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# Ellen Hørup and Other Gandhian Women in Denmark

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by

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Abstract: This paper summarizes a life-long archive research on Ellen Hørup, and the other Gandhians Anne Marie Petersen and Esther Faering, three extraordinary Danish women who got in touch with Gandhi, and were involved in social work, and peace-keeping. Until 1921, Mohandas Gandhi and the Indian non-violent struggle for freedom in South Africa and in India was unknown in Scandinavia, except – as we shall learn – for a little group of Danish missionaries in India and their friends back home – especially Anne Marie Petersen and Esther Faering. Ellen Hørup's first work was on Gandhi and his non-violent struggle against British imperialism in India.

My interest in Ellen Hørup started in the mid-1980s with the findings of a few of her chronicle collections from the time of World War II. Initially, I was amazed at her subjects, analyses and interpretations of contemporary politics. They were very human. Active humanism in a time of reaction and wars on the agenda, even though, with the League of Nations and in international politics, efforts were taking place in a different direction, especially in the first ten years of the League.

I continued my research and read about her in the Danish Biographical Lexicon. Then there were visits and studies in the Royal Library's catalogue rooms and to Ellen Hørup's large private archive in the National Archives. Viggo Hørup's wife Emma had adopted a Wiener child and I managed to find this man's son. We became good friends. He still had big part of Ellen Hørup's archive in the loft in the apartment Ellen Hørup lived in when she was in Denmark. I bought them from him, with the intention of writing her biography. All my Ellen Hørup archives, 33 box files, have been submitted to the Women's History Collection. They are in the

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National Archives of Denmark now. The Ellen Hørup diaries were handed over to the Danish Royal Library.

With Ellen Hørup, Gandhi and the other personalities mentioned in this paper, such as Anne Marie Petersen, and Esther Faering, appeared in the aftermath. A large part of my old books and journals about Gandhi originate from Ellen Hørup<sup>1</sup>.

Ultimately Ellen Hørup decided to move to Italy, where she financially helped some of Mussolini's opponents and wrote about the war crimes trials in Italy. Unfortunately, I do not know much about her in this period of her life. This paper summarizes a life-long research on Ellen Hørup, and the other Gandhians, Anne Marie Petersen and Esther Faering, three extraordinary Danish women who got in touch with Gandhi, and were involved in social work, and peace-keeping. Besides, this writing would be a possible input, hoping for a possible new research on Hørup's work in Italy.

### **Gandhi and Denmark**

Until 1921, Mohandas Gandhi and the Indian non-violent struggle for freedom in South Africa and in India was unknown in Scandinavia, except – as we shall learn – for a little group of Danish missionaries in India and their friends back home.

The first article about Gandhi appeared in Danish newspapers on August 25, 1921: “There is a revolt against the English in India. The revolt is led by Gandhi”<sup>2</sup>, the readers learned. A pacifist corrective to the newspaper articles came in the next number of the magazine of the Danish chapter of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. A five-page article by the Ceylon-born Reverend Ariam Williams – “Gandhi-Bevægelsen og dens Principper”<sup>3</sup> – introduced Gandhi and his policy of non-violence to the members of the peace movement. Within a few years all who wanted to know about the development of the political situation in India could read about it in the news and in the writings of Gandhi himself.

However, it was another person who sparked the interest of the Scandinavians for the Indian scene. In 1913 the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature and a few of his books were published in Danish. In May 1921 he was on a much-publicized visit in Denmark where he told the press about

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<sup>2</sup> Victor Elbrling, *Danmark under Verdenskrigen og i Efterkrigstiden*, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup> *Freds-Varden*, 1921, pp. 61-68.

Gandhi. At the same time the Danish missionary Esther Faering<sup>4</sup> wrote an article about Tagore's school<sup>5</sup>.

The breakthrough came with the publication of the French writer Romain Rolland's biography of Gandhi in 1924, together with an anthology of articles from Gandhi's magazine "Young India". Rolland linked the philosophy of Gandhi to anti-imperialism and to a hope for a future of unity and cooperation. In the late twenties the first meetings about Gandhi and non-violence were held in Copenhagen. The snowball started rolling and grew much bigger when the journalist Ellen Hørup established the Friends of India Society in Copenhagen in October 1930. She also established the first monthly magazine devoted fully to Mahatma Gandhi outside South Africa and India.

Until about 1920, Gandhi was little known outside India, South Africa and Britain. Probably the only book about Gandhi, published outside India, was a biography *Gandhi: An Indian Patriot in South Africa* by Rev. Joseph J. Doke, published in London in 1909, with a foreword by Lord Ampthill. In fact, Gandhi carried the manuscript to London and the publication was intended to secure understanding and support for the struggle of the Indians in South Africa against oppression.

In London, there were also news reports about the Indian struggle in South Africa, then a British colony, and Gandhi's two visits to London on behalf of the Indian community. An article by Professor Gilbert Murray in "Hibberts Journal" (January 1918) attracted some attention, especially from pacifists. Another early Gandhi biography was written by Henriëtte (van der Schalk) Roland Holst: *De Revolutionaire Massa-Aktie, Een Studie*, Rotterdam 1918<sup>6</sup>.

Gandhi became a leader of the national movement in India by 1919, but the strict British censorship prevented news of the movement from reaching other countries. In Denmark, however, Gandhi received some early publicity because of a few liberal Danish missionaries who admired him – especially John Bittmann, Anne Marie Petersen and Esther Faering.

### **Anne Marie Petersen (1878-1951)**

Anne Marie Peterson life is best summarized in the Tine Elisabeth Larsen's book *Anne Marie Petersen: a Danish woman in South India – A Missionary story 1909-1951*<sup>7</sup> and in Holger Terp – Enuga S. Reddy (eds.), *Friends of Gandhi. Correspondence of Mahatma Gandhi with Esther Faering (Menon), Anne Marie*

<sup>4</sup> See the paragraph "Esther Faering".

<sup>5</sup> "Højskolebladet", Kolding, 1921, n. 46, columns n. 665-668 and 691-695.

<sup>6</sup> Schalk, *Henriette Goverdine Anna van derat*, Biografisch Woordenboek van het Socialisme end de Arbeidersbewerking in Nederland, at: <https://socialhistory.org/bwsa/biografie/schalk>.

<sup>7</sup> Tine Elisabeth Larsen, *Anne Marie Petersen: a Danish woman in South India – A Missionary story 1909-1951*, Lutheran Heritage Archives, Gurukul 2000.

Petersen, and Ellen Hørup, Danish Peace Academy, Copenhagen 2006<sup>8</sup>. She was born on August 1, 1878. She was a teacher and a missionary. She attended the first women's high school in Denmark, Frederiksborg Folk High School, in 1896. In 1900 she graduated from Vejle Forskoleseminarium as a teacher. She came to India in December 1909 to join the mission of Eduard Løventhal (1841-1917). Early she wanted to establish her own national Christian ashram and school for Indian children and women. She became a member of the Danish Missionary Society in India in November 1912.

During World War I, she took over the oversight of two Danish missionary educational programmes. On a research journey around the country collecting information about Indian Schools, where Miss Faering worked as her assistant, they met Gandhi for the first time on January 6, 1917. Miss Petersen became attached to Gandhi, who wrote many letters to her<sup>9</sup>.

She returned to Denmark on vacation from June 1917 to August 1919. After the death of Edvard Løventhal in 1917, she took over and continued his mission. In August 1920 Miss Petersen participated in a meeting at Vellore, where Gandhi was the main speaker. Anne Marie Petersen wrote in *Højskolebladet*:

I hoped to be able to hide in one of the fringes in the crowd, but it turned out to be impossible. My peculiar figure caught the eye of one of the leaders, a white woman wearing an Indian dress, and whether I liked it or not, I had to take one of the chairs near the platform. I felt very strange as the only woman and only European in this large crowd of people. And he – the great – worshipped like a saint in India – put both his hands to his forehead and greeted me [...]. The leaders standing by stared at me with wonder. I was so embarrassed that I did not know where to hide. But Gandhi waved at me: "Come over here Miss Petersen." "No, no!" I said with a deprecating gesture. But the people standing close to me whispered: "Gandhi wants it, Gandhi wants it". So, there was no excuse. I had to climb the platform. And there in front of the gazing crowd, he took both my hands in his and said: "I am so happy to see you"<sup>10</sup>.

Dissatisfied with Mission's policy on equal rights and its policy towards her school, she left the Danish Mission, and founded an ashram – and a school for poor women and girls (The Christian National Girls' School) – on September 17, 1921 at Porto Novo / the Indo-Danish Mission, also named *Sevamandir* (temple of service). Her Danish support group was led by Reverend P. Reimann (1848-1928).

Gandhi visited Porto Novo on September 17-18, 1921, and stayed that night at Petersen's home<sup>11</sup>. Later, Gandhi and Anne Marie Petersen met often. She visited Gandhi on December 30, 1921<sup>12</sup>. After a pilgrimage to the mountains of Himalaya during 1922, Petersen introduced Sundar Singh to Gandhi at Sabarmathi Ashram,

<sup>8</sup> Further bibliographic information could be found here: <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/nordic/annebib.htm#notes> ; while, *Friends of Gandhi* is available here: <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/nordic/friends.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> See *Friends of Gandhi*, cit.

<sup>10</sup> "Højskolebladet", Kolding, 1920, columns 1383-1384; Tine Elisabeth Larsen, *Anne Marie Petersen: a Danish woman* cit., p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> "The Hindu", January 23, 1924, p. 14. Quoted from: Bent Smidt Hansen, *Dependency and Identity / Aphaengighed og identitet: Problems of Cultural Encounter as a consequence of the Danish Mission in South India between World Wars I and II*, (thesis), Aarhus University Press 1992, p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> Bent Smidt Hansen, *Dependency and Identity*, cit., p. 203.

near Ahmedabad. She called on Gandhi in Yeravda jail on April 1, 1923. In 1924 she met Gandhi together with Esther Faering (Menon)<sup>13</sup>, and before she returned to Denmark on holiday in June, 1926. When Anne Marie Petersen wanted to return to India in November 1927, she couldn't get a visa. Mrs. Petersen travelled through the continent to Armenia, where she met the Danish Missionary-teacher Karen Jeppe<sup>14</sup>. On December 8, Anne Marie Petersen was back in India, just in time to the yearly meeting of the Indian Congress Party at Madras. On December 16, 1928 Ellen Hørup and Cathinca Olsen<sup>15</sup> came to Porto Novo. Before Gandhi was arrested at the National Congress Party's meeting in Madras, on January 4, 1932, Anne Marie Petersen met Gandhi twice. Around November 1, 1933 Anne and Gandhi met at Gandhi's Sevagram Ashram, where Mrs. Petersen wanted to encounter C. F. Andrews. In January 1945 they met at a pedagogical conference at Sevagram and the year after they met at the National Congress Party's 60-year jubilee. Petersen assisted at one of the working sessions of the Congress.

In 1936-1937 Anne Marie Petersen was in Denmark. For the second time the British authorities refused her visa to India in December 1937. Nevertheless, during World War II, Anne Marie Petersen was able to return to India. Her support group continued to collect money for her and the school, but Mrs. Petersen could not receive the funds before October 1945. Even though she did get a little money from Americans, Seva Mandir was falling into decay and Anne Marie Petersen was tired of waiting for the war to end.

On June 23, 1946 Anne Marie Petersen returned to Denmark on a holiday which lasted until December 1947. On August 15, 1947 Mother India was liberated. As a part of the liberation there came freedom of religion, but not for the Christian missionaries. All of them, including Anne Marie Petersen, had to report to the authorities once a month, and if they were taking a journey this also was to be reported to the police. Anne died in India January 9, 1951. "The Harijan" wrote: "There was a peculiar spiritual understanding between herself and Gandhi, who used to call her, "My Annie Marie". To the end she remained a devote admirer and follower of Gandhi and she belongs to the blessed groups of foreign friends who served India in complete harmony"<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> See paragraph on Esther Faering (Menon).

<sup>14</sup> Danish missionary and social worker, known for her aid given to Ottoman Armenian refugees and survivors of the Armenian Genocide. About Karen Jeppe and for further bibliographic information, see: Eva Lotus, *Karen Jeppe: Denmark's First Peace Philosopher*, The Danish Peace Academy, 2003, available at: <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/ukjeppe.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Cathinca Olsen was born in Copenhagen, Denmark August 3, 1868 (d. 1947). Ceramist, painter and designer. She travelled to India with Mrs. Hørup and met Gandhi. Active in the Friends of India 1930-1939, a brief biographical note is available here: <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/nordic/bionotes.htm#Olsen>.

<sup>16</sup> "The Harijan", March 24, 1951, in Tine Elisabeth Larsen, *Anne Marie Petersen: a Danish woman* cit., p. 219.

### Esther Faering Menon (1889-1962)

Eshter Faering<sup>17</sup> was an educated teacher of religion at Frk. Zahles Seminarium in Copenhagen. She got her missionary studies at Carey Hall Missionary Training College. Esther Faering went to India in November 1915. She visited Gandhi's Ashram on January 6, 1917 with Miss Petersen and was very much influenced by him<sup>18</sup>. She wrote:

Anne Marie Petersen selected me to join her visiting schools around India, although I was the youngest. It was then we met Gandhi. My discontent and uneasiness about being a part of an organised society originated from this meeting. He utterly fascinated me and his ideal was mine too from my very youth<sup>19</sup>.

She stayed in the Ashram for some time in 1920. She became a devotee of Gandhi, and he treated her as a daughter, and wrote around 150 letters to her<sup>20</sup>. These letters were published in *My dear child. Letters from M.K. Gandhi to Esther Faering* (1956)<sup>21</sup>. The Government soon considered her presence in India undesirable and tried to deport her under the new Memorandum A, B and C on mission to India from the Indian Office, London, from 1918. On August 22, 1919, Gandhi first wrote to the Governor of the Bombay (now Mumbai) Presidency, Lord Willingdon, requesting him not to deport her. Then he wrote to the governor of the Madras Presidency. Soon after Gandhi also sent his friend, the English missionary, Charles Fraser Andrews, to the governor to speak about her case. On October 22, 1919, he informed the Government of Madras that she had arrived at the Ashram.

In 1921 she was betrothed to Dr. E. Kuhn Menon, and that provoked much criticism within the Danish Mission Society as well as from Hindus. She left for Denmark in March 1920 and married Menon in Denmark on July 1, 1921. The British Government for some time refused her permission to return to India. However, they returned without permission to India in late December 1922, where they spent some time helping Anne Marie Petersen with the school and the ashram she established in Porto Novo. Mr. Menon was overseeing the building of the school and when it was finished in January 1924, he was awarded medical tools for 2000 kr. by the support group of Anne Marie Petersen<sup>22</sup>.

They then moved to Kotagiri, a hill station in Nilgris, where Dr. Menon helped poor patients. Both the Menons' salaries were paid by Anne Marie Petersen's support

<sup>17</sup> For further information about Esther Faering (Menon), see Holger Terp – Enuga S. Reddy (eds.), *Friends of Gandhi*, cit; Alice M. Barnes (ed.) *My dear child. Letters from M.K. Gandhi to Esther Faering*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 1956, available at: <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/nordic/child.htm>; and Karl Baago, *Mahatma Gandhi's Dear Child*, in Frede Hojgaard (ed.) *Friends of Gandhi: Inter-war Scandinavian Responses to the Mahatma*, "NIAS Report", 7, 1991. The original letters from Gandhi to Ester Menon are at Håndskriftafdelingen the Royal Library, Copenhagen. Files n. Ny Kongelig Samling, 2251 and 4308.

<sup>18</sup> Rasmus Anker-Møller, *Porto Novo Missionen*, cit., p. 208.

<sup>19</sup> Tine Elisabeth Larsen, *Anne Marie Petersen: a Danish woman* cit., p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> A selection of Gandhi-Esther Faering letters could be found here: <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/nordic/index5/index5.htm#Esther>.

<sup>21</sup> Alice Barnes (ed.), *My dear child*, cit.

<sup>22</sup> Bent Smidt Hansen, *Dependency and Identity*, cit., p. 180.

group. On March 10, 1923 Gandhi was arrested on a charge of sedition and sentenced to six years in jail. The correspondence of Esther with Gandhi was interrupted since Gandhi was only allowed to send four letters a year. She wrote in her Gandhi biography that a letter from her was returned because the prisoner Gandhi was not allowed to receive letters<sup>23</sup>. Gandhi was released in January 1924 because of illness. Esther Menon and Anne Marie Petersen travelled to Poona and were at his bedside, when the news of his release was made public. They were together with him for eight days. Esther's two daughters, Nan (Ann) and Tangai (Sarawati Ellen), were born in September 1923 and 1926. But the hot climate began to affect the health of Mrs. Menon from this time. Right after the birth of Nan, Esther got malaria. The Menons left for Denmark again because of Mrs. Menon's ill-health and Mr. Menon was in England from 1927 to 1933 as he studied surgery at Birmingham, while Mrs. Menon and her children were in Denmark. In 1931 Esther Menon visited Gandhi for two weeks, when Gandhi was in London<sup>24</sup>. Mr. Menon was associated with the Woodbrooke Settlement, a Quaker institution in Birmingham which Gandhi visited in 1931 and lived at Selly Oak, Birmingham.

The Menons returned to Porto Novo on February 10, 1934. Mr. Menon established a hospital there. After the second world war Esther Menon and her girls returned to Denmark, where Esther died in 1962.

### **Gandhi and Anne Marie Petersen on education**

Their common interest in education was the reason why Anne Marie Petersen first met Gandhi in January 1917. The poor had to be educated in order to be able to protest against their conditions of slavery and to support themselves. However, there was no common education in India at that time.

“In my opinion the present educational system is absolutely bad! At any rate it is no good for us here in India. All these exams which you have to take are of no use whatever except for a few people who want to make their way in the world. The students are filled with a whole lot of knowledge which they had better forget again. I personally have had to unlearn a good deal of my English education”<sup>25</sup>, said Gandhi to Bokken Lassen<sup>26</sup> and Ellen Hørup.

Gandhi developed a national school and educational program, taught at the Wardha Ashram: basic craft education, where the children learnt through the work of their hands. Basic craft education was divided into three parts: 1) pre-basic for small children, 2) children's schools for pupils aged 7-14 and 3) post-basic, general

<sup>23</sup> Ester Menon, *Gandhi. En karakteristik og Fremstilling af de sidste Dages Begivenheder: Med Forord af Jens Rosenkjær*, H. Hagerups Forlag, Copenhagen 1930, p. 33.

<sup>24</sup> Esther Menon, *En Dag med Gandhi i London*. “Porto Novo”, 11, 1931, pp. 160-167 and *Af et Brev fra Fru Menon*, “Porto Novo”, 1, 1932, pp. 5-8.

<sup>25</sup> Holger Terp – Enuga S. Reddy (eds.), *Friends of Gandhi*, cit., p. 428.

<sup>26</sup> Caroline (Bokken) Lassen, was a Norwegian singer and writer; she visited India in 1930-31 with Ellen Hørup, and met Gandhi at Anand Bhavan, Allahabad, in February 1931. For further information see: <http://www.fredsakademiet.dk/library/nordic/index5/letter26.htm>.



education, which included the universities and problems relating to the enlightenment of the masses of whom only a few were able to read and write<sup>27</sup>.

When Anne Marie Petersen came to India in 1909, she left a country with a poor common education system. Militaristic Danish governments in the 19th century used more than half of the public funds to pay for past wars and the militarization of Denmark. From 1844, progressive teachers and churchmen established free schools for children and folk high schools for adult peasants and workers with the goal that the pupils would become good citizens. The schools became part of the political process which made Denmark more liberal before and after the turn of the twentieth century. In the words of Anne Marie Petersen to Gandhi:

Only by indigenous education can India be truly uplifted. Why this appeals so much to me is perhaps because I belong to the part of the Danish people who started their own independent, indigenous national schools. The Danish Free Schools and Folk-High-Schools, of which you may have heard, were started against the opposition and persecution of the State. The organisers won and thus have regenerated the nation<sup>28</sup>.

When she arrived in India in 1909, Mrs. Petersen had a vision of establishing a Christian National School, a home school for children and women. Her school at Porto Novo was one of the first national schools in India build on Gandhi's ideas.

Why a national school? The school at Porto Novo should become a Christian part in the process of the liberation of India, beginning at the basic, children and women. All education and upbringing should be for the life. There were special conditions in India. When the Western schools came to India, knowledge and examinations became somewhat of an idol. "As one of India's great leaders said to me", wrote Anne Marie Petersen in "Vor Skole" (1918) where she quotes Gandhi: "India suffers from brain fever; we are running after literary knowledge and despising the work of the body. But India is a big agricultural country; there the progress has to be made. The work of the hand must be honoured and aided forward equal with the spirit"<sup>29</sup>.

Anne Marie Petersen, together with a young missionary, Esther Faering, undertook a research journey in India investigating Christian and Hindu schools. They were in Guntur with Dr. Kugler; Poona with Professor Karve; Mukti near Poona with Pândita Râmabai; and Ahmedabad with Dr. Taylor and Gandhi. Mrs Petersen liked Gandhi's educational philosophy, but did not feel at home in his Ashram. "I spoke with Mahatma Gandhi about what he thought and would advise me to do (with the school plans). "Yes", said he, "when you ask, I will answer, that my demand for a national school first and foremost is that it is independent (self-supplying), and therefore it should be established in response to a demand from the people. Ask the nationalists you to begin at Madras, receive the offer! But", he added, with a roguish twinkle in his eyes, "if I know you right, after all you act not after the advice from others, but only according to what you believe is right for God"<sup>30</sup>, wrote Anne Petersen.

<sup>27</sup> Rasmus Anker-Møller, *Porto Novo Missionen*, cit., p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> Holger Terp – Enuga S. Reddy (eds.), *Friends of Gandhi*, cit., pp. 353-354.

<sup>29</sup> "Vor Skole", 1918, p. 181.

<sup>30</sup> "Porto Novo: meddelelser om arbejdet ude og hjemme", 22, 1922, p. 11.



Anne Marie Petersen had hoped her national girls' school at Porto Novo would attract attention in India, but it became controversial within the Danish high school and missionary circles. Out of the heated debates grew a wider knowledge of Gandhi in Denmark. On June 21, 1921 her school project was named the Mission at Porto Novo / Portonovomissionen<sup>31</sup>.

Before the laying of the foundation stone of Sevamandir on September 17, 1921, Gandhi wrote an article about National Education in Young India. Anne Marie Petersen's friends in Denmark published his article and her comments to it.

The school was opened on January 20, 1924. The pupils got an intercultural education which combined the work of the hand with the work of the spirit. They learned to spin in order to produce their own clothes, grew their own food, and learned to read and write as well as their lessons on Indian history, religions and culture. Anne Marie Petersen and Esther Menon travelled from Porto Novo to Poona to tell Gandhi the happy news. On February 5, 1924, Mrs. Petersen wrote: "Then I nevertheless came to congratulate the Mahatma with the release. When I came to the hospital 9 pm and they told it, it was about to overwhelm me. May it now be to happiness for India and may an wall of love – and intercession be built around Mahatma Gandhi, so he is allowed to live as a free man – not only free from prison – for that he is – but free from the burden of being him who shall lead and carry India"<sup>32</sup>. During the All India Teachers Conference in 1930 Anne Marie Petersen spoke about her school. Mrs. Visalakshi visited Porto Novo according to *The Voice of Youth*<sup>33</sup>.

When I, on April 1, [1933, wrote Anne Marie Petersen] visited Gandhi in the Yeravda prison, he looked so happy and easy of mind, as ever I have seen him. We talked a great deal, both about, what we, what our little mission could do for those untouchable – here with us in South India – the so called Parias edifying. I also included the question, which so long has burned in me, and I wanted to receive a direct answer from the great reformer of India: if he during Swaraj would have compulsory school attendance or not. To this he answered, that he was against all compulsion, but namely was a hater of compulsory school attendance "I want good schools and free schools for all, so all children and young ones can have an opportunity to receive the best possible enlightenment. But even the best school attendance is destroyed if it is compulsory. "But", he added, "I know, I am in a pitiful minority in this, as well as in so many other questions".

"Bapu, it does not matter if you ever are so alone, You have the justice and the truth on your side, and we few, which believe in the victory of freedom, will be victorious. So poor as she is, it is impossible for India to carry through compulsory school attendance; this will help us." When I left him, I asked, when I should see him again. He laughed and said: "When you return back from Kashmir". But I cried: "Here in the prison? God forbids it!" "Why not," he answered, "I have," and he showed his five fingers, "so many years left! I am completely happy here." "But the question is not, if you are happy or not; but if we are happy with you in prison, if we,

<sup>31</sup> P. Riemann, *Portonovo. Højskolebladet*, 1921, column 977.

<sup>32</sup> "Porto Novo: meddelelser om arbejdet ude og hjemme", 2, 1924, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> "Porto Novo: meddelelser om arbejdet ude og hjemme", 4, 1930, pp. 87-89.

if India can do without you". That Gandhi admitted, and we parted agreeing, as the will of God is, so will it turn out"<sup>34</sup>.

The education system Gandhi adopted in 1937, was called The National Basic Craft Scheme of Education<sup>35</sup>. As a member of the Rural Reconstruction Workers Association, in 1939 Anne Marie Petersen was invited to speak at the conference for the rural reconstruction workers at Kengeri. She was the only women at the conference. Mrs. Petersen spoke of the need for educating women teachers and suggested that her school in Porto Novo was developed into a women's teacher training college which it became in April 1949<sup>36</sup>.

Communication between Denmark and India became difficult, during World War II, after the German occupation of Denmark on April 9, 1940. Even though the support group continued to collect money for the Indo-Danish Mission, it couldn't be sent to India. In August 1940 as the school at Porto Novo was recognised by Talimi Sangh and Mahatma Gandhi as a Basic Craft School, Anne Marie Petersen had to send most of the pupils home for lack of money. Gandhi showed solidarity. He mailed Mrs. Petersen 200 Rupees<sup>37</sup>. In January 1945 Anne Marie Petersen attended the "All India National Basic Craft Educational Conference" at Sevagram. On the last day of the meeting she visited Gandhi and got a smile from him<sup>38</sup>. A short while thereafter she was invited to participate in the Constructive Workers Congress in Madras, where she met Gandhi again. Back in Porto Novo from Denmark, on December 11, 1947, Anne Marie Petersen was welcomed by half the town. More than 1000 people, mostly Harijans, greeted her. Seva Mandir had expanded to two Harijan schools, with more than 80 children; Seva Mandir was buying fields to grow their own rice to feed the pupils during the hunger periods.

The murder of Gandhi came as a shock for Anne Marie Petersen as well as many others. Mrs. Petersen's work continued. Her school was recognised by the District Educational Officer. Also, she made a village school. Memorials for Gandhi were suggested. Anne Marie Petersen saw herself going into local politics of the town. She rejected plans of a statue and suggested as alternatives: 1) building of a waterworks, 2) establishing a centre for Khaddar, 3) help to the untouchables, 4) developing Sevamandir into a common school by employing Hindu and Muslim teachers, and 5) establishing a hospital for women. The governor of Madras came to the school on June 19, 1948. Anne Marie Petersen wanted the school to remain independent. In April 1949 Serva Mandir got the permission to educate the first 60 women teachers.

Within the framework of the struggle for Indian political and social liberation Anne Marie Petersen and Gandhi pioneered a North-South dialogue. They were in

<sup>34</sup> "Porto Novo: meddelelser om arbejdet ude og hjemme", 6, 1933, pp. 80-81.

<sup>35</sup> "Porto Novo", 5, 1949, p. 92.

<sup>36</sup> Sara Joshus, *Kengeri-Mødet for Landsby-Genrejsnings-Arbejdere*, Porto Novo, 4, 1939, pp 92-97 and Anne Marie Petersen, *Kvinden og Hjemmets Plads i Arbejdet for en ny Skole og for Landsbylivets Genrejsning*, Porto Novo, 5, 1941, pp. 113-117

<sup>37</sup> Anne Marie Petersen, *Brev fra Anne Marie Petersen*, Porto Novo, 1, 1941, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Rasmus Anker-Møller, *Porto Novo Missionen*, p. 25 and Anne Marie Petersen, *To Møder*, Porto Novo, 3, 1946, pp. 57-70.

India, but came from different cultures. Also, it was an early North-South dialogue including development aid, because Anne Marie Petersen couldn't have made her school (as big) as it became, without financial support from Christian friends and friends from the Folk High school movement in Denmark. Some of the concepts and terms they used in developing a national Indian school were later used in the development of the pedagogy of liberation, based upon "the ethical indignation, the preferential option for the poor and finally the liberation of the poor and oppressed - and of the oppressor"<sup>39</sup>. The educators of the oppressed and the poor Latin Americans who have learned from Gandhi might also benefit from ideas from the Danish Folk High School movement.

In 1919, Anne Marie Petersen mentioned Gandhi for the second time in a Danish publication: "The great Indian reformer Gandhi, said to me: Yes, I would like to go to Denmark. It is one of the countries in the world we can learn most from. India is a large farming country; we need to learn from Denmark agriculturally, we need good public education, and we need unions, loan banks and co-operative societies as in Denmark"<sup>40</sup>. He said the same to her in 1924 and also told it to Carl Vett in 1925. Two years later Gandhi suggested in an interview to Hans and Emilie Bjerrum, that Denmark should give development aid to India: "Let them (the Danes) teach us their life-giving industry of cooperative dairy and cattle-breeding". In 1963 India was among the first "underdeveloped" countries to receive development aid from Denmark, the Hessarghatta cattle-breeding project in Karnataka.

There was censorship on news from India after the Salt March of 1930. Carl Vett, a Norwegian barrister of the Supreme Court and his wife, Edward Holton James, an American barrister from Boston, Ellen Hørup and Caroline (Bokken) Lasson "created a little self-constituted commission, whose members all travelled to India on their own", meeting once in a while in India. The journey of Ellen, Caroline and Carl to India lasted from November 1930 to April 1931.

### **Ellen Hørup (1871-1953)**

The Danish journalist Ellen Hørup (1871-1953) wrote more than 600 feature articles and editorials, and more than 300 shorter articles in newspapers, magazines and books about international politics, armament and disarmament, and imperialism. Her first work was about Gandhi and his non-violent struggle against British imperialism in India. Later she wrote against Fascism and Nazism, against totalitarian governments as a whole, and militarism, including NATO. Most of her work was done in the 1930s and 40s, which made it natural for her to write about subjects such as the Spanish Civil War, The League of Nations and political as well as religious refugees (long before Amnesty International).

During the German occupation of Denmark, when she was unable to write about foreign political matters, she set her mind upon writing about another oppressed group: children. She became a strong critic of Danish public childcare, an effort for

<sup>39</sup> Marina Jacobsen, *Fra Barbari til værdighed*, RUC, 2001 p. 271.

<sup>40</sup> Anne Marie Petersen, *Danmarks Verdensmission*, 1919, p. 64.

which she is not completely forgotten. In fact, some people still remember her with gratitude, and a new magazine about children's conditions in Denmark is named after her, "ELLEN".

Ellen Hørup was, in many ways, a person ahead of her time. She wrote not only about the subjects already mentioned, she also wrote about agriculture and pollution. Being one of the first female foreign policy journalists in Denmark and internationally, she also took great interest in women's liberation and wrote a great deal about it. Her main focus was, however, her peace work. She was a cosmopolite. Not only did Ellen Hørup speak and write in Danish, but she also spoke and wrote excellently in English, Italian, German, Russian and French.

Ellen Hørup was a member of Danish and international peace groups. However, she never was a member of any political party or religious group, even though she had friends in unexpected places. Ellen Hørup was a "grassroots" 50 years before the word was invented<sup>41</sup>. She was the daughter of the famous Danish anti-militarist, journalist and politician Viggo Hørup (1841-1902)<sup>42</sup>. In October 1884 he founded the daily "Politiken", which slowly grew to become one of the biggest newspapers in the country. The shares in "Politiken", which she had inherited from her parents, made her economically independent.

After the death of her mother, in late 1923, Ellen Hørup divorced her husband and settled in Rome. After translating some of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales into Italian in 1927, she made the acquaintance of Gandhi's non-violent fight for freedom and decided to carry on her father's journalistic work by describing the activities of the Congress Party as well as the activities of Mahatma (as he was called) Gandhi. She visited Gandhi and worked for him in the late 1920s together with other female friends: the world-famous Danish painter, ceramist and designer Cathinca Olsen and the then equally famous Norwegian singer Bokken Lasson. Both worked in the Friends of India Society in Copenhagen and Oslo.

Despite the fact that her father had taken part in establishing "Politiken", and she was a shareholder and member of the board (from 1933 to 1949), as a part of the Danish establishment, the paper was not always happy to publish her controversial articles and analyses of international politics. But the paper did so in spite of growing political disagreement. Throwing out the daughter of the founder and late leading journalist in Scandinavia would not look too good in the public's eyes.

### **The International Committee for India**

In order to get her pacifist information out to a larger international public, as well as in order to be better informed herself, she moved to Geneva in 1933. Here, before moving, in October 1932, she established "The International Committee for India" and in 1935, the news agency "Journal des Archives". "The International Committee for India" held at least three international conferences in 1932 and 1933 in Geneva.

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<sup>41</sup> The files of Ellen Hørup are placed at Rigsarkivet (The National Archives), Copenhagen, Privatarkiv, File n. 8094.

<sup>42</sup> Viggo Hørup's writings and biography are unfortunately not translated into English. See Holger Terp, *The History of the Peace Movements* for references to Danish and Norwegian biographies.

Some of the organizations and individuals which were connected to the Committee were: “The Friends of India Societies” in London, Copenhagen and Oslo, “The Indian Conciliation Group”, London, “The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom”, Alice Paul, Agathe Harrison, Edmond Privat, Dorothy Detzer, Edit Pye, Margerith Cousins, Sidney Strong, Magdalene Rolland – the sister of Romain Rolland – and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence. (Some of the women mentioned here were supporters of the Suffragette movement and members of “The Womens’ International League for Peace and Freedom”. Others were “Friends”).

“The International Committee for India” published the magazine “Indian Press”, 1934-1935. The peace news agency published the now extremely rare, and to my knowledge, never since quoted magazines “Letter from Geneva” and “Journal des Archives” in English, French and German. In 1930, in Copenhagen, she had already formed the organization and magazine “Indiens Venner” / Friends of India Society. At the time there were similar pro-Gandhi organizations which supported the Indian nationalist struggle in Norway, Sweden, England, Belgium, France, Bulgaria, Japan and the U.S.A., as well as other countries. These organizations and their magazines are mostly forgotten today.

The Danish “Friends of India Society” lasted from November 1930 to around 1938 and had some 250 members<sup>43</sup>. Among the members were Danish missionaries who had travelled and lived in India for a long time. Among them were Anne Marie Petersen, the headmaster of “The Indian National School”, Porto Novo; Gandhi’s “dear child” Ester Færing (Menon), Johan Bittermann and his wife – who lived in India for 42 years and the Swedish missionary Mrs. Karlmark from “The Swedish Church Mission”. Besides the stories of the Indian liberation movement, the magazine also carried cultural and religious articles, thus painting a broader picture of India than the ordinary magazines of the peace movements of the time.

### **The role of women in civil disobedience**

Ellen Hørup admired Gandhi whom she visited and worked for in the winter of 1929/30 and again in the winter of 1930/31 when she followed him and worked for him during his journey from India to the Round Table Conference in London. She also corresponded with Gandhi through the years. In one of the first letters she wrote to him from Rome, dated May 2, 1929, she writes:

In Denmark we have a Socialist-Radical ministry. Two of my friends have been ministers, one of foreign affairs, another of justice (Minister of Foreign Affairs P. Munch and former Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Carl Th. Zahle), so I hope that there shall be no difficulties with my passport for India in a year and a half. My first article about India has been published. I send you the number of the paper although it is in Danish, because I remember your expression when you asked me “what I was doing in Rome”. My second article is called “Mahatma Gandhi and his Ashram”. It is already mailed and will be published this month. The Danish ministry is a disarmament ministry in accordance with my father’s ideas<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Membership book of “Indiens Venner” at Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen.

<sup>44</sup> The first article by Ellen Hørup about Gandhi: “Mahatma Gandhi” is published in “Politiken”, February 28, 1929. A copy of the cited letter is at the Gandhi Informations Zentrum, Berlin. The other

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1931 Ellen Hørup wrote to Bapuji, Gandhi's nickname among friends:

Yes, it would have been nice, if we could have met each other oftener. But I don't complain. I went to most of your meetings, and I attended more than twenty times to the evening prayer. But I always felt, that I had no right to take your time [...]. I am on my way back to Denmark, where I shall let my friends make me a member of the board of my paper Politiken. During this year I shall stay in Copenhagen and try to make the paper a little less yellow and a little more truthful. If I can do nothing, I must make "The Friends of India" larger and broader and leave the others alone<sup>45</sup>.

In December 1931 she published the book "Gandhis Indien", on Gandhi and the political situation in India which shows how passionately she felt for the cause of India. It gives witness to the degree to which she could penetrate into, and familiarize herself with, Indian ways of life and mind. Yet the curious thing is that however deeply she may be seized by the sentiment of the individual festive moment, she remained a cool and sceptical observer with a sharp eye for the paltriness of her fellow human beings.

In a totally natural way, Ellen Hørup describes the conditions and ways of life which were enormously remote from the life of contemporary Europeans. The reason why she was able to do this is that she did not travel as a typical tourist - satisfied with the stereotyped sightseeing usually presented to the curious European - she visited ordinary Indian quarters, dined at the native restaurants, listened to all kinds of people. She also went to the villages where she observed the poverty in which the people lived.

When Ellen Hørup, unlike so many of the followers of Gandhi, drifted somewhat away from him, it was not because of the policy of non-violence, with which she agreed. But because, in her view, the fight for the liberation of India should be still further developed. The workers and the women of India should be included more, but Gandhi would support neither the Indian workers' unions nor the women's liberation groups. In fact, Gandhi supported the trade union of textile workers in Ahmedabad and advised them on their strike in 1919. That union followed his principles - and later many unions followed him. He did not believe in class struggle, like Communist trade union leaders. He did not set up a women's organisation, but supported women's equality. The All India Women's Conference was set up in the 1930s by women leaders, many of whom were his followers. Ellen's statement is, therefore, controversial.

In an address held in Copenhagen, for the Danish "Friends of India Society" on November 23, 1936, "My relationship with Gandhi" Ellen Hørup among other things said,

His ideas, my admiration for him, the longing to meet the man, who gave me what I have been seeking all my life - something which together is called devotion, reverence and love - was what led me twice to India. I wanted to see Gandhi, and I wanted to see the 350 million meek Hindus who follow him. While in India, I sought out only him and his followers. In every city, my first goal was the Kaddar-shop, where I just had to show a little medallion of Gandhi which

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letter from Gandhi to Ellen Hørup are published in "Indiens Venner", 6, 1933. The original letter from Gandhi to Ellen Hørup are at Rigsarkivet. File n. 8094.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Mrs. Ellen Hørup, May 2, 1929 (Rome), Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen, File 8904.

was sold in the streets for 10 cents, before all faces would change, all hearts open and all hands be ready to greet me. I found what I sought. But that was all I found. I did what one of my friends wrote that she had done! I identified India with Gandhi. And Gandhi meant, to me, the apostle who would bring, not only to India but to the entire world, the gospel of the future - the abolishing of violence from mankind. And he still does. But as the years have passed and after I have been to London attending the Round Table Conference India now means more than Gandhi to me. And I have become wiser from reading and from meeting many people from Gandhi's country, and I have learned that there are different movements in India just as there are in any country. And I have drifted from Gandhi in many ways. I follow him on his journeys among the peasants and in the cities among the workers. I read what he says about the women, and what he says to them when they ask for advice. Gandhi admires them highly. He has called them out from their isolation, freed them from the purdahs. But Gandhi still has the mind of a man, and besides that, the mind of a Hindu<sup>46</sup>.

However, she was able to express her dissent against Gandhi's too traditionalist ideas about women, as we can read in her speech dated 1936.

In Gandhi's magazine "Young India" from 1929 there is an article entitled "The Hindu Wife", where he is asked for advice regarding a woman married to a man who treats her meanly. But Gandhi is against separation. What women need is education and upbringing. But when a man ties a woman to a pole to make her look at his outrageousness, then I don't understand that the woman is the one who needs education. Gandhi declared that she should go back home and find a job. But she has never learned anything, and possibly her parents are so poor, that they can't take her back. Does Gandhi know the words of the Chinese mother to her daughter, who, driven to the uttermost despair, runs from her husband back to her mother, who exclaims: "What do you come here for? Don't you know I can't help you, or have you forgotten the way to the river?" But Gandhi is against separation. And even if the parents took her back, then she is, according to Hindu law, segregated from anything resembling normal life. She is not even seen as a widow. Instead the women have to suffer and do without a normal life. Why? Is it justice that she is going to be punished because her parents gave her to a bestial man? In one of the last numbers of "Harijan", Gandhi discusses birth control with an English advocate of the cause. Gandhi is against it. He too doesn't want children before India has been liberated. But he demands abstinence. Only when the intention is to create new life is intercourse ethical. If two persons do it only for the sake of the enjoyment, then they are, instead of being near the divine, near the devilish. Is this not the unnatural teaching of Asceticism, which all healthy people, including the scientists, have long ago abandoned as dangerous? Gandhi says that women are stronger than men. When a woman would rather die than give in, the worst beast can't make her do something against her will. But when the English woman then asks what a poor woman should do when her husband takes another wife, Gandhi answers that the English woman is changing the subject. Are there no poor women? Has Gandhi forgotten the girl-child married away in the age of 12 to 14? Is she not the one who has to fight for her life in order to escape pregnancy every time her husband wants her, and who no beast of a man can overcome? Has Gandhi no idea that a woman has the same need for devotion as a man, and suffers the same trouble of jealousy as Gandhi himself did when he was at school knowing that his wife was visiting her friends?<sup>47</sup>

When Gandhi was nominated for the 1937 Nobel Peace Prize by the Norwegian chapter of the "Friends of India Society", Ellen Hørup wrote to a number of influential persons to make them support the nomination. She got positive replies

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<sup>46</sup> The first article by Ellen Hørup about Gandhi: "Mahatma Gandhi" is published in "Politiken", February 28, 1929. A copy of the cited letter is at the Gandhi Informations Zentrum, Berlin. Other letters from Gandhi to Ellen Hørup are published in "Indiens Venner", 6, 1933. The original letters from Gandhi to Ellen Hørup are at Rigsarkivet. File n. 8094.

<sup>47</sup> Unpublished speech in Danish, dated November 23, 1936. Manuscript in the files of Holger Terp.



from Romain Rolland, C. F. Andrews, The Danish Nobel Laureate Henrik Pontoppidan, and the German Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Professor Ludvig Quidde, the Danish MPs Hassing Jørgensen and Edv. Larsen, Bart de Ligt, Maria Montessori, The Danish chapter of “The Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom”, as well as support from numerous other Danish organizations and individuals. But Gandhi, in spite of the popular Scandinavian and international demand, never was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize<sup>48</sup>.

After her mother’s death and her divorce, Ellen Hørup settled in Rome from 1924 to 1933, when she moved to Geneva. In the inter-war years, she helped some of Mussolini’s opponents financially, so they could emigrate from Italy. She had a continuing interest in Italian relationships.

Ellen Hørup continued in the late 1930s to write and publish articles about Gandhi and the Indian struggle for freedom, and later, in 1948, she became a member of the board of the “Danish Indian Friendship Union”<sup>49</sup>. After World War II, she wrote about the war crimes trials in Italy and the floods in the Po Valley in 1951.

At the age of 81 years Ellen Hørup died from a combination of lung cancer and a cold, which she contracted doing research among the poor farmers in Italy in the spring of 1953. Ellen Hørup died dictating her last articles protesting against the Korean War. She was not able to hold a pen in her hand nor to sit at the typewriter.

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<sup>48</sup> Gandhi and the Nobel Peace Prize. See the article by Thomas Weber, *Gandhi and the Nobel Peace Prize*, in “South Asia. Journal of South Asian Studies”, 1, 1990, pp. 29-47. Ellen Hørup’s correspondence in connection with the nomination of Gandhi to the Nobel Peace Prize, see: “Indiens Venner”, 8, 1937, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> See the minutes of the Danish Indian Friendship Union 1949.