spent as the Honorary Secretary to Syed Husain, from 1925 for the next two and three years, when he was spending his time giving lectures throughout the United States to Universities, colleges, foreign international associations, people interested in international history and politics and women's clubs on the subject of India. He was probably the first outstanding person to present the Indian point of view, and to give a background and an understanding of why Indians were asking for independence. He was a handsome, charming person, with a command of English such as most Americans had not heard and with a knowledge and a background and a presentation which was remarkable. I remember some of the ladies

telling me that if India could produce a man like Syed Husain it could not be a very backward country. He had many difficulties, thanks to the British influence in United States in those days. Some of the big halls, like <sup>the</sup> Town Hall of New York, ~~was~~ closed to him and they did their best to keep him from speaking because of the impact that he was making throughout the country. Up until that time the general run of Americans didn't know very much about India and the political movement. There would be some natural sympathy for anybody who was seeking to have freedom and there were always some people who were against the imperialism, although the British, with people like their English-Speaking Union workers, like Capt. Harry Hubertfield, who was the man who travelled throughout India with Miss Mayo, were doing all they could to create<sup>a</sup> feeling in the United States that India was a backward country and not fit for independence and that the British were doing every<sup>^</sup>thing they could with their 'white man's burden'. One of the sides of the personality and charm of Syed Husain, which is perhaps less known, is that he was a great student of philosophy and of religion and would give<sup>a</sup> series of lectures on Jainism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Bahai and their philosophy with great understanding. I remember a series which I attended, ~~as~~ along with many of the leading socialites of New York city, and particularly the talk he gave on Christianity, <sup>it</sup> was so fine that, at the end, these sophisticated society people talked amongst themselves and said: "If Christianity had ever been presented to us like this, we would have been better people and would have been perhaps very fine Christians, which we feel today we are not." He made such an impact with his knowledge, his philosophy, his personality and his great charm and his sincerity and ~~a~~ devotion to the cause of India which they had to respect and, of course, by respecting his sincerity, his impact on their thinking about India was even greater. The lecture tours were from one end of the United States to the other, from New York to California, to Texas, <sup>to</sup> the South, to the north. It was quite a strain on his health because one day he would be in a hot part of the country, another he would be (in a) cold... but he persisted. He was devoted to the cause and, of course, his lectures<sup>a</sup> tours they tried to arrange so that when he was in one area, he could give as many talks as possible. But still it was a great strain to be travelling so much and to be giving such a variety of lectures but always to show how fine a country India was and (to present) the point of view of the Indian nationalists. He always received very good coverage. I remember he was particularly well covered in California, in San Francisco. Of course, there were many Indians settled there and he was in contact constantly with the Indians who had settled in America or who



had come as students. Many of them looked upon him as their leader and would come for advice and guidance.

This particularly was so at the time of Miss Mayo's book 'Mother India' which caused such a stir and made an impression against India. Perhaps ~~(by)~~ on those who heard Syed Husain and the Indian students who knew them, who immediately rose up in protest against the book, it did not make so much of an impression. But still it made an impression. It certainly stirred up the Indians to think about themselves and what was happening in their country and what kind of an impression it made. They insisted on Miss Mayo coming to give a talk and I was present when she was there on the platform of the Town Hall, which was available to her although not to Syed Husain, and she could not answer the questions. It looked as if she didn't know what was in the book! And when one goes back to the history of Miss Mayo, who was a ~~hack~~ journalist at the time of Teddy Roosevelt, and the trouble with the police in the coal-mine area of Pennsylvania and then from there she was picked up by people in Wall Street to go out to the Philippines and to write a book on 'why the Philippines were not fit for independence', when the United States Congress was considering giving the Philippines independence. Wall Street did not want that done because this was the time of the <sup>Stevenson</sup> Stephenson Act when the British were controlling all the rubber in the world and Wall Street people discovered that rubber could be grown in the northern islands of the Philippines and did not want the Philippines to become independent. I think this is some thing that is not generally known that Miss Mayo was a factor in this. From that book which was widely <sup>publicised</sup> published in U.K. the British evidently thought that it was a good idea to have Miss Mayo write a book on why India was not ready for independence and consequently they deputed Capt. Harry Hubert<sup>F</sup>field, who was at the time in charge of the propaganda work of the English Speaking Union in Boston to travel with her. And, of course, everyone later found out that she had always stayed at Government House wherever she went and it also became evident later at a second meeting, where people challenged Capt. Harry Hubert<sup>F</sup>field to answer the questions since she hadn't been able to do so ~~at~~ the previous meeting. It <sup>C</sup>ame out he had been the author of this <sup>E</sup>book but he could not very well substantiate many things when questioned and could only keep saying it was the evidence of sixty to seventy people in India.

## PART II

Mr. Shanker

Mrs. Nimbkar continues her reminiscences with her recollections of a three

months' stay during 1930 in Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad.

Mrs. Nimbkar

I went there not as a real Ashramite but to try and understand <sup>part of</sup> the life in India as I was to be married and live in India and should be able to manage in any surroundings. I lived the general ashram life, taking a bath in the river. I used to be rather annoyed when the fish would nibble at us because they knew we could not hit them or do anything to them and would beat my clothes with a wooden paddle to clean them and things of that sort. I took the weekly duty of cleaning the toilets. These things never bothered me. What bothered me much more was the tattle<sup>e</sup>-taling - the carrying of tales. We had to write a weekly diary of what we had done and our ideas about things in the Ashram. We had to write a letter to Bapuji who was in jail at Yeravada at that time, which was quite alright. But there was always some<sup>e</sup>one around who would consider it his duty to tell every<sup>e</sup>thing somebody else said or did and didn't trust us that we would put down any of our mistakes in our weekly diary. So there was a small group of us who used to meet in the evening and discuss the ideas that Gandhiji was trying to put across: the questions of discipline, attitudes towards (others).. so many things in life. We did not mind recording our ideas(exchanged) with this group that we had for discussions, but we did object to people writing in their diaries that we had done such and such. And one man, Thakkar Bhai, was always doing this to our annoyance. So one day we decided that we would have to do something about it and we purposely told, in front of him, that we had done such and such, which, of course, we had not done. He recorded it all very carefully in his diary and next Sunday when Naraindas Bhai, Gandhiji's nephew, who was in charge of the Ashram, read his diary, we, a group of us, were called up to give explanations. And then we told him: "These are not true but we had to bring it to your attention, what a tattle<sup>e</sup>-tale Thakkurbhai was, because this is not good. He should mind <sup>look</sup> as to how he behaves and we would let our consciences look after us."

Another example of tale<sup>e</sup>-b<sup>e</sup>aring was the story ~~that~~ <sup>without realising,</sup> told of how Ba, Mrs. Gandhi, had one day been given some pickle by someone and ate it, forgetting for the moment that this she should not do. Miraben saw her do it and immediately ran off to Bapuji and said: "Ba has eaten pickles." So dear Ba was called up by Bapuji and punished. I don't know just what the punishment was but she was given some punishment for having eaten the pickles. This, to my mind, was very wrong. People should be punished <sup>who</sup> to carry the tales as well as those who did the wrong.



Then the questions of cleanliness sometimes bothered me. They would wrap food, greasy food, fried things, in newspaper and the print would come off on the food. So I wrote to Bapuji about it and he was quite disturbed and he wrote back orders that they should use clean leaves. Then we had to clean our plates or thalis with earth, after each meal, and they were using the earth where people rinsed and spat and cleaned their mouths. And this I objected to. I was not prepared to put that kind of earth on my plate. So I wrote to Gandhiji, about it and he wrote back ordering them to get a box of clean earth from a field so that we could use that for cleaning our plates, instead of this dirty soil that was around when people were walking and rinsing their mouths. These were the kinds of things that bothered me quite a bit. There were other things that were very charming and delightful - the early morning prayers on the banks of the Sabarmati River, things of that sort. And I think one of my happiest recollections is while Ba was there, her eldest son and his wife and the first grandson came to visit. They, of course, as a married couple, could not stay in the Ashram and stayed in a little cottage just outside the Ashram grounds. Then next morning after they had come, I went with her (Ba) to see them, and her son, his wife and I sat there on the floor while she held the baby and she forgot that she was the wife of a great man, and a Mahatma, and was just a grandmother. It was such a charming sight. Suddenly she said she must go see <sup>er</sup> Mirabai. My reply was: "Oh, hang <sup>er</sup> Mirabai." You stay and enjoy the baby. I'll go and get her here, if you have to see her." "No, no, no, I must go." So the dear old lady insisted. After that, <sup>time</sup> some, after I had left the Ashram, I met her a time or two and I always told her that I thought she was a far finer person than Bapuji and that I had come to see her and not him. And she always sort of giggled at me because she thought that was very funny, and, of course, didn't believe me for a minute; although I was convinced that she was perhaps one of the finest people I had ever met.

Then, at the same time, while Miraben was there she <sup>had</sup> would come a few days earlier because, although she was out roaming about India, doing manure pit propaganda work. She was Miss Slade - English admiral's daughter - Miss Slade, called Miraben then. She had been sending articles for Gandhiji's magazine which was then edited by Kumarappa from Gujarat Vidyapith, <sup>a few</sup> after miles down the road. <sup>had</sup> Slade, been sending him articles and he had not printed them. Some he showed to me and frankly I didn't think they were very special. But she didn't like it; she felt they should be printed. So she came to the Ashram with the idea of going up to Sabarmati jail and seeing Mahadev Desai, who was ~~xxx~~ in jail then, and getting a note from him to order Kumarappa to print her articles. So she

came late one evening and the next morning, without asking permission of the farmer, as she should have done, she got one of the boys to help her hitch up a bullock-cart and they drove off towards Sabarmati jail, up the road. They had not gone very far when the wheel came off and dumped Miraben in the ditch. I had been doing the 'external' medicine. Dear old Gangaben did the 'internal' medicine. But I did external and I was doing bandages and putting on iodine and cleaning wounds - things of that sort. So when Miraben had some bruises and scratches, they sent for me. So I went to a little hut and greeted her, looked at her ~~legs~~ and said: "I'll get the iodine and paint you up and you'll ~~would~~ be alright in a day or two because you have to go on, I understand, somewhere else." Her immediate reply was: "Should I have iodine or should I have mud?" Well, I hadn't been in India very long and this idea of mud was a new one to me and I sort of envisaged, myself making mud-pies on Miraben's legs. But I kept quiet and then she said if I were in a village, what would I do. I said: "I do not know, Miraben." "If Bapuji <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ here, what would he do?" I again said: "I don't know". Then various people came, so she asked them: should she have iodine or should she have mud. This went on for quite a little while and finally I said: "I am sorry, Miraben, iodine is here in the Ashram. If Bapuji didn't approve of it, it would not be here. I have not brought it in. It was here when I came. And I ~~have~~ to go and do my kitchen duty, preparing the vegetables for the new meal. If you want the iodine, you send for me. If you want mud you will have to get somebody else, because I don't know how to do it." Later, of course, I found out that you put it in a cloth and make it as a poultice and wet it. It is a cooling thing and may<sup>be</sup> you get some very good river mud or something of the sort. But this was her sense of importance that she must always do what was correct and ~~get~~ an example. Then there was always the talk and she was interested, I believe, in having a kind of a temple to Gandhiji. Well, of course, he didn't want that. There was the same thing that kept coming up. Somebody finds - one of the Ashram girls, women-found an old pair of his wooden shoes. So she wrote him a letter and said: "May I have them?" And he wrote her back a very lovely letter saying why she should not, why he did not want her to have it. But, in the end, he said: "If you are not convinced by my letter you may have them." Which again went against all my background because I felt that if he felt that this was wrong, she should not have been given them (wooden shoes).

Anyhow there was another thing that happened while I was there. I was taken across the fields some distance in a truck and ~~was told:~~ <sup>to visit</sup> "This is a go-shala (cattle-shed) where they had the old cows and the baby calves that they had



rescued. It was interesting and the old man there was very much impressed with me because I took my shoes off before I went into his little house and I didn't touch his earthen vessels and I spoke a little Hindi - I have<sup>d</sup> been trying to learn Hindi - and when I got up in the truck to go back to the Ashram, he namasted me and called me "Mataji". Well I learnt that 'Mataji' meant 'mother'. So I turned to the man with me and I said: "Does he think me that old?" Not realising he was really paying me quite a compliment. So<sup>there</sup> were plenty of little amusing incidents at the same time. But the Ashram life to me seemed very artificial. I felt that there was to be order, there was to be discipline, but I didn't quite like the way it was carried out. Then, of course, we were not allowed to eat onions or any spices, because they were supposed to stimulate your sexual interests and which turned into a very amusing event because in this discussion group, we had a Swiss girl. This Swiss girl had come there because she was interested in a young man from Madras, who had gone on earlier to some<sup>other</sup> places for national work and she was to follow him. But in the meantime she joined our discussion group and she also had the idea that the women should do whatever the men did. And she wrote to Bapuji that the women should be allowed to go on night patrols, since the men took turns as night - watchmen taking a patrol - two or three of them together - round the area. Well, the little Gujarati ladies and I, and some of the other ladies there, were not interested in going on night patrol; we didn't care whether we did what the men did or not. But she didn't tell that to Gandhiji and he wrote back saying that he thought perhaps he should make that possible. So I had to write and tell him that she was the only one that wanted to go, and that if he wanted to give her permission, that was alright with us, but then<sup>at</sup> we didn't, any one of us, want to go. Anyhow, the night she was ~~the~~ to leave the Ashram, so she said she would give us a party at our little discussion group and she went and walked into Ahmedabad and came back, with brown bread, butter, tomatoes and onions, and made sandwiches. When she brought them to our group, we said: What have you done? You have brought onions in the Ashram, which is against the rules. How are we to eat it? What should ~~be~~ we do with the onions? Somebody said: "Let's bury them." Well, there was a little dog around, we said: 'Yes' and if the dog digs them up and somebody sees the onions in the morning there would be a line-up. The whole Ashram would be called up to explain how onions got in to the Ashram, we can't do that." Of course, the onions looked awfully good to us because we had not had any for such a long time. Then we said: "What is the rule? "The rule is: You cannot eat onions in the Ashram." "Alright, let's go out". Well, then we discovered that the gates had been locked, so we

could not get out. Then I thought: Well, if our feet are out, are we are out?" They said: "Yes", of course, if our feet are out, we are out". So I said: "Well go and sit on the ghats, put our feet in the water, which is outside the Ashram, and eat the onion sandwiches." So we did.

Going back to the question of medical treatment, I was giving external medicine, and dear old Gangaben was doing internal medicine. Well I soon discovered that her idea of internal medicine, generally, was Soda Bicarb. And people would be dosed with Soda Bicarb until they vomited! And then they would soon be cured and perhaps it was a good remedy, I don't know, but I often wondered whether it was the answer to all the ailments for which they were given Soda Bicarb. However, she was a very dear person and I was very upset the next year when I returned to Ahmedabad on a visit and was met at the station by some friends who apologised for being late, because they had been busy with the car, taking little boys to the hospitals. It seems that some little boys had gotten there together and had read proscribed literature on some street corners in Ahmedabad and had been lathi charged, at the orders of the British head of police there, and so the car had been busy taking these children to the hospital. I went and saw them - poor little things - with broken arms and cracked heads. And the next day the women took out a procession, led by dear Gangaben, and again they were assaulted by the police, with their lathis under British regulations. I have been told: "Oh, this was done by the Indian police." But <sup>if</sup> any one <sup>e</sup> know India and knew the order and discipline of British rule, they would know that no Indian policeman was going to do any thing against orders. But he did follow the orders given him most of the time. So this was dear old Gangaben and I was very sorry to hear that she has been very badly beaten that next day after that lathi charge on the little boys.

Returning to life in Ashram, the food was good and simple. It consisted of chapatties once a day, with some vegetable, and the other time, we had rice with a mixture of the dal and split pea-soup which had the vegetables put in it. So there would be just these two dishes. Some people were doing an experiment of not eating salt at all to see how it effected their health. Another thing (that) was a little trouble some in the Ashram for me, in the beginning, As an American, I was used to slapping at insects and killing flies and, of course, in Ashram you did not take life, so you had to watch the path and step over the ants if they were going along. If there were wasps around, you had to be sure not to hit them. I used to sit in my room with my hands under me for a while to make sure I didn't automatically swat at them. But it didn't seem right, if this was their feeling, to then allow the small boys in the Ashram with their



mothers, to catch scorpions, take out the stings<sup>es</sup>, tie a string to them and play with them. It seemed to me that this was cruel, more cruel than taking the life of the insects. So it was the inconsistencies of things that were very troublesome. On the other hand, it was a very worthwhile experience. After this trip to the Gowshala where the old man had called me 'Mataji', I wrote to Gandhiji in jail, saying that it was alright to look after the cows and the baby cows, but it seemed to me that the money should be spent on human babies rather than the baby cows. And he wrote back and asked me: "Who can say that in the <sup>right</sup> ~~side~~ of God the human baby is any more important than the baby calf." And, of course, there is no answer to that.

### PART III

#### Mr. Shanker

Mrs. Nimbkar goes on to give her impressions of her association with the freedom movement during the thirties and forties.

#### Mrs. Nimbkar

After my three months' in Sabarmati Ashram, I travelled with Sitla Sahai to Allahabad where I spent a few days <sup>in</sup> ~~at~~ the home of Pandit Motilal Nehru who was most anxious that I should stay with him, as he said his daughters would be going to jail, but I, of course, was <sup>more</sup> ~~most~~ interested in going to Jodhpur to be married. After Allahabad, I went to Lucknow and stayed in the home of Ali Zahir, which gave me an insight into purdah life, because at that time the ladies of the family were in strict purdah, and I came to the conclusion that most of what have been told in the West about purdah was not true, that they did have fresh air, if they wanted it, but had the habit of sitting in the houses or in the gardens or rather closed quarters and that was the ~~factor~~. It was not that they were not allowed to go out. They could go out. There were special gardens for them. They could go out in a car. But this was never properly explained. From Lucknow I went on to Ajmer to visit some people whom I had met in <sup>the</sup> ~~an~~ Ashram briefly and they asked me to attend a public meeting being held and give a little talk. Well, I did not know what I should talk on, but I did say something about Miss Mayo and her book and how it had impressed only certain types of Americans. But the meeting was held in <sup>a</sup> ~~wide~~ enclosure and I learnt that a good many of the audience were actually police in mufti with their lathies and that they had intended having a lathi-charge at that meeting and beating up the speakers and the leaders. But because I was there and they were afraid that, as an American I might be hurt, they had to give up their plan<sup>y</sup> for a

lathi-charge to beat up the political leaders of Ajmer. From Ajmer I went on to Jodhpur and was married there after a few <sup>a couple</sup> ~~couples~~ of weeks. In the meantime... and then an order ~~was~~ issued upon me by the British administrator of Jodhpur State that I should not go out of Jodhpur city into the villages, that I should not do any khadi propaganda work, although I was wearing khadi, and that I should be very careful what I said and did or I would have to leave. Since my husband's work was in Jodhpur, I had no other choice than to follow his directive. So at that time I could not do very much. Later on I became active in the All India Women's Conference work and part of my work was concerned with investigating British treatment of women and children in some of the incidents in the country. However, my next recollection of national work is in <sup>the</sup> 1942 movement. By that time we had settled in Bombay and I was running a school for children - boys and girls, fourteen mother-tongues, every possible religious group and all very national-minded youngsters. One morning I went to the school and found that most of the children had gone up to the next suburb to watch, while some bigger boys were upsetting trash cans and doing whatever nuisance they could. I saw an English officer, with a cane, lashing the legs of my little girls and I ran. And when he saw me coming, he stopped. Then I got the children home. Some of the older ones were arrested and taken to the police station. So I had to go down to the police station at Bandra and ~~fixed~~ find out ~~which~~ of my students were arrested and then let their parents know where they were.

At that time we were all doing anything we could to help the national movement. I became a messenger for the underground to the representative <sup>at</sup> of President Roosevelt at the United States Embassy. President Roosevelt had sent out a man to get an independent point of view on what was happening in India, separate from any reports that he might get officially from the British. I <sup>carried</sup> ~~(was)~~ having messages several times, always with a bag packed, expecting to be arrested and hoping that I would be. But the British let me down. I have always regretted it because, of course, if I had gone to jail I would perhaps be a much bigger and more important person today! Perhaps I would be a Member of Parliament or something of the sort or in the Government, or even a Minister! But that was not possible because the British would not have it. We believed at that time that our telephone wire was tapped and they must have known that several American newspapermen were in touch with me and they would ring up and say: "Oh, you are not yet in jail!" Because they were hoping to have a big splash in the newspapers in the United States: "American woman (although by that time, of course, married to an Indian citizen, I was a British subject) was put in



jail." So I was never jailed, although I did my best to be.

The school children we tried to direct them to positive activities and give them the idea that to work in a positive way was far better than <sup>having</sup> strikes and staying away from school. I met at that time, through the underground work a good many people but very briefly. Because it was only to get this material that they gave me so that this man, the representative (of President Roosevelt) in Delhi, would have another side of the picture. He was quite well-informed on the whole. Occasionally, I would take him information which he did not have. But, of course, unfortunately that information did not do enough to make President Roosevelt insist <sup>on the</sup> British giving the Indians a chance to have their share in the Government and in working for the World War.

#### PART IV

##### Mr. Shanker

Mrs. Nimbkar concludes her reminiscences with her experiences of the social work she has been engaged in, over the last twenty years, particularly in regard to the rehabilitation of the handicapped people in India as well as in Asia and abroad.

##### Mrs. Nimbkar

Having established a school from Kindergarten to High school and then giving it to a local association to run, I was <sup>looking</sup> working for something else that I might contribute to my adopted country - India - and came across an article <sup>on about</sup> 'Occupational Therapy' which means 'treatment by doing'. This interested me and it was something, <sup>I</sup> felt, that was obviously needed in Indian hospitals and institutions. Hence in 1945, when I was able to get out of India at the end of the War, I returned to the United States and stayed with my father and commuted to Philadelphia and took Occupational Therapy as my profession, which was at the age of 45, to bring it as a profession to India. On my return, I founded the first school for Occupational Therapy in India and Asia in the K.E.M. Hospital in Bombay. One thing led to another because Occupational Therapy concerns itself with all types of handicapped - the crippled, the neurologically affected, blind, deaf, leprosy - all areas - tuberculosis and mentally retarded. <sup>practically</sup> ~~and~~ there was particularly no area in which Occupational Therapy does not have a part to play. That Occupational Therapy is not enough and so, after two years, I was able <sup>to persuade</sup> the hospital authorities to take up physio-therapy training and, with the help of W.H.O. and other international bodies, that training was

also started at the K.E.M.Hospital.

Later, I felt that I should retire, I having run the school for seven years but in the following year, after having retired in 1957, I was invited by the Government of the then Bombay State to start a second school at the Medical College and Hospital in Nagpur. This I did and, then in 1957, I felt the need for a publication which would carry information on rehabilitation to workers in India and Asia and to also give people in other parts of the world an idea of what India and Asia were doing. This journal has been one of my chief interests ever since and is now 10 years old. I also founded three years ago the Nimbkar Rehabilitation Trust which would run the journal and give it a more permanent basis. At the same time, in 1961, I <sup>helped found</sup> ~~have formed~~ - it was merely my own idea - the Indian Society for the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped which should concern itself with blind, deaf, mentally retarded, orthopaedically handicapped and leprosy. I think, probably, one of the things that I am proudest of is, (that) through the Indian Society, I have been able to bring leprosy workers and leprosy-handicapped patients into the general field of rehabilitation and helped to break some of the stigma against them. Another contribution that has been made through the Indian Society <sup>for</sup> ~~of~~ Rehabilitation of the Handicapped is the observance of the World Day of the Disabled. This Day was established by people in Europe after the last World War in order to help the cause of the civilian disabled. The veterans <sup>were being</sup> ~~would have been helped~~ by the Governments but not the civilians. Mine-workers <sup>were being</sup> ~~would have been injured~~, industrialists <sup>were being</sup> ~~would have been injured~~ but no one was doing anything about it. So this organisation, called 'Fimatic', <sup>FIMATIC [International Federation of Persons with Physical Disabilities]</sup> developed the World Day and I learnt about it in 1962 when in Italy, to a conference that they had organised. Came back to India and from 1964 began encouraging people in all parts of India to observe this Day. By now on the 3rd Sunday in March, the World Day of the Disabled, every State in India has some observance. At that time all the organisations working for the handicapped in a particular area come together and discuss the needs of the handicapped, give some assistance and develop public community opinion that is going to help give jobs and a chance to the handicapped to show their abilities, which is extremely important. Then, out of this work, the Government of India Department of Social Welfare took up the idea and organised, this last year (1969), National Awards to the best workers in open industry - one blind, one deaf, and one orthopaedically handicapped and three employers - outstanding employers from the whole of India. In the meantime, the India Society for the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped and the Nimbkar Rehabilitation Trust, last year and <sup>again</sup> this year (1969 & 1970), in Bombay, Hyderabad, Madras and Poona, gave awards - small cash awards - and certificates



of Merit to outstanding employees and employers. This, I feel, is one of the best contributions that has been made to the cause of the handicapped in India because it is working for equal opportunity for them.

Mr. Shanker

Thank you very much, Mrs. Nimbkar for your very interesting reminiscences of the Indian leader, Dr. Syed Husain, in U.S.A. during the twenties, of your association with Mahatma Gandhi and the freedom movement during the thirties and forties and of the work of rehabilitation of the handicapped to which you have dedicated yourself over the last 20 years.