

**TEXT CUT WITHIN  
THE BOOK ONLY**

**UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY**

**OU\_214068**

**UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY**

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No 842.42      Acc No 29806

# Osmania University Library

Call No 842.42  
M 78 M

Accession No ~~298~~ 298

Author Moore W. G

Title Moliere - A new criticism

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below



## WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

SOCIALISM IS a beautiful word and, so far as I am aware, in Socialism all the members of society are equal—none low, none high. In the individual body the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society. This is Socialism.

In it, the prince and the peasant, the wealthy and poor, the employer and the employee are all on the same level. In terms of religion, there is no duality in Socialism. It is all unity. Looking at society all the while over, there is nothing but duality or plurality. Unity is conspicuous by its absence. This man is high, that one is low, that is a Hindu, that a Muslim, third a Christian, fourth a Parsi, fifth a Sikh, sixth a Jew. Everywhere among these there are sub-divisions. In the unity of my conception, there is perfect unity in the plurality of designs.

1. In order to reach this state, we may not look on things philosophically and say that we need not make a move until all are converted to Socialism. Without changing our life we may go on giving addresses, forming parties and hawk-like seize the game when it comes our way. This is no Socialism. The more we treat it as game to be seized, the farther it must recede from us.

Socialism begins with the first convert. If there is one such, you can add zeros to the one and the first zero will account for ten and every addition will account for

## SOCIALISM OF MY CONCEPTION

ten times the previous number If, however, the beginner is a zero, in other words, no one makes the beginning, multiplicity of zeros will also produce zero value Time and paper occupied in writing zeros will be much waste

This Socialism is as pure as crystal It, therefore, requires crystal-like means to achieve it Impure means result in an impure end<sup>1</sup> Hence, the prince and the peasant will not be equalized by cutting off the prince's head, nor can the process of cutting off equalize the employer and the employed One cannot reach Truth by untruthfulness Truthful conduct alone reaches Truth Are not Non-violence and Truth The answer is an emphatic 'no' Non-violence is bedded in Truth and *vice versa* Hence has it been said that they are faces of the same coin<sup>2</sup> Either inseparable from the other Read the coin either way The spelling of words will be different The value is the same This blessed State is unattainable without perfect purity Harbour impurity of mind or body and you have untruth and violence in you

Therefore, only truthful, non-violent and pure-hearted Socialists will be able to establish a Socialistic society in India and the world To my knowledge, there is no

<sup>1</sup> "They say 'means are after all means' I would say means are after all everything As the means, so the end There is no wall of separation between means and end Indeed, the Creator has given us control (and that, too, limited) over means, none over the end 'Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means This is a proposition that admits of no exception'

—*Young India* July 17, 1924

<sup>2</sup> "Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth, unstamped, metallic disc Who can say which is the obverse, and which the reverse?"

—*From Yeravda Mtmadv* (1945 Edition) P 8

hty in the world which is purely socialistic. With-  
 Ithe means described above, the existence of such a  
 leity is impossible

-*Harijan*. July 13, 1947

## II

### SOCIALISM AND BELIEF IN GOD

TH and "*Ahtmsa* must incarnate in Soaahsm. In  
 o r that they can, the votary ipust have a living faith  
 v i H<sup>1</sup> Mere mechanical adherence to Truth and  
 . 'ic m is likely to break down at the critical moment  
 Hu jt have I said that Truth is God This God is a  
 Livmg Force. Our life is of that Force. That Force  
 resides in, but is not only body He who denies the  
 existence of that Great Force, denies to himself the use  
 of that Inexhaustible Power and thus remains impotent  
 He is Jike a rudderless ship which, tossed about here  
 and there, uerishes without making any headway. The  
 ^Socialism of such takes them nowhere, what to say of the  
 society in which they live

If such be the case, does it mean that no Socialist  
 believes in God? If there be any, why have they not  
 made any visible progress? Then again, many godly

<sup>1</sup> "But be it far from me to suggest that you should believe in the  
 God that I believe in Maybe your definition is different from mine,  
 but your belief in that God must be your ultimate mainstay It  
 may be some Supreme Power or some Being even indefinable, but  
 belief in it is indispensable To bear all kinds of tortures without  
 a murmur of resentment is impossible for a human being without  
 the strength that comes from God Only in His strength we are  
 strong And on'y those who can cast their cares and their fears  
 on that Immeasurable Power have faith in God "

—*Hartjan* June 3, 1939



persons have lived before now, why have they not succeeded in founding a Socialistic State?

It is difficult completely to silence these two doubts. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that it has perhaps, never occurred to a believing Socialist that there is any connection between his Socialism and belief in God. It is equally safe to say that godly men, as a rule, never commended Socialism to the masses

Superstitions have flourished in the world in spite of godly men and women. In Hinduism itself, untouchability has, till of late, held undoubted sway

The fact is that it has always been a matter of strenuous research to know this Great Force and its hidden possibilities

My claim is that in the pursuit of that search lies the discovery of *Satyagraha*. It is, however, not claimed that all the laws of *Satyagraha* have been laid down or found. This I do say, fearlessly and firmly, that every worthy object can be achieved by the use of *Satyagraha*. It is the highest and infallible means, the greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other means. *Satyagraha* can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral

—*Harijan* July 20, 1947

### III

## THE GREAT SPIRITUAL FORCE

VIOLENCE IS the negation of this great spiritual force which can only be cultivated or wielded by those who will entirely eschew violence. It is a force that may

be used by individuals as well as by communities. It may be used as well in political as in domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and invincibility. It can be used alike by men, women and children. It is totally untrue to say that it is a force to be used only by the weak so long as they are not capable of meeting violence by violence. This superstition arises from the incompleteness of the English expression 'Passive Resistance'. It is impossible for those who consider themselves to be weak to apply this force. Only those who realize that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively be *Satyagrahis*. This force is to violence, and, therefore, to all tyranny, all injustice, what light is to darkness. In politics, its use is based upon the immutable maxim, that government of the people is possible only so long as they consent, either consciously or unconsciously, to be governed.

The use of this force requires the adoption of poverty, in the sense that we must be indifferent whether we have the wherewithal to feed or clothe ourselves.

The exercise of the purest soul-force, in its perfect form, brings about instantaneous relief. For this exercise, prolonged training of the individual soul is an absolute necessity, so that a perfect *Satyagrahi* has to be almost, if not entirely, a perfect man. We cannot all suddenly become such men, but if my proposition is correct—as I know it to be correct—the greater the spirit of *Satyagraha* in us, the better men will we become. Its use, therefore, is, I think, indisputable, and it is a force, which, if it became universal, would revolutionize social ideals and do away with despotisms as the

ever-growing militarism under which the nations of the West are groaning and are being almost crushed to death, and which fairly promises to overwhelm even the nations of the East. If the past struggle has produced even a few Indians who would dedicate themselves to the task of becoming *Satyagrahis* as nearly perfect as possible, they would not only have served themselves in the truest sense of the term, they would also have served humanity at large.

—*Young India* No—'3, 1927

#### IV

### SCIENCE OF SATYAGRAHA

IN THE application of *Satyagraha*, I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of Truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For, what appears to be Truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So, the doctrine came to mean vindication of Truth, not by infliction of suffering on the opponent, but one's own self.

When Daniel disregarded the laws of the Medes and Persians, which offended his conscience, and meekly suffered "the punishment for his disobedience, he offered *Satyagraha* in its purest form. Socrates would not refrain from preaching what he knew to be the truth to the Athenian youth, and bravely suffered the punishment of death. He was in this case, a *Satyagrahi*. Prahlad disregarded the orders of his father because he

considered them to be repugnant to his conscience. He uncomplainingly and cheerfully bore the tortures to which he was subjected at the instance of his father. Mirabai, who is said to have offended her husband by following her own conscience, was content to live in separation from him and bore with quiet dignity and resignation all the injuries that are said to have been done to her in order to bend her to her husband's will. Both Prah-lad and Mirabai practised *Satyagraha*. It must be remembered that neither Daniel nor Socrates, neither Prah-lad nor Mirabai had any ill-will towards their persecutors. Daniel and Socrates are regarded as having been model citizens of the States to which they belonged, Prah-lad a model son, Mirabai a model wife.

This doctrine of *Satyagraha* is not new, it is merely an extension of the rule of domestic life to the political. Family disputes and differences are generally settled according to the Law of Love. The injured member has so much regard for the others that he suffers injury for the sake of his principles without retaliation and without being angry with those who differ from him. And as repression of anger, self-suffering are difficult processes, he does not dignify trifles into principles, but, in all non-essentials, readily agrees with the rest of the family and thus contrives to gain the maximum of peace for himself without disturbing that of the others. Thus his action, whether he resists or resigns, is always calculated to promote the common welfare of the family. It is this Law of Love which, silently but surely, governs the family for the most part throughout the civilized world.

I feel that nations cannot be one in reality nor can their activities be conducive to the common good of

the whole humanity, unless there is this definition and acceptance of the law of the family in national and international affairs, in other words, on the political platform Nations can be called civilized, only to the extent that they obey this Law

This Law of Love is nothing but a Law of Truth Without Truth, there is no Love, without Truth it may be affection, as for one's country to the injury of others, or infatuation, as of a young man for a girl, or love may be unreasoning and blind, as of ignorant parents for their children Love transcends all animality and is never partial *Satyagrat* has, therefore, been described as a coin, on whose face you read Love and on the reverse you read Truth It is a coin current everywhere and has indefinable value

*Satyagrahi* is self-dependent, it does not require the assent of the opponent before it can be brought into play Indeed, it shines out most when the opponent resists It is, therefore, irresistible A *Satyagrahi* does not know what defeat is, for he fights for Truth without being exhausted Death in the fight is a deliverance, and prison, a gate-way to liberty

It is called also soul-force, because a definite recognition of the soul within is a necessity, if a *Satyagrahi* is to believe that death does not mean cessation of struggle, but a culmination The body is merely a vehicle for self-expression, and he gladly gives up the body, when its existence is an obstruction in the way of the opponent seeing the Truth, for which the *Satyagrahi* stands He gives up the body in the certain faith that if anything would change his opponent's view, a willing sacrifice of his body must do so And with the knowledge that the soul survives the body, he is not impatient

to see the triumph of Truth in the present body. Indeed, victory lies in the ability to die in the attempt to make the opponent see the Truth which the *Satyagrah* for the time being expresses.

And as a *Satyagrah* never injures his opponent and always appeals, either to his reason by gentle argument, or his heart by the sacrifice of self, *Satyagraha* is twice blessed, it blesses him who practises it, and him against whom it is practised.

It has, however, been objected that *Satyagraha*, as we conceive it, can be practised only by a select few. My experience proves the contrary. Once its simple principles—adherence to Truth and insistence upon it by self-suffering—are understood, anybody can practise it. It is as difficult or as easy to practise as any other virtue. It is as little necessary for its practice that everyone should understand the whole philosophy of it, as it is for the practice of total abstinence.

After all, no one disputes the necessity of insisting on Truth as one sees it. And it is easy enough to understand that it is vulgar to attempt to compel the opponent to its acceptance by using brute force, it is discreditable to submit to error because argument has failed to convince, and that the only true and honourable course is not to submit to it even at the cost of one's life. Then only can the world be purged of error, if it ever can be altogether. There can be no compromise with error where it hurts the vital being.

But, on the political field, the struggle on behalf of the people mostly consists in opposing error in the shape of unjust laws. When you have failed to bring the error home to the law-giver by way of petitions and the like, the only remedy open to you, if you do not wish to sub-

nut to it, is to compel him to retrace his steps by suffering in your own person, i e, by inviting the penalty for the breach of the law Hence, *Satyagraha* largely appears to the public as civil disobedience or civil resistance It is civil in the sense that it is not criminal

The criminal, *te*, the ordinary law-breaker breaks the law surreptitiously and tries to avoid the penalty; not so the civil resister He ever obeys the laws of the State to which he belongs, not out of fear of the sanctions, but because he considers them to be gffed for the welfare of society But there come occasions, generally rare, when he considers certain laws to be so unjust as to render obedience to them a dishonour, he then openly and civilly breaks them and quietly suffers the penalty for their breach And in order to register his protest against the action of the law-giver, it is open to him to withdraw his co-operation from the State by disobeying such other laws whose breach does not involve moral turpitude In my opinion, the beauty and efficacy of *Satyagraha* are so great and the doctrine so simple that it can be preached even to children

— *Young India* Nov 5, 1919

## V

### SOUL FORCE

Q Is there any historical evidence as to the success of what you have called soul-force or truth-force ?

A The poet Tulsidas has said "Of religion, pity, or love, is the root, as egotism of the body Therefore,

we should not abandon pity so long as we are alive" This appears to me to be a scientific truth I believe in it as much as I believe in two and two being four. The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth We have evidence of its working at every step The universe would disappear without the existence of that force

The fact that there are so many men still alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms, but on the force of truth or love Therefore, the greatest and most unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the wars of the world, it still lives on

Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this force Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the exercise of this force Hundreds of nations live in peace History does not and cannot take note of this fact History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul Two brothers quarrel, one of them repents and re-awakens the love that was lying dormant in him, the two again begin to live in peace, nobody takes note of this But if the two brothers, through the intervention of solicitors or some other reason, take up arms or go to law—which is another form of the exhibition of brute force—their doings would be immediately noticed in the Press, they would be the talk of their neighbours and would probably go down to history And what is true of families and communities is true of nations There is no reason to believe that there is one law for families and another for nations History, then,



is a record of an interruption of the course of Nature Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history<sup>1</sup>

—*Htnd Swaraj* Chap XVII (1908)

## VI

### THE LAW OF LIFE

CONSCIOUSLY or unconsciously, we are acting non-violently towards one another in daily life. All well-constructed societies are based on the Law of Non-violence. I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction and, therefore, there must be a higher law than that of destruction. Only under that law would a well-ordered society be intelligible and life worth-living. And if that is the Law of Life, we have to work it out in daily life. Wherever there are jars, wherever you are confronted with an opponent, conquer him with love. In this crude manner I have worked it out in my life. That does not mean that all difficulties are solved. Only I have found that this Law of Love has answered as the Law of Destruction has never done.

It takes a fairly strenuous course of training to attain to a mental stage of non-violence. In daily life, it has to be a course of discipline though one may not like it, like, for instance, the life of a soldier. But I agree that

<sup>1</sup> "This world is held together by bonds of love. History does not record the day-to-day incidents of love and service. It only records incidents of conflict and wars. Actually however, acts of love and service are much more common in this world than conflicts and quarrels. We find innumerable villages and towns flourishing in the world. If the world were always full of quarrel and discord they could not possibly exist."

unless there is a hearty co-operation of the mind, the mere outward observance will be simply a mask, harmful both to the man himself and to others. The perfect state is reached only when mind and body and speech are in proper co-ordination. But it is always a case of intense mental struggle. It is not that I am incapable of anger, for instance, but I succeed on almost all occasions to keep my feelings under control. Whatever may be the result, there is always in me a conscious struggle for following the Law- of Non-violence deliberately and ceaselessly. Such a struggle leaves one stronger for it. Non-violence is a weapon of the strong. With the weak, it might easily be hypocrisy. Fear and love are contradictory terms. Love is reckless in giving away, oblivious as to what it gets in return. Love wrestles with the world as with itself, and ultimately gains a mastery over all other feelings. My daily experience, as of those who are working with me, is that every problem would lend itself to 'solution if we are determined to make Law of Truth and Non-violence the Law of Life. For, Truth and Non-violence, are to me, faces of the same coin.

Whether mankind will consciously follow the Law of Love, I do not know. But that need not perturb us. The Law will work, just as the Law of Gravitation will work whether we accept it or not. And just as a scientist will work wonders out of various applications of the laws of Nature, even so a man who applies the Law of Love with scientific precision can work greater wonders. For, the force of Non-violence is infinitely more wonderful and subtle than the forces of Nature, like, for instance, electricity. The man who discovered for us the Law of Love was a far greater scientist than any of

our modern scientists. Only our explorations have not gone far enough, and so it is not possible for every one to see all its workings. Such, at any rate, is the hallucination, if it is one, under which I am labouring. The more I work at this Law, the more I feel the delight in life, the delight in the scheme of this universe. It gives me a peace and a meaning of the mystenes of Nature that I have no power to describe

—*Zmmg India*: March 19, 1931.

## VII

### MAN'S PROGRESS TOWARDS NON-VIOLENCE

IF WE turn our eyes to the time of which history has any record down to our own time, we shall find that man has been steadily progressing towards *Ahtmsa*. Our remote ancestors were cannibals. Then came a time when they were fed up with cannibalism and they began to live on chase. Next came a stage when man was ashamed of leading the life of a wandering hunter. He, therefore, took to agriculture and depended principally on Mother Earth for his food. Thus, from being a nomad he settled down to civilized stable life, founded villages and towns, and from member of a family he became member of a community and a nation. All these are signs of progressive *Ahimsa* and diminishing *Htmsa*. Had it been otherwise, the human species should have been extinct by now, even as many of the lower species have disappeared.

Prophets and *Avatars* have also taught the lesson of *Ahtmsa*, more or less. Not one of them has professed

to teach *Himsa*. And how should it be otherwise? *Himsa* does not need to be taught. Man as animal is violent, but as Spirit is non-violent. The moment he awakes to the Spirit within, he cannot remain violent. Either he progresses towards *Ahtmm* or rushes to his doom. That is why the prophets and *Avatars* have taught the lessons of Truth, Harmony, Brotherhood, Justice, etc.—all attributes of *Ahtntsa*.

If we believe that mankind has steadily progressed towards *Ahtntsa*, it follows that it has to progress towards it still further. Nothing in this world is static, everything is kinetic. If there is no progression, then there is inevitable retrogression. No one can remain without the eternal cycle, unless it be God Himself.

—*Harijan*- August 11, 1940

## VIII

### NON-VIOLENCE AND POSSESSION

I CLAIM that even now, though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of Non-Violence, all the world over mankind lives and men retain their possessions on the sufferance of one another. If they had not done so, only the fewest and the most ferocious would have survived. But such is not the case. Families are bound together by ties of love, and so are groups in the so-called civilized society called nations. Only they do not recognize the supremacy of the Law of Non-violence. It follows, therefore, that they have not investigated its vast possibilities. Hitherto, out of sheer inertia, shall I say, we have taken it for granted

that complete non-violence is possible only for the few who take the vow of non-possession and the allied abstinences. Whilst it is true that the votaries alone can carry on research work and declare from time to time the new possibilities of the great Eternal Law governing man, if it is a law, it must hold good for all. The many failures we see are not of the Law but of the followers, many of whom do not even know that they are under that Law *willy-nilly*. When a mother dies for her child, she unknowingly obeys the Law. I have been pleading for the past fifty years for a conscious acceptance of the Law and its zealous practice even in the face of failures. Fifty years' work has shown marvellous results and strengthened my faith. I do claim that by constant practice we shall come to a state of things when lawful possession will command universal and voluntary respect. No doubt, such possession will not be tainted. It will not be an insolent demonstration of the inequalities that surround us everywhere. Nor need the problem of unjust and unlawful possession appal the votary of Non-Violence. He has at his disposal the non-violent weapon of *Satyagraha* and Non-Co-operation which hitherto has been found to be a complete substitute of violence, wherever it has been applied honestly in sufficient measure. I have never claimed to present the complete Science of Non-Violence. It does not lend itself to such treatment. So far as I know, no single physical science does, not even the very exact science of mathematics. I am but a seeker, and I have fellow-seekers whom I invite to accompany me in the very difficult but equally fascinating search.

— *Hanjan*. Feb 22, 1942.

## IX

### CIVILIZATION

SEVERAL English writers refuse to call that civilization which passes tunder the name. Many books have been written upon that subject. Societies have been formed to cure the nation of the evils of civilization. A great English writer has written a work called *Cmhzatwn: Its Cause and Cure*. Therein he has called it a disease.

Those who are intoxicated by modern civilization are not likely to write against it, Their care will be to find out facts and arguments in support of it, and this they do unconsciously, believing it to be true. A man, whilst he is dreaming, believes in his dream; he is undeceived only when he is awakened from his sleep. A man labouring under the bane of civilization is like a dreaming man. What we usually read are the words of defenders of modern civilization, which undoubtedly claims among its votaries very brilliant and even some very good men. Their writings hypnotize us. And so, one by one, we are drawn into the vortex.

Let us first consider what state of things is described by the word "civilization". Its true test lies in the fact that people living in it make bodily welfare the object of life. We will take some examples. The people of Europe to-day live in better-built houses than they did a hundred years ago. This is considered an emblem of civilization, and this is also a matter to promote bodily happiness. Formerly, they wore skins, and used spears as their weapons." Now, they wear long trousers, and, few embellishing their bodies, they wear a variety of dotting, and, instead of speius, they carry with them

SMC—2

revolvers containing five or more chambers. If people of a certain country, who have hitherto not been in the habit of wearing much clothing, boots, etc., adopt European clothing, they are supposed to have become civilised out of savagery.

Formerly, in Europe, people ploughed their lands mainly by manual labour. Now, one man can plough a vast tract by means of steam engines and can thus amass great wealth. This is called a sign of civilization. Formerly, only a few men wrote valuable books. Now, anybody writes and prints anything he likes and poisons people's minds. Formerly, men travelled in waggons. Now, they fly through the air in trains at the rate of four hundred and more miles per day. This is considered the height of civilization. It has been stated that, as men progress, they shall be able to travel in airships and reach any part of the world in a few hours.

Men will not need the use of their hands and feet. They will press a button, and they will have their clothing by their side. They will press another button, and they will have their newspaper. A third, a motor-car will be waiting for them. They will have a variety of delicately dished up food. Everything will be done by machinery. Formerly, when people wanted to fight with one another, they measured between them their bodily strength, now it is possible to take away thousands of lives by one man working behind a gun from a hill. This is civilization.

Formerly, men worked in the open air only as much as they liked. Now thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories or mines. Their condition is worse than that of beasts. They are obliged to work, at the risk of their

lives, at most dangerous occupations, for the sake of millionaires. Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion. Now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy. There are now diseases of which people never dreamt before, and an army of doctors is engaged in finding out their cures, and so hospitals have increased. This is a test of civilization.

Formerly, special messengers were required and much expense incurred in order to send letters; to-day, anyone can abuse his fellow by means of a letter for one penny. True, at the same cost, one can send one's thanks also. Formerly, people had two or three meals consisting of home-made bread and vegetables; now, they require something to eat every two hours so that they have hardly leisure for anything else. What more need I say? All this you can ascertain from several authoritative books. These are all true tests of civilization. And if anyone speaks to the contrary, know that he is ignorant.

This civilization takes note neither of morality nor of religion. Its votaries calmly state that their business is not to teach religion. Some even consider it to be a superstitious growth. Others put on the cloak of religion, and prate about morality. But, after twenty years' experience, I have come to the conclusion that immorality is often taught in the name of morality. Even a child can understand that in all I have described above, there can be no inducement to morality. Civilization seeks to increase bodily comforts, and it fails miserably even in doing so.

This civilization is irreligion, and it has taken such a hold on the people in Europe that those who are in



it appear to be half-mad. They lack: real physical strength or courage. They keep up their energy by intoxication. They can hardly be happy in solitude. Women, who should be the queens of households, wander in the streets or they slave away in factories. For the sake of a pittance, half a million women in England alone are labouring under trying circumstances in factories or similar institutions. This awful fact is one of the causes of the daily growing suffragette movement

•

This civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed. According to the teaching of Mohammed, this would be considered a Satanic Civilization. Hinduism calls it the Black Age. I cannot give you an adequate conception of it. It is eating into the vitals of the English nation. It must be shunned.

— *Hind Swaraj*: Chap VI (1908);

## X

### WHAT IS TRUE CIVILIZATION?

I BELIEVE that the civilization India has evolved is not to be beaten in the world. Nothing can equal the seeds sown by our ancestors. Rome went, Greece shared the same fate, the might of the Pharaohs was broken, Japan has become Westernized; of China nothing can be said, but India is still, somehow or other, sound at the foundation. The people of Europe learn their lessons from the writings of the men of Greece or Rome, which exist no longer in their former glory. In

trying to learn from them, the Europeans imagine that they will avoid the mistakes of Greece and Rome. Such is their pitiable condition. In the midst of all this, India remains immovable and that is her glory. It is a charge against India that her people are so uncivilized, ignorant and stolid, that it is not possible to induce them to adopt any changes. It is a charge really against our merit. What we have tested and found true on the anvil of experience, we dare not change. Many thrust their advice upon India, and she remains steady. This is her beauty, it is the sheet-anchor of our hope.

Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization is "good conduct".

If this definition be correct, then India, as so many writers have shown, has nothing to learn from anybody else, and this is as it should be. We notice that the mind is a restless bird, the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions, the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition. A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich, or unhappy because he is poor. The rich are often seen to be unhappy, the poor to be happy. Millions will always remain poor. Observing all this, our ancestors dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures. We have managed with the same kind of plough as existed thousands of years ago. We have retained the same kind of cottages that we had in former times, and our mdi-

genous education remains the same as before. We have had no system of life-corroding competition. Each followed his own occupation or trade and charged a regulation wage. It was not that we did not know how to invent maphmery, but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They, therefore, after due deliberation decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet. They saw that our real happiness and health consisted in a proper use of our hands and feet. They further reasoned that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and that people would not be happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them and that poor men would be robbed by rich men. They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages. They saw that kings and their swords were inferior to the sword of ethics, and they, therefore, held the sovereigns of the earth to be inferior to the *Rtshts* and the *Faktrs*. A nation, with a constitution like this, is fitter to teach others than to learn from others. This nation had courts, lawyers and doctors, but they were all within bounds. Everybody knew that these professions were not particularly superior, moreover, these *vaktls* and *vadyas* did not rob people, they were considered people's dependants, not their masters. Justice was tolerably fair. The ordinary rule was to avoid courts. There were no touts to lure people into them. This evil, too, was noticeable only in and around capitals. The common people lived independently and followed their agricultural occupation. They enjoyed true Home Rule.

And, where this cursed modern civilization has not

readied, India remains as it was before. The inhabitants of that part of India will very properly laugh at your new-fangled notions\*. The English do not rule over them, nor will you ever rule over them. Those in whose name we speak we do not know, nor do they know us. I would certainly advise you and those like you who love the Motherland to go into the interior that has yet not been polluted by the railways and to live there for six months; you ought then be patriotic and speak of Home Rule.

Now, you see, what I consider to be real avilization. Those who want to change conditions, such as I have described, are enemies of the country and are sinners.

The Indian avilization, as described by me, has been so described by its votaries. In no part of the world, and under no civilization, have all men attained perfection. The tendency of the Indian avilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western avilization is to propagate immorality. The latter is Godless, the former is based on a belief in God. So understanding and so behaving, it behoves every lover of India to cling to the old Indian avilization even as a child clings to the mother's breast.

—*Hind Swaraj* Chap XIII (1908)

## XI

### MACHINERY

**Q** When you speak of driving out Western Civilization, I suppose you will also say that we want no machinery?

**A.** By raising this question, you have opened the wound I have received. When I read Mr. Dutt's

*Economic History of India*, I wept; and as I think of it again, my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared.

But I make a mistake. How can Manchester be blamed\* We wore Manchester cloth and this is why Manchester wove it. I was delighted when I read about the bravery of Bengal There were no cloth-mills in that presidency. They were, therefore, able to restore the original hand-weaving occupation. It is true, Bengal encourages the mill industry of Bombay. If Bengal had proclaimed a boycott of *all* machine-made goods, it would have been much better

Machinery has begun to desolate Europe Ruination is now knocking at the English gates Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization, it represents a great sin.

The workers in the mills have become slaves The condition of the women working in the mills is shocking When there were no mills, these women were not starving If the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become an unhappy land It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth than to multiply mills in India By using Manchester cloth we only waste our money, but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped, and I call in support of my statement the very mill-hands as witnesses. And those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men. It would be folly to

assume that an Indian Rockfeller would be better than the American Rockfeller. Impoverished India can become free, but it will be hard for any India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom, I fear we shall have to admit that moneyed men support British rule, their interest is bound up with its stability. Money renders a man helpless. The other thing which is equally harmful is sexual vice. Both are poison. A snake-bite is a lesser poison than these two, because the former merely debroys the body, but the latter destroys body, mind and soul. We need not, therefore, be pleased with the prospect of the growth of the mill-industry.

Q. Are the mills, then, to be closed down?

A. That is difficult. It is no easy task to do away with a thing that is established. We, therefore, say that the non-beginning of a thing is supreme wisdom. We cannot condemn mill-owners, we can but pity them. It would be too much to expect them to give up their mills, but we may implore them not to increase them. If they would be good, they would gradually contract their business. They can establish in thousands of households the ancient and sacred handlooms and they can buy out the cloth that may be thus woven. Whether the mill-owners do this or not, people can cease to use machine-made goods.

Q. You have so far spoken about machine-made cloth, but there are innumerable machine-made things. We have either to import them or to introduce machinery into our country.

A. Indeed, our gods even are made in Germany. What need, then, to speak of matches, pins and glassware? My answer can be only one. What did India do before these articles were introduced? Precisely the

same should be done to-day. As long as we cannot make pins without machinery, so long will we do without them. The tinsel splendour of glassware we will have nothing to do with, and we will make wicks, as of did, with home-grown cotton and use hand-made earthen saucers for lamps. So doing, we shall save our eyes and money and support *Swadeshi* and so shall we attain Home Rule

It is not to be conceited that ail men will do all these things at one time, or that some men will live up all machine-made things at once. But, if the thought is sound, we shall always find out what we can give up and gradually cease to use it. What a few may do, others will copy, and the movement will grow like the oocooanut of the mathematical problem. What the leaders do, the populace will gladly do in turn. The matter is neither complicated nor difficult. You and I need not wait until we can carry others with us. Those will be losers who will not do it and those who will not do it, although they appreciate the truth, will deserve to be called cowards.

Q What, then, of the tram-cars and electricity?

A This question is now too late. It signifies nothing. If we are to do without the railways, we shall have to do without the tram-cars. Machinery is like a snake-hole, which may contain from one to a hundred snakes. Where there is machinery, there are large cities; and where there are large cities, there are tram-cars and railways, and there only does one see electric light. English villages do not boast of any of these things. Honest physicians will tell you that where means of artificial locomotion have increased, the health of the people has suffered. I remember that when in a European

town there was a scarcity of money, the receipts of the tramway company, of the lawyers and of the doctors went down and people were less unhealthy. I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery. Books can be written to demonstrate its evils.

Q. Is it a good point or a bad one, that all you are saying will be printed through machinery?

A. This is one of those instances which demonstrate that sometimes poison is used to kill poison. This then, will not be a good point regarding machinery. As it expires, the machinery, as it were, says to us\* "Beware and avoid me. You will derive no benefits from me and the benefit that may accrue from printing will avail only those who are infected with the machinery-craze."

Do not, therefore, forget the mam thing. It is necessary to realize that machinery is bad. We shall then be able gradually to do away with it. Nature has not provided any way whereby we may reach a desired goal all of a sudden. If, instead of welcoming machinery as a boon, we should look upon it as an evil, it would ultimately-craze."

—*Hind Swaraj* Chap XIX (1908)

## XII

### DESTRUCTIVE SHOW OF MAMMON

DON'T be *dazzled* by the splendour that comes to you from the West. Do not be thrown off your feet by this passing show. The Enghshtened One<sup>1</sup> has told you in never-to-be forgotten words that this little span of life

<sup>1</sup> Gautama Buddha



is but a passing shadow, a fleeting thing; and if you realize the nothingness of all that appears before your eyes, the nothingness of this material case that we see before us ever changing, then, indeed, are treasures for you up above, and there is peace for you down here, peace which passeth all understanding, and happiness to which we are utter strangers. It requires an amazing faith, a divine faith and surrender of all that we see before us. What did Buddha do, and Chnst do, and also Mohammed? Theirs were lives of self-sacrifice and renunciation. Buddha renounced every worldly happiness, because he wanted to share with the whole world his happiness which was to be had by men who sacrificed and suffered in search for Truth. If it was a good thing to scale the heights of Mt Everest, sacrificing precious lives in order to be able to go there and make some slight observations, if it was a glorious thing to give up life after life in planting a flag in the uttermost extremities of the earth, how much more glorious would it be to give not one life, surrender not a million lives but a billion lives in a search of the potent arfii imperishable Truth? So, be not lifted off your feet, do not be drawn away from the simplicity of your ancestors. A time is coming when those, who are in the mad rush to-day of multiplying their wants, vainly thinking that they add to the real substance, real knowledge of the world, will retrace their steps and say: 'What have we done?'<sup>1</sup> Civilizations have come and gone, and, in spite

<sup>1</sup> " I do not believe that multiplication of wants and machinery contrived to supply them is taking the world a single step nearer its goal. I whole-heartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time, to increase animal appetites and go to the ends of the earth in search of their satisfaction. If modern dvriaation stands for all this, and I have understood it to do so, I call it Satanic"  
—young *Indte*. March 17, 1927

of all our vaunted progress, I am tempted to ask again and agam: 'To what purpose?' Wallace, a contemporary of Darwin, has said the same thing. Fifty years of brilliant inventions and discoveries, he has said, has not added one inch to the moral height of mankind. So said a dreamer and visionary, if you will,—Tolstoy. So said Jesus, and Buddha, and Mohammed, whose religion is being denied and falsified in my own country to-day.

By all means drink deep of the fountains that are given to you in the *Sermon on the Mount*, but then you will have to take sack-cloth and ashes. The teaching of the *Sermon* was meant for each and every one of us. You cannot serve both God and Mammon. God, the Compassionate and the Merciful, Tolerance incarnate, allows Mammon to have his nine days' wonder. But I say to you "Fly from that self-destroying but destructive show of Mammon."

[From an address to the Y M C A , Colombo ]

—*Young India*- Dec. 8, 1927

### XIII

#### THE LOIN CLOTH

A CRITIC has fallen foul of my remark that the Indian civilization must not be allowed to be wiped out by the inroads from the West. The critic has confused Indian civilization with the loin-cloth and then condemned it. There is no question of loin-cloth civilization. The adoption of the loin-cloth was for me a sheer necessity. But, in so far as the loin-cloth also spells

simplicity, let it represent Indian civilization. It is a mingling of the cultures represented by the different faiths and influenced by the geographic and other environment in which the cultures have met. Thus, Islamic culture is not the same in Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and India, but it is itself influenced by the conditions of the respective countries. Indian culture is, therefore, Indian. It is neither Hindu, Islamic nor any other, wholly. It is a fusion of all the essentially Eastern I had in mind that culture. And everyone who calls himself or herself an Indian is bound to treasure that culture, be its trustee, and resist any attack upon it.

European civilization is no doubt suited for the Europeans, but it will mean ruin for India, if we endeavour to copy it. This is not to say that we may not adopt and assimilate whatever may be good and capable of assimilation by us, as it does not also mean that even the Europeans will not have to part with whatever evil might have crept into it. The incessant search for material comforts and their multiplication is such an evil, that I make bold to say that the Europeans themselves will have to remodel their outlook, if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves. It may be that my reading is wrong, but I know that for India to run after the Golden Fleece is to court certain death. Let us engrave on our hearts the motto of a Western Philosopher 'Plain living and high thinking'. To-day, it is certain that the millions cannot have high living, and we the few who profess to do the thinking for the masses run the risk, in a vain search after high living, of missing high thinking.

—*Young India* April 30, 1931.

## XIV

### PLAIN LIVING AND HIGH THINKING

'AN IDEAL society is that in which every individual will be able to live a life of progressively increasing wants with a minimum output of labour." Thus writes a friend from Ahmedabad. The proposition is pleasing and is backed by plausible argument which many may accept. That everyone in this world should be able to maintain as high a standard of life as possible, with the least possible output of labour, is just as fantastic as to expect a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. The writer's high living would appear to mean luxurious living, which is an impossible proposition for any society as a whole. And when there is no limit to luxury, where shall we stop? All the scriptures of the world have taught the exact opposite. 'Plain living and high thinking' is the ideal that has been placed before us. The vast majority recognize its truth, but are unable to get there because of human frailty. It is, however, perfectly possible to envisage such an existence. That the crores in India should be guaranteed a certain income is only right, and to achieve this ideal large scale machinery is not only not necessary, but wholly destructive.

Man falls from the pursuit of the ideal of plain living and high thinking, the moment he wants to multiply his daily wants. History gives ample proof of this. Man's happiness really lies in contentment. He who is discontented, however much he possesses, becomes a slave to his desires. And there is really no slavery equal to that of his desires. All the sages have declared from the house-tops, that man can be his own worst enemy as well as his best

friend- To be free or to be a slave lies in his own hands.  
And what is true for the individual, is true for society.

—*Hanjan*: Feb. 1, 1942

## XV

### THE MORAL LAW

PEOPLE in the West generally hold that the whole duty of man is to promote the happiness of the majonty of mankind, and happiness is supposed to mean only physical happiness arid economic prospepty If the laws of morality are broken in the conquest of this happiness, it does not matter very much Again, as the object sought to be attained is the happiness of the majonty, Westerners do not think there is any harm if this is secur-ed by sacnficing a minonty The consequences of this line of thinking are wnt large on the face of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

This exclusive search for physical and economic well-being, prosecuted m disregard of morality, is contrary to Divine Law, as some wise men m the West Ifave shown. One of these was John Ruskm, who contends in *Unto*

1 "I do not believe in the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number It means m its nakedness that in order to achieve fee supposed good of 51 per cent, the interest of 49 per cent may be, or rather should be, sacrificed It is a heartless doctrine and has done harm to humanity The only real, dignified, human doctrine is the greatest good of all, and this can only be achieved by uttermost self-sacrifice "

—*The Dtary of Mahadev Desat* June 4, 1932, p 149

"I do not believe in the; 'greatest good of the greatest number', nor can I agree that might is right For human beings, the object in view should be the good of all, with the weak being served first We are two-legged men, but have still to cast away the nature of four-footed beasts"

—*The Dtary of Mahadev Desat* July 10, 1932, p 221

*This Last* that men can be happy only if they obey the Moral Law.

We, in India, are very much given now-a-days to an imitation of the West. It is necessary to imitate the virtues of the West, but there is no doubt that Western standards are often bad, and everyone will agree that we should shun all evil things

Morality is an essential ingredient in all the faiths of the world; but apart from religion, our commonsense indicates the necessity of observing the Moral Law. Only by observing it can we hope to be happy

—*Unto This Last*—A Paraphrase: P. IX.

## XVI

### MORALITY AND UNIVERSAL GOOD

MAN IS worse than the brute so long as he is selfish and indifferent to the happiness of others. He rises above the level of the brute when he begins to work for the welfare of his family. He rises higher in the scale when he comes to look upon his whole community or race as his own family. He becomes greater still when he begins to regard even the so-called barbarous races as the members of his own family. In other words, man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellowmen.

And so long as we do not feel sympathy and love for every one of our fellow-beings, we cannot be said to have understood the Moral Law. The highest morality is universal. We should render devoted service to the world in every possible way, remembering that; every

one of our brethren has a claim on us. Those who think that they are responsible only to themselves can never be men of high character. It is, of course, a silly and a dangerous notion that the man who does not safeguard his own interest must fail in the struggle for existence. God will never forsake those who devote themselves to the service of others with a punty and a singleness of aim.

Mankind is one, seeulfe that all are equally subject to the Moral Law. All men are equal in God's eyes. There are, of course, differences of race and status and the like; but the higher the status of a man, the greater is his responsibility. If we happen to occupy a high position, we ought not to boast of our superiority, and I a \* down upon those who are below us. We do our work, as they theirs. And all work towards a common end—the welfare of humanity. So long as we think otherwise, we cannot call ourselves moral men

It follows from this, that it is morally wrong for one nation to exercise control over another for its selfish ends. If a highly developed nation happens to have under its control people who are not so highly developed, it is its bounden duty to leave no stone unturned in order to bring its subject to its own level. Then again, according to the Moral Law, a king should not regard himself as in any way superior to his subjects, for, indeed, he is but the servant of the people. Men in power should exercise their power for the good of their fellowmen. A republic that is not based on moral foundations, and that is not composed of unselfish men and women, would be worse than an autocracy.

The Moral Law also requires that the strong men of a community or nation should regard it as their paramount

duty to protect the weak and the oppressed. If all men realized the obligation of service, they would regard it as a sin to amass wealth; and then, there would be no inequalities of wealth, and consequently no famine or starvation. Those who tread the path of virtue should not be disheartened by the thought that virtue is so rare in the world, and that they are in a minority. Their duty is simply to do the right, and leave the rest to God. They should never think of the result of their action; for the only reward of a thing well done is to have done it.

—*Ethical Reltgum*: P. 56.

## XVII

### MAN'S DUTY

MAN'S duty is to do unselfish service to others; and he should do such service, not in order to do good to others, but rather because it is the very law of his being\* There are some people who think that we can afford to act as we please in matters that affect only ourselves, but no man can, in fact, do anything in the world which does not, directly or indirectly, affect the welfare of his fellowmen.

Everyone must remember that his most secret thoughts have an influence on himself as well as on others. He should, therefore, practise self-control so as to put all evil thoughts out of his mind, and give room only for thoughts that are noble and great. He should keep his body as clean and spotless as his mind. A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, that he becomes. Hence, all temptations to evil must be



sternly repressed. No one who has not become the complete master of his senses and his passions, can come to any good

The man who has learnt to keep his mind spotlessly pure must also have a clear conception of his goal in life. The man, who starts on his career with no fixed idea of his goal, must dissipate his energies and finally be lost for ever, even as a rudderless boat is tossed hither and thither by the waves of the sea, and finally destroyed. The noblest of all aims is the worship of God. And the highest form of worship consists in doing the work of God by living in obedience to, the Moral Law, and by rendering disinterested service to humanity. Thousands of men who are wicked and depraved take the name of God in vain. A parrot can be taught to repeat the name of God; but can it be called godly or pious? Service of man is possible to all men under all circumstances. The man who regards service as the highest end of his life cannot help being highly moral\* for, the welfare of the world is intimately bound up with the exercise of the moral virtues

In judging the actions of men, we should always apply this test—whether it conduces to the welfare of the world or not. The merchant should see that he does not profit himself at the expense of his customers, lawyers and doctors should think of the interests of their clients, rather than of their own earnings. The mother should always take care to see that her child is not spoilt by false affection or otherwise. A poor unlettered labourer is by far a greater man than the clever merchant, lawyer, or doctor who has earned his money by unworthy means. Let us never forget that even the meanest of us is capable of guiding his life by the above

principle. Even the humblest of us can rise above the limitations of wealth and rank; for a man's greatness rests not on wealth or social position, but simply and solely on his life and conduct. To judge the character of a man, we should know the inner workings of his heart. One man may give a rupee to a beggar in order to send him away from his sight, while another may give him four annas, moved by pity and love. Of these two, the latter is clearly the better man, although he has given much less than the former.

To sum up, then, that man alone can be called truly religious or moral whose mind is not tainted with hatred or selfishness, and who leads a life of absolute purity and of disinterested service, and that man alone can be called truly wealthy or happy either. Only such men can do good to mankind, for Truth is the foundation of all that is good and great. To a true servant of humanity, the question never arises as to the best form of service. When we have realized the majesty of the Moral Law, we shall see how little our happiness or unhappiness depends on health, and success, and fame, and the like. As has been finely said by Emerson, even the pains and griefs of good men contribute to their happiness, while even the wealth and fame of bad men cause misery to themselves as well as to the world.

\*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.'

—*Ethical Religion*: P. 59.

## XVIII

### ECONOMIC V. MORAL PROGRESS

DOES economic progress clash with real progress? By economic progress, I take it, we mean material advancement without limit, and by real progress we mean moral progress which again is the same thing as progress of the permanent element in us. The subject may, therefore, be stated thus: Does not moral progress increase in the same proportion as material progress? I know that this is a wider proposition than the one before us. But I venture to think that we always mean the large one even when we lay down the smaller. For, we know enough of science to realize that there is no such thing as perfect rest or repose in this visible universe of ours. If, therefore, material progress does not clash with moral progress, it must necessarily advance the latter.

Nor can we be satisfied with the clumsy way in which sometimes those who cannot defend the large proposition put their case. They seem to be obsessed with the concrete case of thirty millions of India, stated by the late Sir William Wilson Hunter, to be living on one meal a day. They say that, before we can think or talk of their moral welfare, we must satisfy their daily wants. With these, they say, material progress spells moral progress. And then is taken a sudden jump; what is true of thirty millions is true of the universe. They forget that hard cases make bad law. I need hardly say to you how ludicrously absurd this deduction would be. No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation. Every human being has a right to live and, therefore, to find the where-

withal to feed himself and, where necessary, to clothe and house himself. But for this very simple performance, we need no assistance from economists or their laws.

'Take no thought for the morrow' is an injunction which finds an echo in almost all the religious scriptures of the world. In well ordered society the securing of one's livelihood should be, and is, found to be the easiest thing in the world. Indeed, the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of tonkonaires it owns, but the absence of starvation among its masses. The only statement that has to be examined is, whether it can be laid down as a law of universal application that material advancement means moral progress.

Now, let us take a few illustrations. Rome suffered a moral fall when it attained high material affluence. So did Egypt, and so perhaps most countries of which we have any historical record. The descendants and kinsmen of the royal and divine Knshna, too, fell when they were rolling in riches. We do not deny to the Rockefellers and the Carnegies possession of an ordinary measure of morality, but we gladly judge them indulgently. I mean that we do not even expect them to satisfy the highest standard of morality. With them material gain has not necessarily meant moral gain. In South Africa, where I had the privilege of associating with thousands of our countrymen on most intimate terms, I observed almost invariably that the greater the possession of riches, the greater was their moral turpitude. Our rich men, to say the least, did not advance the moral struggle of Passive Resistance as did the poor. The rich men's sense of self-respect was not so much injured as that of the poorest. If I were not afraid of treading

on dangerous ground, I would even come nearer home and show how the possession of riches has been a hindrance to real growth,

I venture to think that the scriptures of the world are far safer and sounder treatises on laws of economics than many of the modern text-books. The question we are asking ourselves is not a new one. It was addressed of Jesus two thousand years ago. St Mark has vividly described the scene. Jesus is in his solemn mood. He is earnest. He talks of eternity. He knows the world about him. He is himself the greatest economist of his time. He succeeded in economizing time and space, he transcended them. It is to him at his best that one comes running, kneels down, and asks. "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit Eternal Life?" And Jesus said unto him "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the Commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill; Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother." And he answered and said unto him "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him and said unto him "One thing thou lackest! Go thy way, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven. Come, take up the Cross and follow me."

And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved, for he had great possession. And Jesus looked round about and said unto the disciple: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again and said unto them: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the

Kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."

Here you have an eternal rule of life stated in the noblest words the English language is capable of producing. But the disciples nodded unbelief, as we do even to this day. To him they said, as we say to-day "But look, how the law fails in practice. If we sell all and have nothing, we shall have nothing to eat. We must have money or we cannot even be reasonably moral." So they state their case thus.—And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves\* "Who, then, can be saved?" And Jesus looking upon them said. "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for, with God all things are possible." Then, Peter began to say unto him "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee" And Jesus answered and said: 'Verily, I say unto you there is no man that has left house or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children or lands for my sake and Gospel's but he shall receive one hundredfold, now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and land, and, in the world to come, Eternal Life. But many that are first shall be last and the last, first"

You have here the result or reward, if you prefer the term, of following the Law. I have not taken the trouble of copying similar passages from the other non-Hindu scriptures and I will not insult you by quoting, in support of the Law stated by Jesus, passages from the writings and sayings of our own sages, passages even stronger if possible, than the Biblical extracts I have drawn your attention to. Perhaps, the strongest of all the testimonies in favour of the affirmative answer to

the question before us ate the lives of the greatest teachers of the world. Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Shankara, Dayananda, Ramaknshna were men who exercised an immense influence over, and moulded the character of, thousands of men. The world is the richer for their having lived in it. And they were all men who deliberately embraced poverty as their lot

I should not have laboured my point as I have done, if I did not believe tftat, in so far we have made the modern matenalistic craze our goal, so far are we going down-hill on the path *qi* progress I hold that economic progress, m the sense I have put it, is antagonistic to real progress Hence, the ancient ideal has been the limitation of activities promoting wealth. This does not put an end to all matenal ambition We should still have, as we have always had, m our midst people who make the pursuit of wealth thar aim in life But we have always recognized that it is a fall from the ideal It is a beautiful thing to know that the wealthiest among us have often felt that to have remaned voluntarily poor would have been a higher state for them That you cannot serve God and Mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. We have to make our choice.

Western nations are to-day groaning under the heel of the Monster God of Matenalism. Their moral growth has become stunted. They measure their progress in £ s. d Amencan wealth has became the standard. She is the envy of the other nations. I have heard many of our countrymen say that we shall gam Amencan wealth but avoid its methods I venture to suggest that such an attempt, if it were made, is foredoomed to

failure. We cannot be 'wise, temperate and furious' in a moment. I would have our leaders teach us to be morally supreme in the world. This land of ours was once, we are told, the abode of the gods. It is not possible to conceive gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the din of mill-chimneys and factories, and whose roadways are traversed by rushing engines, dragging numerous cars crowded with men who know not for the most part what they are after, who are often absent-minded, and whose tempers do not improve by being uncomfortably packed like sardines in boxes, and, finding themselves in the midst of utter strangers, who would oust them if they could and whom they would, in their turn, oust similarly. I refer to these things because they are held to be symbolical of material progress. But they add not an atom to our happiness. This is what Wallace, the great scientist, has said as his deliberate judgment:

"In the earliest records, which have come down to us from the past, we find ample indications that general ethical considerations and conceptions, the accepted standards of morality, and the conduct resulting from these, were in no degree inferior to those which prevail to-day"

In a series of chapters, he then proceeds to examine the position of the English nation under the advance in wealth it has made. He says

"This rapid growth of wealth and increase of our power over Nature put too great a strain upon our crude civilization, on our superficial Christianity, and it was accompanied by various forms of social immorality almost as amazing and unprecedented"

He then shows how factories have risen on the corpses of men, women and children, how, as the country has rapidly advanced in riches, it has gone down in mora-



lity. He shows this by dealing with insanitation, life-destroying trades, adulteration, bribery and gambling. He shows how with the advance of wealth, justice has become immoral, deaths from alcoholism and suicide have increased, the average of premature births and congenital defects has increased, and prostitution has become an institution. He concludes his examination with these pregnant remarks'

"The proceedings of the divorce courts show other aspects of the result of wealth and leisure, while a friend who had been a good deal in London society assured me that, both in country houses and in London, various kinds of orgies were occasionally to be met with, which would hardly have been surpassed in the period of the most dissolute emperors. Of war, too, I need say nothing. It has always been more or less chronic since the rise of the Roman Empire, but there is now undoubtedly a disinclination for war among all civilized peoples. Yet the vast burden of armaments, taken together with the most pious declarations in favour of peace, must be held to show an almost total absence of morality as a guiding principle among the governing classes"

Under the British aegis we have learnt much, but it is my firm belief that there is little to learn from Britain in intrinsic morality, that if we are not careful, we shall introduce all the vices that she has been a prey to owing to the disease of materialism. We can profit by that connection only if we keep our civilization and our morals straight, i e, if, instead of boasting of the glorious past, we express the ancient moral glory in our own lives and let our lives bear witness to our boast. Then, we shall benefit her and ourselves. If we copy her because she provides us with rulers, both they and we shall suffer degradation. We need not be afraid of ideals, or of reducing them to practice even to the uttermost. Ours will only then be a truly spiritual nation

when we shall show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self. If we will but cleanse our houses, our palaces and temples of the attributes of wealth and show in them the attributes of morality, we can offer battle to any combinations of hostile forces without having to carry the burden of a heavy militia. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the irrevocable promise is that everything will be added unto us. These are real economics. May you and I treasure them and enforce them in our daily life!

[A lecture delivered at a meeting of the Muir Central College Economics Society, Allahabad, on December 22, 1916]

—*Speeches & Writings of M Gandhi* P 349

## XIX

### THE FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF NATURE

I SUGGEST That we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use and keep it, I steal it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day-to-day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality, so long we are stealing.

I am no Socialist and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions: but I do say that, personally, those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody. I

should then be departing from the rule of *Akimsa*. If somebody else possesses more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated, I do say that I dare not possess anything which I do not want. In India, we have got three millions of people having to be satisfied with one meal a day, and that meal consisting of a *chapattt* containing no fat in it, and a pinch of salt. You and I have no right to anything that we really have, until these three millions are clothed and fed better. You and I, who ought to know better, must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation in order that they may be nursed, fed and clothed<sup>1</sup>

—*Speeches & Writings of M Gandhi*. P 384

## XX

### NON-STEALING

EVERY one of us is, consciously or unconsciously, more or less, guilty of theft. We may steal not only what belongs to others, but also what belongs to ourselves, as is done, for instance, by a father who eats something secretly, keeping his children in the dark about it

<sup>1</sup> "We should aim at getting only what the rest of the world gets. Thus, if the whole world gets milk, we may also have it. We may pray to God and say.. "O God, if you wish me to have milk, give it first to the rest of the world " But who can pray thus? Only he who has so much sympathy for others and who labours for their good. Even if we cannot practise this principle, we must at least understand and appreciate it. For the present, our only prayer to God should be that since we are fallen so low, He may accept whatever little we do, and that even if we do not progress in this direction, He should give us strength to lessen our possession. If we repent of our sins, they will not increase further. We should not keep anything with us thinking it as our own, but should strive to give up as much of our possessions as we can."

—*To Ashram Sisters*. P 106.

It is theft to take anything belonging to another without his permission, even if it be with his knowledge. It is equally theft to take something in the belief that it is nobody's property. Things found on the roadside belong to the ruler or the local authority.

Thus far, it is pretty smooth sailing. But the observance of Non-stealing goes very much farther. It is theft to take something from another even with his permission, if we have no real need of it. We should not receive any single thing that we do not need. Theft of this description generally has food for its object. It is theft for me to take any fruit that I do not need, or to take it in a larger quantity than is necessary. We are not always aware of our real needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants, and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject, we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants. One who follows the observance of Non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of his own wants. Much of the distressing poverty in this world has arisen out of breaches of the principles of Non-stealing.

One, who observes the principle of Non-stealing, will refuse to bother himself about things to be acquired in the future. This evil anxiety for the future will be found at the root of many a theft. To-day we only desire possession of a thing, to-morrow we shall begin to adopt measures, straight if possible, crooked when thought necessary, to acquire its possession.

One who takes up the observance of Non-stealing has, therefore, to be humble, thoughtful, vigilant and in habits simple.

—*From Yeravda Mandir: Chap. V.*

## NON-POSSESSION OR POVERTY

POSSESSION implies provision for the future. A seeker after Truth, a follower of the Law of Love cannot hold anything against to-morrow. God never stores for the morrow. He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment\*. If, therefore, we repose faith in His providence, we should rest assured, that He will give us every day our daily bread, meaning everything that we require. Sams and devotees, who have lived in such faith, have always derived a justification for it from their experience. Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon them. The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are, therefore, neglected and wasted; while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The poor man would fain become a millionaire, and the millionaire a multi-millionaire. The rich should take the initiative in dispossession with a view to a universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the starving will be easily fed, and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich.

Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of Non-possession requires that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the

morrow. He will indeed need his daily bread, but it will be God's business, and not his, to provide it. Only the fewest possible, if any at all, can reach this ideal. We ordinary seekers may not be repelled by the seeming impossibility. But we must keep the ideal constantly in view, and in the light thereof, critically examine our possessions and try to reduce them. Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and, voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service.

—*From Yeravdd Mandir: Chap VI.*

## XXII

## VOLUNTARY POVERTY

WHEN I found myself drawn into the political ooil, I asked myself what was necessary for me in order to remain absolutely untouched by immorality, by untruth, by what is known as political game. I do not propose to take you through all the details of that act or performance, interesting and, to me, sacred though they are—but I can only tell you that it was a difficult struggle in the beginning and it was a wrestle with my wife and—as I can vividly recall—with my children also. Be that as it may, I came definitely to the conclusion that, if I had to serve the people in whose midst my life was cast and of whose difficulties I was witness from day to day, I must discard all wealth, all possession.

I cannot tell you the truth that, when this belief arose in me, I discarded, without delay, I must say, all that I had.

confess to you that progress at first was slow. And now, as I recall these days of struggle, I remember that it was also painful in the beginning. But, as days went by, I saw that I had to throw overboard many other things which I used to consider as mine, and a tune came when it became a matter of positive joy to give up those things. And one after another then, by almost geometric progression, the things slipped away from me. And, as I am describing my experience, I can say a great burden fell off my shoulders, and I felt that I could now walk with ease and do my work also in the service of my fellow-men with great comfort and still greater joy. The possession of anything then became a troublesome thing and a burden.

Exploring the cause of that joy, I found that, if I kept anything as my own, I had to defend it against the whole world. I found also that there were many people who did not have the thing, although they wanted it, and I would have to seek police assistance also if hungry fanune-stricken people, finding me in a lonely place, wanted me not merely to divide the thing with them but to dispossess me. And I said to myself: If they want it and would take it, they do so not from any malicious motive, but they would do it because theirs was a greater need than mine.

And, then, I said to myself: Possession *serais* to me to be a crime. I can only possess certain things when I know that others, who also want to possess similar things, are able to do so. But we know—every one of us can speak from experience—that such a thing that can be possessed by all is non-possession, not to have anything whatsoever. In other words, a willing surrender.

You might, then, well say to me: 'But you are keep-

ing many things on your body, even as you are speaking about voluntary poverty and not possessing anything whatsoever<sup>1</sup>. And your taunt would be right, if you only superficially understood the meaning of the thing that I am speaking about just now. It is really the spirit behind. Whilst you have the body, you will have to have something to clothe the body with also. But, then, you will take for the body not all that you can get, but the least possible, the least with which you can do. You will take for your house not many mansions, but the least cover that you can do with. And, similarly, with reference to your food and so on.

Now, you see that there is here a daily conflict between what you and we understand to-day as civilization, and the state which I am picturing to you as a state of bliss and a desirable state. On the other hand, the basis of culture for civilization is understood to be the multiplication of all your wants. If you have one room, you will desire to have two rooms, three rooms, the more the merrier. And, similarly, you will want to have as much furniture as you can put in your house, and so on, endlessly. And the more you possess, the better culture you represent, or some such thing. I am putting it, perhaps, not as nicely as the advocates of that civilization would put it, but am putting it to you in the manner I understand it.

And, on the other hand, you find the less you possess, the less you want, the better you are. And better for what? Not for enjoyment of this life, but for enjoyment of personal service to your fellow-beings; service to which you dedicate yourselves, body, soul and mind. Even the body is not yours. It has been given to you as



a temporary possession, and it can also be taken frgpi you by Han who has given it to you.

Theiefore having that absolute conviction in me, such must be my constant desire that this body also may be surrendered at the will of God, and, while it is at my disposal, must be used not for dissipation, not for seUn indulgence, not for pleasure, but merely for service ao4 service the whole of your waking hours. And if this n true with reference to the body, how much more so with reference to clothing and other things that we use?

And those who have actually followed out this vow of voluntary poverty to the fullest extent possible (to reach absolute perfection is an impossibility, but the iullest possible extent for a human being), those who have reached the ideal of that state, they testify that when you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world. In other words, you really get all that is in reality necessary for you, everything. If food is necessary, food will come to you.

Many of you are men and women of prayer, and I have heard from very many Christian lips that they get their food in answer to prayer, that they get everything m answer to prayer. I believe it. But I want you to come with me a step further and believe with me that those who voluntarily give up everything on earth, including the body—that is to say, have readiness to give up everything (and they must examine themselves critically, rigidly, and give always an adverse judgmaitf against themselves)—those who will follow this out will really find that they are never in want.

'Want must aot again be *taken* literaliy. Gad the hardest task-master I have known on this eart and

He tries you through and through And when you find  
 that your faith is failing or your body is failing you, and  
 you are sinking, He comes to your assistance somehow  
 or other, and proves to you that you must not lose your  
 faith and that He is always at your beck and call, to  
 rely on His terms, not on your terms. So I have found, I  
 cannot really recall a single instance when, at the ele-  
 venth hour, He has forsaken me

[From the address delivered at the Ouldhouse, London, on Sep-  
 tember 23, 1931)

—*Speeches & Writings of M Gandhi* P 1066.

## XXIII

### DIGNITY OF POVERTY

POVERTY has a dignity in our country The poor man  
 is not ashamed of his poverty He prefers his hut to  
 the rich man's palace He even takes pride in it.  
 Though poor in material goods, he is not poor in spirit  
 Contentment is his treasure He may as well say to  
 himself 'Since we cannot all become rich and own  
 palaces, let us at least pull down the palaces of the rich  
 and bring them down to our level' That can bring no  
 happiness or peace either to themselves or anyone else,  
 and God will certainly be not the friend and helper  
 of the poor of such description.

Poverty, in the sense of inequality of material posses-  
 sions, is there in every part of the world. That is  
 perhaps in a certain measure inevitable, for all men are  
 not equal either in their talents or the measure of their  
 needs Even in America, which is fabulously rich and

where Mammon has taken the place of God, there are many poor. Poet Malaban had come across some relatives of Shah Alam begging in the streets of Rangoon. He has written a beautiful poem about it, which has sunk into my heart. The substance of it is that he alone is rich who has God for his friend and helper.

In India, there is a particular type of man who delights in having as few needs as possible. He carries with him only a little flour and a pinch of salt and chillies tied in his napkin. He has a *lata* and a string to draw water from the well. He needs nothing else. He walks on foot covering 10-12 miles a day. He makes the dough in his napkin, collects a few twigs to make a fire and bakes his dough on the embers. It is called *bah*. I have tasted it and found it most delicious. The relish does not lie in the food but in the appetite that honest toil and the contentment of the mind give. Such a man has God as his companion and friend and feels richer than any king or emperor. God is not the friend of those who inwardly covet other's riches. Everyone can copy that example and enjoy ineffable peace and happiness himself and radiate it to others. On the other hand, if one hankers after riches, one has to resort to exploitation, by whatever name it may be called. Even then, the crores cannot become millionaires. True happiness lies in contentment and companionship with God only.

—Hartjan: July 21, 1946.

## YAJNA OR SACR ,—

THE world cannot subsist for a single moment without *yajna*<sup>1</sup>.. and, therefore, the *Gita*, after having dealt with true wisdom in the Second Chapter, takes up in the third the means of attaining it, and declares in so many words, that *yajna* came with the Creation itself. This body, therefore, has been given us, only in order that we may serve all Creation with it. And, therefore, says the *Gita* 'He who eats without offering *yajna*, eats stolen food'. Every single act of one, who would lead a life of purity, should be in the nature of *yajna*. *Yajna* having come to us with our birth, we are debtors all our lives, and thus for ever bound to serve the universe. And even as a bond-slave receives food, clothing and so on from the master whom he serves, so should we gratefully accept such gifts as may be assigned to us by the Lord of the Universe. What we receive must be called a gift, for, as debtors, we are entitled to no consideration for the discharge of our obligations. Therefore, we may not blame the Master, if we fail to get it. Our body is His to be cherished or cast away according to His will. This is not a matter for complaint or even pity, on the contrary, it is a natural and even a pleasant and desirable state, if only we realize our proper place in God's scheme. We do indeed need strong faith, if we

<sup>1</sup>*Yajm* means an apt directed to the welfare of others, done without desiring any return for it, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature. 'Act' here must be taken in its widest sense, and includes thought and word, as well as deed. 'Others' embraces not only humanity, but all life."

would experience this supreme bliss. "Do not worry in the least about yourself, leave all worry to God,"—this appears to be the commandment in all religions.

This need not frighten anyone. He who devotes himself to service with a clear conscience, will day by day grasp the necessity for it in greater measure, and will continually grow richer in faith. The path of service can hardly be trodden by one who is not prepared to renounce self-interest, and to recognize the conditions of his birth. Consciously or unconsciously, every one of us does render some service or other. If we cultivate the habit of doing this service deliberately, our desire for service will steadily grow stronger, and will make not only for our own happiness but that of the world at large.

—*From Yervada Mandir Chap. XIV.*

## XXV

### MORE ABOUT YAJNA

IT will perhaps be worthwhile further to consider a principle which has been created along with mankind. Yajna is duty to be performed, or service to be rendered; all the twenty-four hours of the day.

To serve without desire is to favour not others, but ourselves, even as in discharging a debt we serve only ourselves, lighten our burden and fulfil our duty. A Jai is not only for the good but all of us are bound to place our resources at the disposal of humanity. And if such is the law, as evidently it is, indulgence ceases to hold a place in life and gives way to renunciation. The duty

of renunciation differentiates mankind from the beast

Some object that life thus understood becomes dull and devoid of art, and leaves no room for the householder. But renunciation here does not mean abandoning the world and retiring into the forest. The spirit of renunciation should rule all the activities of life. A householder does not cease to be one, if he regards life as a duty rather than as an indulgence. A merchant who operates in the sacrificial spirit, will have money passing through his hands, but he will, if he follows the law, use his abilities for service. He will, therefore, not cheat or speculate, will lead a simple life, will not injure a living soul and will lose millions rather than harm anybody. Let no one run away with the idea that this type of merchant exists only in my imagination. Fortunately for the world, it does exist in the West as well as in the East. It is true, such merchants may be counted on one's fingers' ends, but the type ceases to be imaginary, as soon as even one living specimen can be found to answer to it.

A life of sacrifice is the pinnacle of art, and is full of true joy. *Yajna* is not *yajm*, if one feels it to be burdensome or annoying.<sup>2</sup>

Self-indulgence leads to destruction, and renunciation to immortality. Joy has no independent existence, it depends upon our attitude to life. One man will enjoy theatrical scenery, another the ever new scenes which

<sup>1</sup> "The human body is meant solely for service, never for indulgence. The secret of happy life lies in renunciation. Renunciation is life. Indulgence speeds death."

—*tfarjan* Feb 24, 1946

<sup>2</sup> "No sacrifice is worth the name unless it is a joy. Sacrifice and a long face go ill together"

—*Youm India* June 25, 1925

unfold themselves in the sky. Joy, therefore, is a matter of individual and national education. We shall delight in things which we have been taught to delight in as children. And illustrations can be easily cited of different national tastes.

Again, many sacrificers imagine that they are free to receive from the people everything they need, and many things they do not need, because they are rendering disinterested service. Directly this idea sways a man, he ceases to be a servant and becomes a tyrant over the people.

One who would serve will not waste a thought upon his own comforts, which he leaves to be attended to or neglected by his Master on High. He will not, therefore, encumber himself with everything that comes his way, he will take only what he strictly needs and leave the rest. He will be calm, free from anger and unruffled in mind, even if he finds himself inconvenienced. His service, like virtue, is its own reward, and he will rest content with it.

Again, one dare not be negligent in service,\*or be behind-hand with't. He who thinks that he must be diligent only in his personal business, and unpaid public business may be done in any way and at any time he chooses, has still to learn the very rudiments of the science of sacrifice. Voluntary service of others demands the best of which one is capable, and must take precedence over service of self. In fact, the pure devotee consecrates himself to the service of humanity without any reservation whatever.

—*From Yeravda Mandtr: Chap. XV.*

## XXVI

### NECESSITY OF BODILY LABOUR

"By food the living live, food comes of ram,  
And ram comes by the pious sacrifice,  
And sacrifice is paid with tithes of toil"

—Edwm Arnold

HERE there is not only the theory, in my opinion, of bodily labour propounded, but there is also the theory established of labour not only for oneself but for others, when and when only it becomes *yajna* or sacrifice<sup>1</sup>. The rams come not through intellectual feats, but through sheer bodily labour. It is a well-established scientific fact that where forests are denuded of trees, rams cease, where trees are planted, rams are attracted and the volume of water received increases with the increase of vegetation. Laws of Nature are still unexplored. We have but scratched the surface. Who knows all the ill effects, moral and physical, of the cessation of bodily labour? Let me not be misunderstood. I do not dis-

<sup>1</sup> "This service is impossible without bread-labour, otherwise described in the *Gita* as *yajna*. It is only when a man or woman has done bodily labour for the sake of service, that he or she gets any right to live. The *Gita* says that anybody who eats without performing *yajna*, in Tolstoy's language bread-labour, is a thief, 'eats sin'. But body-labour becomes *yajna* only when it is undertaken in a spirit of service not of indulgence, as it may easily become when it is done only to develop the animal in man. A man who adopts service as his ideal will go on curbing his carnal appetites more and more and though, as in the case of Tolstoy, the attainment of full self-restraint seems always as far away as ever, he will never cease to persevere in it and regard such perseverance as the *summum bonum* of life. Firhad, in his quest of Shinn, wore away his life in breaking rocks, shall we do less for our Shinn of Truth, without which service is not?"



count the value of intellectual labour, but no amount of it is any compensation for bodily labour, which every one of us *ds bom* to give for the common good of all. It may be, often is, infinitely superior to bodily labour, but it never is or can be a substitute for it, even as intellectual food, though far superior to the grains we eat, never can be a substitute for them. Indeed, without the products of the earth, those of the intellect would be an impossibility.

—*Young India*. Oct 15, 1925

## XXVII

### "BREAD-LABOUR"

THE law, that to live man must work, first came home to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing on bread-labour. But even before that, I had begun to pay homage to it after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The Divine Law, that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands, was first stressed by a Russian writer named T M Bondaref. Tolstoy advertised it and gave it wider publicity. In my view, the same principle has been set forth in the Third Chapter of the *Gita*, where we are told that he who eats without offering sacrifice, eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only mean bread-labour.

Reason, too, leads us to an identical conclusion. How can a man, who does not do body labour, have the right to eat? In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread', says the *Bible*. A millionaire cannot carry on for long, and will soon get tired of his life, if he rolls to his bed all day long, and is even helped to his food. He,

therefore, induces hunger by exercise, and helps himself to the food he eats. If everyone, whether rich or poor, has thus to take exercise in some shape or form, why should it not assume the form of productive t.e., bread-labour? No one asks the cultivator to take breathing exercise or to work his muscles. And more than nine-tenths of humanity lives by tilling the soil. How much happier, healthier and more peaceful would the world become, if the remaining tenth followed the example of the overwhelming majority, at least to the extent of labouring enough for their food! And many hardships connected with agriculture would be easily redressed, if such people took a hand in it. Again, invidious distinctions of rank would be abolished, when everyone, without exception, acknowledged the obligation of bread-labour. It is common to all the *varnas*. There is a world-wide conflict between Capital and Labour, and the poor envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated, the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest.

Bread-labour is a veritable blessing to one who would observe Non-violence, worship Truth, and make the observance of *Brahmacharya* a natural act. This labour can truly be related to agriculture alone. But, at present, at any rate, everybody is not in a position to take to it. A person can, therefore, spin or weave or take up carpentry or smithery, instead of tilling the soil, always regarding agriculture, however, to be the ideal. Everyone must be his own scavenger. Evacuation is as necessary as eating; and the best thing would be for everyone to dispose of his own waste. If this is im-

possible, each family should see to its own scavenging. I have felt for years, that there must be something radically wrong, where scavenging has been made the canon of a separate class in society. We have no historical record of the man who first assigned the lowest status to this essential sanitary service. Whoever he was, he by no means did us good. We should, from our very childhood, have the idea impressed upon our minds that we are all scavengers, and the easiest way of doing so is, for everyone, who has realized this, to commence bread-labour as a scavenger. Scavenging, thus intelligently taken up, will help one to a true appreciation of the equality of man.

—*From Yeravda Mandir* Chap IX.

## XXVIII

### IMPORTANCE OF BREAD-LABOUR

REFERRING to the Russian writer Bondaref, Tolstoy observes that his discovery of the vital importance of bread-labour is one of the most remarkable discoveries of modern times. The idea is that every healthy individual must labour enough for his food, and his intellectual faculties must be exercised not in order to obtain a living or amass a fortune, but only in the service of mankind. If this principle is observed everywhere, all men would be equal, none would starve and the world would be saved from many a sin.

It is possible that this golden ride will never be observed by the whole world. Millions observe it in spite

of themselves without understanding it. **But** their mind is working in a contrary direction, so that they are unhappy themselves and their labour is not as fruitful as it should be. This state of things serves as an incentive to those who understand and seek to practise the rule. By rendering a willing obedience to it, they enjoy good health as well as perfect peace and develop their capacity for service.

Tolstoy made a deep impression on my mind, and, even in South Africa, I began to observe the rule to the best of my ability. In my opinion, the same principle has been set forth in the Third Chapter of the *Gita*. I do not go so far as to say that the word *yajna* (sacrifice) there means body-labour. But when the *Gita* says that 'ram comes from sacrifice' (Verse 14), I think it indicates the necessity of bodily labour. The 'residue of sacrifice' (Verse 13) is the bread that we have won in the sweat of our brow. Labouring enough for one's food has been classed in the *Gita* as a *yajna*. Whoever eats more than is enough for sustaining the body is a thief for most of us hardly perform labour enough to maintain themselves. I believe that a man has no right to receive anything more than his keep, and that everyone who labours is entitled to a living wage.

This does not rule out the division of labour. The manufacture of everything needed to satisfy essential human wants involves bodily labour, so that labour in all essential occupations counts as bread-labour. But as many of us do not perform such labour, they have to take exercise in order to preserve their health. A cultivator working on his farm from day to day has not to take breathing exercise or; stretch his muscles. Indeed,

if he observes the other laws of health, he will *never be* afflicted with illness,

God never creates more than what is strictly needed ~~few~~ the moment, with the result that if anyone appropriates more than he really needs, he reduces his neighbour to destitution. The starvation of people in several parts of the world is due to many of us seizing very much more than they need. We may utilize the gifts of Nature just as we choose, but in her books the debits are always equal to the credits. There is no balance in either column.

Intellectual development is often supposed to mean a knowledge of facts concerning the universe. It is a gross superstition to imagine that knowledge is acquired only through books. We must discard this error. Reading books has a place in life, but is useful only in its own place. If book-knowledge is cultivated at the cost of body-labour, we must raise a revolt against it. Most of our time must be devoted to body-labour, and only a little to reading. As in India to-day the rich and the so-called higher classes despise body-labour, it is very necessary to insist on the dignity of labour. Even for real intellectual development, one should engage in some useful bodily activity.

—*Ashram Observances in Action* P 60.

## XXIX

### DUTY OF BREAD-LABOUR

"BRAHMA created his people with the duty of sacrifice laid upon them and said: 'By this do you flourish. Let

it be the fulfiller of all your desires\* . He who eats without performing this sacrifice eats stolen bread" Thus says the *Gita*. "Earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow," says the *Bible* . Sacrifices may be of many kinds. One of them may well be bread labour. If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all . Then, there would be no cry of over-population, no disease, and no such misery as we see around . Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice . Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love for the common good . There will, then, be no rich and no poor none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable

This may be an unattainable ideal . But we need not, therefore, cease to strive for it. Even if, without fulfilling the whole law of sacrifice, that is, the law of our being, we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we should go a long way towards the ideal

If we did so, our wants would be minimized, our food would be simple . We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let anyone who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread, he will derive the greatest relish from the productions of his labour, improve his health and discover that many things he took were superfluities.

May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's", perhaps applies here as well,

Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour<sup>1</sup> is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers and like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. Obedience to the Law of Bread Labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The Law of the Brute will be replaced by the Law of Man.

Return to the villages means a definite voluntary recognition of the duty of bread labour and all it connotes. But says the critic. "Millions of India's children are to-day living in the villages and yet they are living a life of semi-starvation" This, alas, is but too true. Fortunately, we know that theirs is not voluntary obedience. They would perhaps shirk body labour if they could, and even rush to the nearest city if they could be accommodated in it. Compulsory obedience to a master is a state of slavery, willing obedience to one's father is the glory of sonship. Similarly, compulsory obedience to the Law of Bread Labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. And it is health which is real wealth, not pieces of silver and gold.

—*Hanjan* June 29, 1935

<sup>1</sup> "Intellectual work is important and has an undoubted place in the scheme of life. But what I insist on is the necessity of physical labour. No man, I claim, ought to be free from that obligation, it will serve to improve even the quality of his intellectual output. I venture to say that in ancient times *Brahmins* worked with their body as with their mind. But even if they did not, body-labour was a proved necessity at the present time."

—*Harijan* Feb 6, 1947

XXX

## SWADESHI

AFTER MUCH THINKING, I have arrived at a definition of *Swadeshi* that perhaps best illustrates my meaning. *Swadeshi* is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate religious surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In the domain of politics, I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such *Swadeshi*, if reduced to practice, will lead to the millenium, because we do not expect quite to reach it within our times. So may we not abandon *Swadeshi* even though it may not be fully attained for generations to come.

Much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from *Swadeshi* in the economic and industrial life. If not an article of commerce had been brought from outside India, she would be to-day a land flowing with milk and honey. But that was not to be. We were greedy, and so was England. The connection with England and India was based clearly upon an error.

If we follow the *Swadeshi* doctrine, it would be your



duty and mine to find out neighbours who can supply our wants, and to teach them to supply them where they do not know how to proceed, assuming that there are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then, every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages as are not locally producible. This may all sound nonsensical. Well, India is a country of nonsense. It is nonsensical to parch one's throat with thirst when a kindly Mussalman is ready to offer pure water to drink. Ami yet thousands of Hindus would rather die of thirst than drink water from a Muslim household. These nonsensical men can also, once they are convinced that their religion demands that they should wear garments manufactured in India only and eat food only grown in India, decline to wear any other clothing or eat any other food.

It has often been urged that India cannot adopt *Swadeshi* in the economic life at any rate. Those who advance this objection do not look upon *Swadeshi* as a rule of life. With them it is a mere patriotic effort, not to be made if it involved any self-denial. *Swadeshi*, as defined here, is a religious discipline to be undergone in utter disregard of the physical discomfort it may cause to individuals. Under its spell, the deprivation of a pin or a needle, because these are not manufactured in India, need cause no terror. A *Swadeshist* will learn to do without hundreds of things which to-day he considers necessary. Moreover, those who dismiss *Swadeshi* from their minds by arguing the impossible, forget that *Swadeshi*, after all, is a goal to be reached by steady effort. And we would be making for the

goal even if we confined *Swadeshi* to a given set of articles, allowing ourselves as a temporary measure to use such things as might not be procurable in the country

There now remains for me to consider one more objection that has been raised against *Swadeshi*. The objectors consider it to be a most selfish doctrine without any warrant in the civilized code of morality. With them to practise *Swadeshi* is to revert to barbarism, I cannot enter into a detailed analysis of the proposition. But I would urge that *Swadeshi* is the only doctrine consistent with the law of humility and love. It is arrogance to think of launching out to serve the whole of India, when I am hardly able to serve even my own family. It were better to concentrate my efforts upon the family and consider that through them I was serving the whole nation and, if you will, the whole of humanity. This is humility and it is love. The motive will determine the quality of the act. I may serve my family regardless of the sufferings I may cause to others. As, for instance, I may accept an employment which enables me to extort money from people. I enrich myself thereby and then satisfy many unlawful demands of the family. Here, I am serving neither the family nor the State. Or, I may recognize that God has given me hands and feet only to work with for my sustenance and for that of those who may be dependent upon me. I would then at once simplify my life and that of those whom I can directly reach. In this instance, I would have served the family without causing injury to anyone else. Supposing that everyone followed this mode of life, we should have at once an ideal state. All will not reach that state at the same time. But those of us

who, realizing its truth, enforce it in practice, will clearly anticipate and accelerate the coming of that happy day Under this plan of life, in seeming to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, I do not harm any other country My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that, in all humility, I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature *Sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas* is not merely a legal maxim, but is a grand doctrine of life It is the key to a proper practice of *Ahimsa* or love

[From an address delivered before the Missionary Conference, Madras, on February 14, 1916]

*Speeches and Writings of M Gandhi P 336*

### XXXI

#### THE SWADESHI SPIRIT

IF WE HAVE no regard for our respective vernaculars, if we dislike our clothes, if our dress repels us, if we are ashamed to wear the sacred *shikha*, if our food is distasteful to us, our climate is not good enough, our people uncouth and unfit for our company, our civilization faulty and the foreign attractive, in short, if everything native is bad and everything foreign pleasing to us, I should not know what *Swaraj* can mean for us If everything foreign is to be adopted, surely it will be necessary for us to continue long under foreign tutelage, because foreign civilization has not permeated the masses. It seems to me that before we can appreciate *Swam*), we should have not only love but passion for

*Swadeshi*. Every one of our acts should bear the *Swadeshi* stamp *Swaraj* can only be built upon the assumption that most of what is national is on the whole sound. If the view here put forth be correct, the *Swadeshi* movement ought to be earned on vigorously. Every country that has earned on the *Swaraj* movement has fully appreciated the *Swadeshi* spmt. The Scotch Highlanders hold on to their kilts even at the risk of their lives. We humourously call the Highlanders the 'Petticoat Brigade'. But the whole world testifies to the strength that lies behind that petticoat, and the Highlanders of Sootland will not abandon it even though it is an inconvenient dress and an easy target for the enemy. The object in developing the foregoing argument is not that we should treasure our faults, but that what is national, even though comparatively less agreeable, should be adhered to, and that what is foreign should be avoided, though it may be more agreeable than our own. That which is wanting in our civilization can be supplied by proper effort on our part.

[From the Presidential Address delivered at the first Gujarat Provincial Political Conference in October 1917.]

—*Economics of Khadi* P 12.

## XXXII

### SWADESHI AND NATIONALISM

MY DEFINITION OF *Swadeshi* is well known. I must not serve my distant neighbour at the expense of the nearest. It is never vindictive or punitive. It is in no sense narrow, for I buy from every part of the world

what is needed for my growth I refuse to buy from anybody anything however nice or beautiful, if it interferes with my growth or injures those whom Nature has made my first care. I buy useful healthy literature from every part of the world. I buy surgical instruments from England, pins and pencils from Austria, and watches from Switzerland. But I will not buy an inch of the finest cotton fabric from England or Japan or any other part of the world, because it has injured and increasingly injures the millions of the inhabitants of India. I hold it to be sinful for me to refuse to buy the cloth spun and woven by the needy millions of India's paupers, and to buy foreign cloth although it may be superior in quality to the Indian hand-spun. My *Swadesht*, therefore, chiefly, centres round the hand-spun *Khaddar* and extends to everything that can be and is produced in India. My nationalism is as broad as my *Swadeshi*. I want India's rise so that the whole world may benefit. I do not want India to rise on the ruin of other nations. If, therefore, India was strong and able, India would send out to the world her treasures of art and health-giving spices, but would refuse to send out opium or intoxicating liquors although the traffic may bring much material benefit to India.

—*Young India* March 12, 1925

### XXXIII

#### WHAT SWADESHI MEANS

A MAN'S FIRST DUTY IS to his neighbour. This does not imply hatred for the foreigner or partiality for the

fellow-countrymen. Our capacity for service has obvious limits. We can serve even our neighbour with some difficulty. If every one of us duly performed his duty to his neighbour, no one in the world who needed assistance would be left unattended. Therefore, one who serves his neighbour serves all the world. As a matter of fact, there is in *Swadeshi* no room for distinction between one's own and other people. To serve one's neighbour is to serve the world. Indeed, it is the only way open to us of serving the world. One, to whom the whole world is as his family, should have the power of serving the universe without moving from his place. He can exercise this power only through service rendered to his neighbour. Tolstoy goes further and says that at present we are riding on other people's backs, it is enough only if we get down. This is another way of putting the same thing. No one can serve others, without serving himself. And whoever tries to achieve his private ends without serving others, harms himself as well as the world at large. The reason is obvious. All living beings are members one of another, so that a person's every act has a beneficial or harmful influence on the whole world. We cannot see this, near-sighted as we are. The influence of a single act of an individual on the world may be negligible. But that influence is there all the same, and an awareness of this truth should make us realize our responsibility.

*Swadeshi*, therefore, does not involve any disservice to the foreigner. Still *Swadeshi* does not reach everywhere, for that is impossible in the very nature of things. In trying to serve the world, one does not serve the world and fails to serve even the neighbour. In serving the neighbour, one, in effect, serves the world-

Only he who has performed his duty to his neighbour has the right to say. 'All are akin to me' But if a person says. 'All are akin to me' and neglecting his neighbour gives himself up to self-indulgence, he lives to himself alone

We find some good men who leave their own place and move all over the world serving non-neighbours They do nothing wrong, and their activity is not an exception to the Law of *Swadeshi* Only their capacity for service is greater To one man, only he who lives next-door to him is his neighbour For a second man, his neighbourhood is co-extensive with his village, and for a third with ten surrounding villages Thus, everyone serves according to his capacity A common man cannot do uncommon work Definitions are framed with an eye to him alone, and imply everything which is not contrary to their spirit When he observes the Law of *Swadeshi*, the ordinary man does not think that he is doing service to any others He deals with the neighbouring producer, as it is convenient for him But an occasion may arise when this is inconvenient One who knows that *Swadeshi* is the law of life, will observe it even on such occasions Many of us at present are not satisfied with the quality of goods made in India, and are tempted to buy foreign goods. It is, therefore, necessary to point out that *Swadeshi* does not simply minister to our convenience but is a rule of life *Swadesht* has nothing to do with hatred of the foreigner It can never be one's duty to wish or to do ill to others

*Khadi* has been conceived as the image of *Swadeshi*, because India has committed a heinous sin by giving it up and thus failing in the discharge of her **natural duty**.

The importance of *Khadi* and the spinning-wheel first dawned on me in 1908, when I had no idea of what the wheel was like and did not even know the difference between the wheel and the loom. I had only a vague idea of the condition of India's villages, but still I clearly saw that the chief cause of their pauperization was the destruction of the spinning wheel, and resolved that I would try to revive it when I returned to India.

—*Ashram Observance? in Action* P 67.

#### XXXIV'

#### THE LAW OF SWADESHI

*Swadeshi* is the law of laws enjoined by the present age. Spiritual laws, like Nature's laws, need no enacting, they are self-acting. But through ignorance or other causes, man often neglects or disobeys them.

The Law of *Swadeshi* is ingrained in the basic nature of man, but it has to-day sunk into oblivion.

In its ultimate and spiritual sense, *Swadeshi* stands for the final emancipation of the soul from her earthly bondage or permanent abode, it is a hindrance in her onward journey, it stands in the way of her realizing her oneness with all life. A votary of *Swadeshi*, therefore, in his striving to identify himself with the entire creation, seeks to be emancipated from the bondage of the physical body.

If this interpretation of *Swadeshi* be correct, then it follows that its votary will, as a first duty, dedicate himself to the service of his immediate neighbours. This involves exclusion or even sacrifice of the interests of the



rest, but the exclusion or the sacrifice would be only in appearance. Pure service of our neighbours can never, from its very nature, result in disservice to those who are far away, but rather the contrary 'As with the individual, so with the universe' is an unfailing principle, which we would do well to lay to heart. On the other hand, a man who allows himself to be lured by 'the distant scene', runs to the ends of the earth for service, is not only foiled in his ambition, but also fails in his duty towards his neighbours. Take a concrete instance. In the particular place where I live, I have certain persons as my neighbours, some relations and dependants. Naturally, they all feel, as they have a right to, that they have a claim on me, and look to me for help and support. Suppose now I leave them all at once, and set out to serve people in a distant place. My decision would throw my little world of neighbours and dependants out of gear, while my gratuitous knight-errantry would, more likely than not, disturb the atmosphere in the new place. Thus, a culpably neglect of my immediate neighbours, and an unintended disservice to the people whom I wish to serve, would be the first fruits of my violation of the principles of *Swadeshi*.

It is not difficult to multiply such instances. That is why the *Gita* says: 'It is best to die performing one's own duty or *Swadharma*; *Paradharma* or another's duty is fraught with danger'. Interpreted in terms of one's physical environment, this gives us the Law of *Swadeshi*. What the *Gita* says with regard to *Swadharma* equally applied to *Swadeshi*, for *Swadeshi* is *Swadharma* applied to one's immediate environment.

It is only when the doctrine of *Swadeshi* is wrongly

understood, that mischief results. For instance, it would be a travesty of the doctrine of *Swadeshi*, if to coddle my family I set about grabbing money by all means fair or foul. The Law of *Swadeshi* requires no more of me than to discharge my legitimate obligations towards my family by just means, and the attempt to do so will reveal to me the universal code of conduct. The practice of *Swadeshi* can never do harm to anyone, and if it does, it is not *Swadharma* but egotism that moves me.

There may arise occasions, when a votary of *Swadeshi* may be called upon to sacrifice his family at the altar of universal service. Such an act of willing immolation will then constitute the highest service rendered to the family. 'Whosoever saveth his life shall lose it, and whosoever loseth his life for the Lord's sake shall find it' holds good for the family group no less than for the individual. Take another instance. Supposing there is an outbreak of plague in my village, and in trying to serve the victims of the epidemic, I, my wife and children and all the rest of my family are wiped out of existence, then, in inducing those dearest and nearest to join me, I will not have acted as the destroyer of my family but, on the contrary, as its truest friend. In *Swadeshi*, there is no room for selfishness; or, if there is selfishness in it, it is of the highest type, which is not different from the highest altruism. *Swadeshi*, in its purest form, is the acme of universal service.

It was by following this line of argument, that I hit upon *Khadi* as the necessary and the most important corollary of the principle of *Swadeshi* in its application to society. 'What is the kind of service', I asked myself, 'that the teeming millions of India most need at the pre-

sent time, that can be easily understood and appreciated by all, that is easy to perform and will at the same time enable the crores of our semi-starved countrymen to live?' and the reply came, that it is the universalizing of *Khadi* or the spinning wheel alone, that can fulfil these conditions.

Let no one suppose, that the practice of *Swadeshi* through *Khadi* would harm the foreign or Indian mill-owners. A thief, who is weaned from his vice, or is made to return the property that he has stolen, is not harmed thereby. On the contrary, he is the gainer, consciously in the one case, unconsciously in the other. Similarly, if all the opium addicts or drunkards in the world were to shake themselves free from their vice, the canteen keepers or the opium vendors, who would be deprived of their custom, could not be said to be losers. They would be the gainers in the truest sense of the word. The elimination of the wages of sin is never a loss either to the individual concerned or to society, it is pure gain.

It is the greatest delusion to suppose that the duty of *Swadeshi* begins and ends with merely spinning some yarn anyhow and wearing *Khadi* made from it. *Khadi* is the first indispensable step towards the discharge of *Swadeshi Dharma* to society. But one often meets men, who wear *Khadi*, while in all other things they indulge their taste for foreign manufactures. Such men cannot be said to be practising *Swadeshi*. They are simply following the fashion. A votary of *Swadeshi* will carefully study his environment, and try to help his neighbours wherever possible by giving preference to local manufactures, even if they are of an inferior grade or dearer in price than things manufactured elsewhere. He will

try to remedy their defects but will not, because of their defects, give them up in favour of foreign manufactures.

But even *Swadeshi*, like any other good thing, can be ridden to death if it is made a fetish. That is a danger which must be guarded against. To reject foreign manufactures merely because they are foreign, and to go on wasting national time and money in the promotion in one's country of manufactures for which it is not suited, would be criminal folly and a negation of the *Swadeshi* spirit. A true votary of *Swadeshi* will never harbour ill-will towards the foreigner, he will not be actuated by antagonism towards anybody on earth. *Swadeshism* is not a cult of hatred. It is a doctrine of selfless service, that has its roots in the purest *Ahimsa*, i e Love

—From *Yeravda Mandir* Chap XVI

### XXXV

## THE MUSIC OF THE SPINNING WHEEL

SLOWLY BUT SURELY, the music of perhaps the most ancient machine of India is once more permeating society. Pandit Malaviyaji has stated that he is not going to be satisfied until the *Rams* and the *Maharanis* of India spin yarn for the nation and the *Ranas* and the *Makaranas* sit behind the hand-looms and weave cloth for the nation. They have the example of Aurangzeb who made his own caps. A greater emperor—Kabir—was himself a weaver and has immortalized the art in his poems. The queens of Europe, before Europe was

caught in Satan's trap, spun yarn and considered it a noble calling. The very words 'spinster' and 'wife' prove the ancient dignity of the art of spinning and weaving. 'When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then a gentleman' also reminds one of the same fact. Well may Panditji hope to persuade the royalty of India to the ancient calling of this sacred land of ours. Not on the clatter of arms depends the revival of her prosperity and true independence. It depends most largely upon re-introduction, in every home, of the music of the spinning wheel. It gives sweeter music, and is more profitable than the execrable harmonium, concertina and the accordion.

I know that there are friends who laugh at this attempt to revive this great art. They remind me that in these days of mills, sewing machines or typewriters,, only a lunatic can hope to succeed in reviving the rusticated spinning wheel. These friends forget that the needle has not yet given place to the sewing machine,, nor has the hand lost its cunning in spite of the typewriter. There is not the slightest reason why the spinning wheel may not co-exist with the spinning mill, even as the domestic kitchens co-exist with the hotels. Indeed, typewriters and sewing machines may go, but the needle and the reed-pen will survive. The mill may suffer destruction. The spinning wheel is a national necessity. I would ask sceptics to go to the many poor homes where the spinning wheel is again supplementing their slender resources and ask the inmates whether the spinning wheel has brought joy to their homes.

I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution

to the economic and the moral regeneration of India. The millions must have a simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago, and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be enabled to re-introduce spinning in their homes and every village must re-possess its own weaver.

—*Young India*- July 21, 1920

### XXXVI

## THE SECRET OF SWARAJ

UNDER THE PRE-BRITISH economy of India, spinning was an honourable and leisurely occupation for the women of India. It was an art confined to the women of India because the latter had more leisure. And being graceful, musical<sup>1</sup> and as it did not involve any great exertion, it had become the monopoly of women. But it is certainly as graceful for either sex, as is music for instance. In hand-spinning is hidden the protection of women's virtue, the insurance against famine, and the cheapening of prices. In it is hidden the secret of *Swaraj*. The revival of hand-spinning is the least penance we must do for the sin of our forefathers in having succumbed to the Satanic influences of the foreign manufacturer.

1 "I claim for it the properties of a musical instrument, for whilst a hungry and naked woman will refuse to dance to the accompaniment of a piano, I have seen women beaming with joy to see the spinning wheel work, for they know that they can through that rustic instrument both feed and clothe themselves."

—*Young India* Feb 16, 1921.

Do I want to put back the hand of the clock of progress? Do I want to replace the mills by hand-spinning and hand-weaving? Do I want to replace the railway by the country cart? Do I want to destroy machinery altogether? These questions have been asked by some journalists and public men. My answer is. I would not weep over the disappearance of machinery or consider it a calamity. But I have no design upon machinery as such. What I want to do, at the present moment, is to supplement the production of yarn and cloth through our mills, save the millions we send out of India, and distribute them in cottages. This I cannot do unless and until the nation is prepared to devote its leisure hours to hand-spinning. To that end, we must adopt the methods I have ventured to suggest for popularizing spinning as a duty rather than as a means of livelihood.

—*Young India* Feb 16, 1921.

### XXXVII

#### CALL OF THE SPINNING WHEEL

I DO INDEED ask the poet and the page to ply the wheel as a sacrament. When there is war, the poet lays down the lyre, the lawyer his law reports, the school-boy his books. The poet will sing the true note after the war is over, the lawyer will have occasion to go to his law books when people have time to fight among themselves. When a house is on fire, all the inmates go out, and each one takes up a bucket to quench the fire. When all about me are dying for want of food, the only occupation permissible to me is to feed the hungry. It is my

conviction that India is a house on fire, because its manhood is being daily scorched, it is dying of hunger because it has no work to buy food with. Khulna is starving not because the people cannot work, but because they have no work. The Ceded Districts are passing successively through a fourth famine. Onssa is a land suffering from chronic famine. Our cities are not India. India lives in her seven and a half lacs of villages, and the cities live upon the villages. They do not bring their wealth from other countries. The city people are brokers and commission agents for the big houses of Europe, America and Japan. The cities have co-operated with the latter in the bleeding process that has gone on for the past two hundred years<sup>1</sup>. It is my belief based on experience that India is daily growing poorer. The circulation about her feet and legs has almost stopped. And if we do not take care, she will collapse altogether.

To a people famishing and idle, the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work and promise of food as wages. God created man to work for his food, and said that those who ate without work were thieves. Eighty per cent of India are compulsory thieves half the year. Is it any wonder if India has become one vast prison? Hunger is the argument that is driving India to the spinning wheel. The call of the spinning wheel

1 "We may not be deceived by the wealth to be seen in the cities of **India**. It does not come from England or America. It comes from the blood of the poorest. There are said to be 700,000 villages in **India**. Some of them have been simply wiped out. The Government registers can give us no idea of what the village-folk are going through. But being a villager myself, I know the conditions in the villages. I know village economics. I tell you that the pressure from the top crushes those at the bottom. All that is necessary is to get off their backs."



is the noblest of all. Because it is the call of love—And love is *Swaraj*. The spinning wheel will 'curb the mind' when time spent on necessary physical labour can be said to do so. We must think of millions who are to-day less than animals, who are almost in a dying state. The spinning wheel is the reviving draught for the millions of our dying countrymen and countrywomen. 'Why should I, who have no need to work for food, spin?' may be the question asked. Because I am eating what does not belong to me. I am living on the spoliation of my countrymen. Trace the course of every pice that finds its way into your pocket, and you will realize the truth of what I write. *Swaraj* has no meaning for the millions, if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness. The attainment of this *Swaraj* is possible within a short time, and it is so possible only by the revival of the spinning wheel.

I do want growth, I do want self-determination, I do want freedom, but I want all these for the soul. I doubt if the Steel Age is an advance upon the Flint Age. I am indifferent. It is the evolution of the soul to which the intellect and all our faculties have to be devoted. I have no difficulty in imagining the possibility of a man armoured after the modern style making some lasting and new discovery for mankind, but I have less difficulty in imagining the possibility of a man having nothing but a bit of flint and a nail for lighting his path or his matchlock, ever singing new hymns of praise and delivering to an aching world a message of peace and goodwill upon earth. A plea for the spinning wheel is a plea for recognizing the dignity of labour.

I claim that in losing the spinning wheel we lost our left lung. We are, therefore, suffering from galloping

consumption. The restoration of the wheel arrests the progress of the fell disease. There are certain things which all must do in all climes. There are certain things which all must do in certain climes. The spinning wheel is the thing to which all must turn in the Indian clime for the transition stage at any rate, and the vast majority must for all time.

It was our love of foreign cloth that ousted the wheel from position of dignity. Therefore, I consider it a sin to wear foreign cloth. I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and, therefore, sinful. Thus, the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labour. It is sinful to eat American wheat and let my neighbour, the gram-dealer, starve for want of custom. Similarly, it is sinful for me to wear the latest finery of Regent Street when I know that, if I had but worn the things woven by the neighbouring spinners and weavers, that would have clothed me, and fed and clothed them. On the knowledge of my sin bursting upon me, I must consign the foreign garments to the flames and thus purify myself, and thenceforth rest content with the rough *Khadi* made by my neighbours. On knowing that my neighbours may, not having given up the occupation, take kindly to the spinning wheel, I must take it up myself and thus make it popular.

I venture to suggest to the Poet<sup>1</sup> that the clothes I ask him to burn must be and are his. If they had, to his knowledge, belonged to the poor or the ill-clad, he

1. Rabindranath Tagore.

would long ago have restored to the poor what was theirs. In burning my foreign clothes, I burn my shame. I must refuse to insult the naked by giving them clothes they do not need. I will not commit the sin of becoming their patron, but on learning that I had assisted in impoverishing them, I would give them a privileged position and give them neither crumbs nor cast off clothing but the best of my food and clothes, and associate myself with them in work.

Nor is the scheme of Non-co-operation or *Swadeshi* an exclusive doctrine. My modesty has prevented me from declaring from the house-top that the message of Non-co-operation, Non-violence and *Swadeshi* is a message to the world. It must fall flat, if it does not bear fruit in the soil where it has been delivered. At the present moment, India has nothing to share with the world save her degradation, pauperism and plagues. Is it her ancient *Shastras* that we should send to the world? Well, they are printed in many editions, and an incredulous and idolatrous world refuses to look at them because we, the heirs and custodians, do not live them. Before, therefore, I can think of sharing with the world, I must possess. Our non-co-operation is neither with the English, nor with the West. Our non-co-operation is with the system the English have established, with the material civilization and its attendant greed and exploitation of the weak. Our non-co-operation is a refusal to co-operate with the English administrators on their own terms. We say to them 'Come and co-operate with us on our terms, and it will be well for us, for you and the world'. We must refuse to be lifted off our feet. A drowning man cannot save others. In order to be fit to save others, we must try to save ourselves.

Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor aggressive, nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and, therefore, humanitarian. India must learn to live before she can aspire to die for humanity. The mice, which helplessly find themselves between the cat's teeth, acquire no merit from their enforced sacrifice.

True to his poetical instinct, the Poet lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds had their day's food, and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood had flown during the previous night. But I have had the pain of watching birds who for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. It is an indescribably painful state which has to be experienced to be realized. I have found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem—invigorating food. They cannot be given it. They must earn it. And they can earn only by the sweat of their brow.

In these verses is contained for me the whole truth of the spinning wheel as an indispensable sacrament

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।  
 गरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिद्ध्येदकर्मणः ॥  
 यशार्थात् कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।  
 तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसंगः समाचर ॥  
 सहयज्ञा प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।  
 अनेन प्रसविष्यधमेव वोऽस्ति वष्टकमधुक् ॥  
 देवान् भादयातानेन ते देवा भादयन्तु वः ।

परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥  
 इष्टान् भोगान् हि वो देवा दस्त्यन्ते यज्ञभाविता ।  
 तैदत्तानप्रदायैम्यो यो भुक्ते स्तेन एव स ॥  
 यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।  
 भुजते ते त्वघ पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥  
 अन्नाद् भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादम्बसम्भवः ।  
 यज्ञाद् भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥  
 कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भव विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।  
 तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥  
 एव प्रवर्तितं चक्रं भानुवर्तयतीह यः ।  
 अधायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ॥

—गीता, अध्याय ३

for the India of to-day If we will take care of to-day,  
God will take care of the morrow

—*Young India* Oct. 13, 1921.

### XXXVIII

#### CHARKHA IN THE GITA

I HAVE ENDEAVOURED to answer the objection raised by the Poet against spinning as a sacrament to be performed by all. I have done so in all humility and with the desire to convince the Poet and those who think like him. The reader will be interested in knowing that my belief is largely derived from the *Bhagavad Gita*. I have quoted the relevant verses in the article itself. I give below Edwin Arnold's rendering of the verses from his *Song Celestial* for the benefit of those who do not read Sanskrit:

"Work is more **excellent than idleness**;

The body's life proceeds not, lacking work.

There is a task of **holiness to do**,

Unlike world-binding toil, which bindeth not

The faithful soul, such earthly duty do

Free from desire, and thou shalt well perform

The heavenly purpose Spake Prajapati

In the beginning, when all men were made,

And, with mankind, the sacrifice—"Do this

Work Sacrifice' Increase and multiply

With sacrifice' This shall be *Kamadhuk*,

Your 'Cow of Plenty', giving back her milk

Of all abundance Worship the gods thereby,

The gods shall yield ye grace Those meats ye crave

The gods will grant to Labour, when it pays

Tithes in the altar-flame But if one eats

Fruits of the earth, rendering to kindly Heaven

No gift of toil, that thief steals from his world"

Who eat of food after their sacrifice

Are quit of fault, but they that spread a feast

All for themselves, eat sin and drink of sin

By food the living live, food comes of rain

And ram comes by the pious sacrifice,

And sacrifice is paid with tithes of toil,

Thus action is of *Brahma*, who is One,

The Only, All-pervading, at all times

Present in sacrifice He that abstains

To help the rolling wheels of this great world,

Glutting his idle sense, lives a lost life,

Shameful and vain."

**Work here undoubtedly refers to physical labour, and work by way of sacrifice can only be work to be done by all for the common benefit. Such work, such sacrifice can only be spinning I do not wish to suggest, that the author of the Divine Song had the spinning wheel in mind. He merely laid down a fundamental principle of conduct. And reading it and applying it to India, I can only think of spinning as the fittest and most acceptable sacrificial body-labour. I cannot imagine anything nobler or more national than that, for, say, one hour in the day, we should all do the labour that the poor must do, and thus identify ourselves with them**

and through them with all mankind. I cannot imagine better worship of God than that in His name I should labour for the poor even as they do. The spinning wheel spells a more equitable distribution of the riches of the earth

—*Young India* Oct 20. 1921.

### XXXIX

#### REMEDY FOR INDIA'S POVERTY

AN ENGLISH FRIEND sends me a newspaper cutting showing the progress of machinery in China. He has evidently imagined that in advocating hand-spinning I am propagating my ideas about machinery. I am doing nothing of the kind. I would favour the use of the most elaborate machinery, if thereby India's pauperism and resulting idleness be avoided. I have suggested hand-spinning as the only ready means of driving away penury and making famine of work and wealth impossible. The spinning wheel itself is a piece of valuable machinery, and in my own humble way I have tried to secure improvements in it in keeping with the special conditions of India. The only question, therefore, that a lover of India and humanity has to address himself to is how best to devise practical means of alleviating India's wretchedness and misery. No scheme of irrigation or other agricultural improvement that human ingenuity can conceive can deal with the vastly scattered population of India or provide work for masses of mankind who are constantly thrown out of employment. Imagine a nation working only five hours per day on an

average, and this not by choice but by force of circumstances, and you have a realistic picture of India

If the reader would visualize the picture, he must dismiss from his mind the busy fuss of the city life, or the grinding fatigue of the factory life, or the slavery of the plantation. These are but drops in the ocean of Indian humanity. If he would visualize the picture of the Indian skeleton, he must think of the eighty per cent of the population which is working its own fields, and which has practically no occupation for at least four months in the year, and which, therefore, lives on the borderland of starvation. This is the normal condition. The ever recurring famines make a large addition to this enforced idleness. What is the work that these men and women can easily do in their own cottages, so as to supplement their very slender resources? Does anyone still doubt that it is only hand-spinning and nothing else?

—*Young India* Nov 3, 1921.

## XL

### INDIAN ECONOMICS

EVEN THOUGH I AM a layman, I make bold to say that the so-called laws laid down in books on economics are not immutable like the laws of Medes and Persians, nor are they universal. The economics of England are different from those of Germany. Germany enriched herself by bounty-fed beet sugar. England enriched herself by exploiting foreign markets. What was possible for a compact area is not possible for an area 1900 miles long and 1600 broad. The economics of a nation are



determined by its climatic, geological and temperamental conditions. The Indian conditions are different from the English in all these essentials. What is meat for England is, in many cases, poison for India. Beaf tea in the English climate may be good, it is poison for the hot climate of religious India. Fiery whisky in the north of the British Isles may be a necessity, it renders an Indian unfit for work or society. Fur coats in Scotland are indispensable, they will be an intolerable burden in India. Free trade for a country which has become industrial, whose population can and does live in cities, whose people do not mind preying upon other nations and, therefore, sustain the biggest navy to protect their unnatural commerce, may be economically sound (though, as the reader perceives, I question its morality) Free trade for India has proved her curse and held her in bondage

I, therefore, claim for the *Charkha* the honour of being able to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple, inexpensive and business-like manner. The *Charkha*, therefore, is not only not useless, but it is a useful and indispensable article for every home. It is the symbol of the nation's prosperity and, therefore, freedom. It is a symbol not of commercial war but of commercial peace. It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nations of the earth, but of goodwill and self-help. It will not need the protection of a navy threatening a world's peace and exploiting its resources, but it needs the religious determination of millions to spin their yarn in their own homes as to-day they cook their food in their own homes. I may deserve the curses of posterity for many mistakes of omission and commission, but I am confident of earning its bless-

ings for suggesting a revival of the *Charkha*. I stake my all on it. For, every revolution of the wheel spins, peace, good-will and love.

—*Young India*. Dec. 8, 1921.

## XLI

### ABOUT MACHINERY

**Q** ARE YOU AGAINST all machinery?

**A** How can I be when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning wheel itself is a machine, a little tooth-pick is a machine. What I object to, is the *craze* for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. To-day, machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might.<sup>1</sup>

**Q** Then you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today ?

1 "Organization of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few and for the exploitation of many, I hold to be altogether wrong. Much of the organization of machinery of the present age is of that type. The movement of the spinning wheel is an organized attempt to displace machinery from

A. I would unhesitatingly say Yes\ but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be the mere instruments of greed. Then, labourers will not be over-worked and machinery, instead of becoming a hindrance, will be a help I am aiming not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation

It might have to go. But I must make one thing clear The supreme consideration is man The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man For instance, I would make intelligent exception. Take the case of the Singer Sewing Machine It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the sewing machine, in order to save her from unnecessary labour He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine

Q When logically argued out, that would seem to imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go But, in that case, there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Sewing Machines, and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type

A Yes But I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalized, or State-controlled They

that state of exclusiveness and exploitation, and to place it in its proper state Under my scheme, therefore, men in charge of machinery will think not of themselves or even of the nation to which they belong, but of the whole human race Thus, Lancashire men will cease to use their machinery for exploiting India and other countries, but, on the contrary, they will devise means of enabling India to convert in her own villages her cotton into cloth Nor will Americans, under my scheme, seek to enrich themselves by exploiting the other races of the earth through their inventive skill"

—*Young India* Sept 17, 1925

ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit, but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive. It is an alteration in the conditions of labour that I want. This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery. The machine will, under these conditions, be as much a help to the man working it as to the State or the man who owns it. The present mad rush will cease, and the labourer will work (as I have said) under attractive and ideal conditions. This is but one of the exceptions I have in mind. The Singer Sewing Machine had love at its back. The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object and honest humanitarian consideration, and not greed, the motive. Thus, for instance, I would welcome any day a machine to straighten crooked spindles. Not that blacksmiths will cease to make spindles, they will continue to provide the spindles, but when the spindle gets wrong, every spinner will have a machine of his own to get it straight. Therefore, replace greed by love and everything will come right.

**Q.** If you make an exception of the Singer Sewing Machine and your spindle, where would these exceptions end?

**A.** Just where they cease to help the individual and encroach upon his individuality. The machine should not be allowed to cripple the hmb9 of man.

**Q.** Ideally, would you not rule out all machinery? When you except sewing machine, you will have to make exceptions of the bicycle, the motor car, etc.?

**A.** No. I don't, because they do not satisfy any of the

primary wants of man, for, it is not the primary need of man to traverse distances with the rapidity of a motor car. The needle, on the contrary, happens to be an essential thing in life—a primary need. Ideally, however, I would rule out all machinery, even as I would reject this very body, which is not helpful to salvation, and seek the absolute liberation of the soul. From that point of view, I would reject all machinery. But machines will remain because, like the body, they are inevitable. The body itself, as I told you, is the purest piece of mechanism; but if it is a hindrance to the highest flights of the soul, it has to be rejected.

—*Young India* Nov 13, 1924.

## XLII

### INDIA'S POVERTY PROBLEM

DURING MY VISIT to Pun in 1921, I saw many things that I shall not easily forget. But, among them all, there were two that I shall never forget. One of them haunted me day and night.

In those days, Pun had a philanthropic Superintendent of Police. He managed an orphanage. He showed it to me. It had many happy, well-looking, bright children who were engaged in all kinds of industries—mat-weaving, basket-making, spinning, weaving, etc. The Superintendent told me they were all children of famine-stricken parents, some of whom were picked up as mere skin and bone.

He then took me to an open space, in the very shade of the hoary temple, where were arranged in rows the

famine-stricken people who were living within twelve miles of Pun. The life was ebbing away in *them*. They were living pictures of despair. You could count every rib. You could see every artery. There was no muscle, no flesh. Parched, crumpled skin and bone was all you could see. There was no lustre in their eyes. They seemed to want to die. They had no interest in anything save the handful of rice they got. They would not work for money. For love, perhaps. It almost seemed as if they would condescend to eat and live, if you would give them the handful of rice. It is the greatest tragedy I know of—these men and women, our brothers and sisters, dying a slow torturing death. Theirs is an eternal compulsory fast. And as they break it occasionally with rice, they seem to mock us for the life we live.

'Why could they not be kept like the orphans?' I asked the Superintendent. 'They will not work and will not stay there', was the reply. The Superintendent might also have added that he could not accommodate thousands of starving men and women, even if they were ready to work, in an asylum.

There is on the face of the earth no other country that has the problem that India has of chronic starvation and slow death—a process of dehumanization. The solution must, therefore, be original. In trying to find it, we must discover the causes of the tremendous tragedy. These people are starving because there is chronic famine in Orissa due to floods or want of rains. They have no other occupations to fall back upon. They are, therefore, constantly idle. This idleness has persisted for so long that it has become a habit with them. Starvation and idleness are the normal conditions of life for thousands of people in Orissa. But what is true of

Orissa is to a less extent true of many other parts of India.

We may find remedies to prevent flood. That will take years. We may induce people to adopt better methods of cultivation That must take still more years And when we have stopped inundations and have introduced among millions up-to-date cultivation, there will still be plenty of time left with the peasants if they will only work. But these improvements will take generations How are the starving millions to keep the wolf from the door meanwhile? The answer is through the spinning wheel

—*Young India*. Oct 31, 1924

### XLIII

## THE SYMBOL OF NON-VIOLENCE

I GIVE THE FIRST place to the spinning wheel I have heard much against it But I know the time is near when the very thing which is being abused to-day will be worshipped as *Sudarshana Chakra* I am confident that, if we do not take it up voluntary, the force of circumstances will compel us The study of Indian economics is the study of the spinning wheel It is the *sine qua non* for the revival of our languishing village industries I look upon hand-spinning not as an occupation, but as a duty incumbent upon followers of all religious sects and denominations.

An American writer says that the future lies with nations that believe in manual labour. Nations are tired of the worship of lifeless machines multiplied *ad*

*infinitum*. We are destroying the matchless living machines, viz., our own bodies, by leaving them to rust and trying to substitute lifeless machinery for them. It is a law of God that the body must be fully worked and utilized. We dare not ignore it. The spinning wheel is the auspicious symbol of *sharir-yajna*—body labour. He who eats his food without offering this sacrifice steals it. By giving up this sacrifice, we became traitors to the country and banged the door in the face of the Goddess of Fortune. The numerous men and women in India, whose bodies are mere skeletons, bear witness to this. My revered friend Shri Sastriar says I am interfering even in the people's choice of their dress. This is perfectly true. It is the duty of every servant of the nation to do so whenever it becomes necessary. I would certainly raise my voice against it, if the nation takes, say, to the pantaloons. It is wholly unsuited to our climate. It is the duty of every Indian to raise his voice against the nation using foreign cloth. The opposition really is not to the cloth foreign, but to the poverty which its importation brings in its train. If the nation gives up its *jawar* and *bajra* and imports oats from Scotland or rye from Russia, I would certainly intrude into the nation's kitchen, would scold to the full, and even sit *dharna* and make the agony of my soul heard. Such intrusions have happened within recent times. During the late diabolical War in Europe, people were compelled to raise particular crops and the States controlled the food and drink of their subjects.

Those who wish to serve in the villages cannot but take up the study of the spinning wheel. Hundreds and even thousands of young men and women can earn their livelihood by its means and doubly repay the nation for



it This work means organization and familiarity with every villager to whom one could easily impart a rudimentary knowledge of economics and politics. The work might also include the true education of the village children, and give one an insight into the many wants and shortcomings of villages.

My field of labour is clearly defined and it pleases me, I am fascinated by the Law of Love. It is the philosopher's stone for me. I know *Ahimsa* alone can provide remedy for our ills. In my view, the path of non-violence is not the path of the timid or the unmanly. *Ahimsa* is the highest of *Kshatnya Dharma*, as it represents the climax of fearlessness. In it, there is no scope for flight or for defeat. Being a quality of the soul, it is not difficult of attainment. It comes easily to a person who feels the presence of the soul within. I believe that no other path but that of non-violence will suit India. The symbol of that *Dharma* for India is the spinning wheel, as it alone is the friend of the distressed and the giver of plenty for the poor. The Law of Love knows no bounds of space or time. My *Swaraj*, therefore, takes note of *Bhangis*, *Dheds*, *Dublas* and the weakest of the weak, and except the spinning wheel I know no other thing which befriends all these.

—*Young India* Jan. 8, 1925.

## XLIV

### THE POET AND THE CHARKHA

THE POET'S CRITICISM<sup>1</sup> is a poetic licence, and he who

1. The Poet Rabindranath Tagore's criticism of the *Charkha* (Spinning Wheel)

takes it literally is in danger of finding himself in an awkward corner. An ancient poet has said that Solomon arrayed in all his glory was not like one of the lilies of the field. He clearly referred to the natural beauty and innocence of the lily, contrasted with the artificiality of Solomon's glory and his sinfulness in spite of his many good deeds. Or, take the poetical licence in 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven'. We know that no camel has ever passed through the eye of a needle, and we know, too, that rich men like Janaka have entered the Kingdom of Heaven. Or, take the beautiful simile of human teeth being likened 'to the pomegranate seed'. Foolish women, who have taken the poetical exaggeration literally, have been found to disfigure and even harm their teeth. Painters and poets are obliged to exaggerate the proportions of their figures in order to give true perspective. Those, therefore, who take the Poet's denunciation of the *Charkha* literally, will be doing an injustice to the Poet and an injury to themselves.

The Poet does not, he is not expected, he has no need, to read *Young India*. All he knows about the movement is what he has picked up from table talk. He has, therefore, denounced what he has imagined to be the excesses of the *Charkha* cult.

He thinks, for instance, that I want everybody to spin the whole of his or her time to the exclusion of all other activity, that is to say, I want the poet to forsake his muse, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief, and the doctor his lancet. So far is this from truth that I have asked no one to abandon his calling, but, on the contrary, to adorn it by giving every day only thirty

minutes to spinning as sacrifice for the whole nation—I have indeed asked the famishing man or woman, who is idle for want of any work whatsoever, to spin for a living, and the half-starved farmer to spin during his leisure hours to supplement his slender resources. If the Poet span for half an hour daily, his poetry would gain in richness. For, it would then represent the poor man's wants and woes in a more forcible manner than now

The Poet thinks that the *Charkha* is calculated to bring about a death-like sameness in the nation, and thus imagining he would shun it if he could. The truth is that the *Charkha* is intended to realize the essential and living oneness of interest among India's myriads. Behind the magnificent and kaleidoscopic variety, one discovers in Nature a unity of purpose, design and form which is equally unmistakable. No two men are absolutely alike, not even twins, and yet there is much that is indispensably common to all mankind. And behind the commonness of form, there is the same life pervading all. The idea of sameness, or oneness, was carried by Shankara to its utmost logical and natural limit, and he exclaimed that there was only one Truth, one God—*Brahman*, and all form, *noma*, *rupa*, was illusion or illusory, evanescent. We need not debate whether what we see is unreal, and whether the real behind the unreality is what we do not see. Let both be equally real, if you will. All I say is, that there is a sameness, identity or oneness behind the multiplicity and variety. And so do I hold that behind a variety of occupations, there is an indispensable sameness also of occupation. Is not agriculture common to the vast majority of mankind? Even so was spinning common not long ago to a vast

majority of mankind Just as both prince and peasant must eat and clothe themselves, so must both labour for supplying their primary wants. The prince may do so if only by way of symbol and sacrifice, but that much is indispensable for him if he will be true to himself and his people. Europe may not realize this vital necessity at the present moment, because it has made of exploitation of non-European races a religion. But it is a false religion bound to perish in the near future. The non-European races will not for ever allow themselves to be exploited I have endeavoured to show a way out that is peaceful, humane and, therefore, noble. It may be rejected If it is, the alternative is a tug of war, in which each will try to pull down the other. Then, when non-Europeans will seek to exploit the Europeans, the truth of the *Charkha* will have to be realized. Just as, if we are to live, we must breathe not air imported from England nor eat food so imported, so may we not import cloth made in England I do not hesitate to carry the doctrine to its logical limit and say that Bengal dare not import her cloth even from Bombay or from Banga Lakshmi If Bengal will live her natural and free life without exploiting the rest of India or the world outside, she must manufacture her cloth in her own villages as she grows her corn there. Machinery has its place, it has come to stay But it must not be allowed to displace the necessary human labour. An improved plough is a good thing. But if by some chance one man could plough up, by some mechanical invention of his, the whole of the land of India and control all the agricultural produce, and if the millions had no other occupation, they would starve, and being idle, they would become dunces, as many have already become. There is

hourly danger of many more being reduced to that unenviable stage I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine, but I know that it is criminal to displace the hand labour by the introduction of power-driven spindles, unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupation in their homes

The Irish analogy does not take us very far It is perfect in so far as it enables us to realize the necessity of economic co-operation But Indian circumstances being different, the method of working out co-operation is necessarily different. For Indian distress every effort at co-operation has to centre round the *Charkha*, if it is to apply to the majority of the inhabitants of this vast peninsula, 1,900 miles long and 1,500 broad A Sir Gangaram may give us a model farm which can be no model for the penniless Indian farmer, who has hardly two or three acres of land which every day runs the risk of being still further cut up.

Round the *Charkha*, that is amidst the people who have shed their idleness and who have understood the value of co-operation, a national servant would build up a programme of anti-malaria campaign, improved sanitation, settlement of village disputes, conservation and breeding of cattle, and hundreds of other beneficial activities Wherever *Charkha* work is fairly established, all such ameliorative activity is going on according to the capacity of the villagers and the workers concerned.

It is not my purpose to traverse all the Poet's arguments in detail. Where the differences between us are not fundamentalr-and these I have endeavoured to state-there is nothing in the Poet's argument which I cannot endorse and still mamtam my position regarding the

*Charkha*. The many things about the *Charkha* which he has ridiculed I have never said. The merits I have claimed for the *Charkha* remain undamaged by the Poet's battery.

—*Young India*: Nov. 5, 1925.

## XLV

### WHAT KHADDAR STANDS FOR

WHAT *Khaddar* STANDS FOR ? Well, it stands for simplicity, not shoddiness. It sits well on the shoulders of the poor, and it can be made, as it was made in the days of yore, to adorn the bodies of the richest and the most artistic men and women. It is reviving ancient art and crafts. It does not seek to destroy all machinery, but it does regulate its use and check its weedy growth. It uses machinery for the service of the poorest in their own cottages. The wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery.

*Khaddar* delivers the poor from the bonds of the rich and creates a moral and spiritual bond between the classes and the masses. It restores to the poor somewhat of what the rich have taken from them.

*Khaddar* does not displace a single cottage industry. On the contrary, it is being daily recognized that it is becoming the centre of other village industries.

*Khaddar* brings a ray of hope to the widow's broken-up home. But it does not prevent her from earning more, if she can. It prevents no one from seeking a better occupation.

*Khaddar* offers honourable employment to those in

need of some. It utilizes the idle hours of the nation. It cannot put annas into the pockets of the poor without putting rupees into the pockets of some. Whereas those who begin their work in the cities, though they are no doubt doing good work, touch but the fringe of the question. *Khaddar* touches the very centre and, therefore, necessarily includes the rest

The half a dozen modern cities are an excrescence and serve, at the present moment, the evil purpose of draining the life-blood of the villages. *Khaddar* is an attempt to revise and reverse the process and establish better relationship between the cities and the villages. The cities, with their insolent torts, are a constant menace to the life and liberty of the villagers

*Khaddar* has the greatest organizing power in it, because it affects all India. If *Khaddar* rained from heaven, it would be a calamity. But as it can only be manufactured by the willing co-operation of starving millions and thousands of middle class men and women,, its success means the best organization conceivable along peaceful lines. If cooking had to be revived and required the same organization, I should claim for it the same merit that I claim for *Khaddar*

—*Young India*: March 17, 1927.

## XLVI

### DEEP-SEATED DISEASE OF INDIA

ONLY THE OTHER DAY an American friend, Prof. Sam Higginbotham, writing to me upon a subject in which both he and I are deeply interested, said—I give you

the substance of the letter—"I don't believe in religion bereft of economics. Religion, 'to be worth anything', must be capable of being reduced when necessary to terms of economics" I entirely endorse that remark with a big mental reservation. Not that Mr. Higgmbotham also had not that reservation. But I must not claim to speak for him. The mental reservation is this that, whereas religion to be worth anything must be capable of being reduced to terms of economics, economics to be worth anything must also be capable of being reduced to terms of religion or spirituality. Therefore, in this scheme of religion-cum-economics there is no room for exploitation and for Americanization, as the technical term is known. As a distinguished son of India put it—he is no other than Sir M. Vishveshvarayya—whereas an Englishman owns 30 slaves—or is it 36? I speak subject to correction—an American owns 33 slaves. Personally, I think there is no room in true economics, which is convertible with religion, for the owning of slaves whether they are human beings, cattle or machinery. There is no room for slavery in economics. Then, I suggest to you that you cannot escape *Khadi*, and it has the largest limit. Temperance takes in its orbit a certain number of people. It blesses the man who converts the drunkard to teetotalism, and it undoubtedly blesses the drunkard who is so converted by the word of the reformer. Untouchability takes in its orbit, at the most, seven crores of people of this unhappy land, and not every one of us can do untouchability work. You may certainly give the untouchable education; you may dig wells for him and build temples. But these would not make him touchable unless the so-called touchables will come down from their in-



solent heights and brother the untouchable. So, you will see, it is a somewhat complex problem for the man and woman in the street to handle. And as a man whose sole occupation in life is, be it ever so humble, to find out Truth, I was searching for something that everyone can do without exception—everybody in this room—that something which would also remedy the most deep-seated disease of India.

And the most deep-seated disease of India is undoubtedly not drunkenness, undoubtedly not untouchability, great as these diseases are and greater perhaps for those who are suffering from them, but when you examine the numerical content of this disease you will find with me, if you take any census returns or any authentic book on history, such for instance as Sir William Hunter's history, or take the evidence of Mr Higginbotham given before a Commission only two years ago—he said that the largest number of people in India were poverty-stricken, and Sir William Hunter says that one-tenth of the population in India is living barely on one meal a day consisting of a stale *roti* and a pinch of dirty salt which perhaps you and I will not touch—that state of things persists in India to-day. If you were to go into the interior, outside the railway track, you will find, as I have found, that the villages are being reduced to dung-heaps, the villagers are not there—vultures are to be seen—because they could not support themselves, and were reduced to carcasses.

India is suffering from meningitis, and if you will perform the necessary operation and make some return to those starving millions to-day, I say there is nothing but *Khadi* for you. And if, as men spiritually inclined, you will think of those less fortunate than you are, and

who have not even enough to support themselves or clothe themselves, if you will have an indissoluble bond between them and yourselves, I say once more there is nothing for you but *Khadi*. But it jars, and the reason why it jars is that this is a new thing and is a visionary thing, a day-dream as it appears to many. The missionary friend of Vellore, of whom I spoke just now told me at the end of our conversation. "Yes, but can you stem the march of modern progress? Can you put back the hands of the clock, and induce people to take to your *Khadi* and make them work on a mere pittance?" All I could say is that this friend did not know his India. From the Vellore meeting I went to two places, Arcot and Arm. I did not see much of the people there, I assure you, but saw the villagers less well clad than I am. I saw them not in their tens, but in their tens of thousands. They were in their rags, and their wages were practically nil for four months in the year. They gave me of their substance, I was hungrily looking at the thing they gave me. They gave me net pices, they gave me pies.

Come with me to Orissa, to Pun—a holy place and a sanatorium, where you will find soldiers and the Governor's residence during summer months. Within ten miles' radius of Pun, you will see skin and bone. With this very hand I have collected soiled pies from them tied tightly in their rags, and their hands were more paralyzed than mine were at Kolhapur. Talk to them of modern progress. Insult them by taking the name of God before them in vain. They will call you and me fiends, if we talk about God to them. They know if they know any God at all, a God of terror, vengeance a pitiless tyrant. They do not know what love is.

What can you do for them? You will find it difficult to change these delightful sisters (pointing to the ladies present) from their silk *saris* to coarse *Khadi* woven by those paralytic and crude hands *Khadi* is rough. It is too heavy. Silk is soft to be touched and they can wear 9 yards of silk, but they cannot wear 9 yards of *Khadi*. The poor sisters of Onssa have no *sorts*, they are in rags. Yet they have not lost all sense of decency, but, I assure you, we have. We are naked in spite of our clothing and they are clothed in spite of their nakedness. It is because of these that I wander about from place to place, I humour my people, I humour my American friends. I humoured two stripling youths from Harvard. When they wanted my autograph, I said: "No autograph for Americans" We struck a bargain: "I give you my autograph, and you take to *Khadi*". They have promised, and I rely on the word of an American gentleman. Many of them are doing this work—make no mistake about it—and they like it also.

But I cannot be satisfied, not till every man and woman in India is working at his or her wheel. Burn that wheel if you find a better substitute. This is the one and only work which can supply the needs of the millions without disturbing them from their homes. It is a mighty task and I know that I cannot do it. I know also that God can do it. The mightiest and the strongest matter is but a tiny affair for Him, when it pleases Him. He can destroy them all in the twinkling of an eye, as He has destroyed now thousands of homes in Gujarat and as He had destroyed thousands of homes a few years ago in South India. I carry this message of *Khadi* and the spinning wheel with the fullest faith in

God, and, therefore, in His creation, man- You may laugh at me to-day. You may call this a sordid thing. If you like, you may distrust me and say this is some political schemer who has come to place his *Khadi* before us, but he has got many things up his sleeve. You may misinterpret me and my message. You may say 'We are too weak to do these things, and too poor. I know it is possible for you to repel me by your arguments and make me speechless. But I shall not lose faith in you, so long as I cannot lose faith in God. It is impossible for me to lose that faith, and, therefore, I cannot lose faith in the message of *Khadi* and the spinning wheel.

If I have not succeeded in opening out *my* heart to you, and if I have not succeeded in showing to you the rock-bottom spirituality of the message of *Khadi*, I don't think I shall ever succeed in doing so. All I can say is, I mean to succeed. My lips may not deliver the true message. God will do it all, in whose name I have delivered this message to you. God bless you!

[From a speech delivered to the Y. M. C. A., Madras ]

—*Young India* Sept 15, 1927

## XLVII

### THE TRIPLE MESSAGE

To THE MAN or woman who has no other work possible for him or her to do, the spinning wheel says. 'Spin me, and you can find a crust of bread for yourself. That is its economical message.

But it has a cultural message. What is the cultural

message of the spinning wheel? It says to you and to me: 'There are millions on the face of this earth who are not sufficiently provided, and since I am the only instrument that can be placed in the hands of millions of people without taking work away from a single man, will you not spin me for the sake of these millions, and produce an atmosphere of honest industry, self-reliance and hope for all on God's earth?' That is the cultural message, the spinning wheel addresses to all peoples of the earth, no matter to what country, religion or race they belong. And I beg to inform you that slowly but surely this cultural appeal of the spinning wheel is finding a lodgment in the remotest corners of the earth. I know Englishmen, Austrians, Germans, Poles, who have already accepted this appeal of the spinning wheel, and I assure the well-to-do men and women that if they will accept this cultural message of the spinning wheel and try to make at least some part of their clothes for themselves, they will find themselves much taller than they are to-day.

The spinning wheel has a third message, which is metaphorical. It stands for simple life and high thinking. It is a standing rebuke against the modern mad rush for adding material comfort upon comfort, and making life so complicated as to make one doubly unfit for knowing oneself or one's God. It says appealingly every minute of our lives to you and to me: 'Use me and if you unitedly make use of me, small and insignificant though I may appear, you will find in the end that I will become an irresistible force against the mad indiscriminate worship of the curse called Machinery.' The spinning wheel is a standing rebuke to the men and women who go in for all kinds of

fashions and styles, and it tells them: 'Don't for the sake of your country ape the manners and the customs of others which can only do harm to you, and, for Heaven's sake, do not wish to be what everyone cannot be.'

—*Young India*- Dec 8, 1927.

## XLVIII

### THE MACHINERY METHOD

I HOLD THAT THE machinery method is harmful, when the same thing can be done easily by millions of hands not otherwise occupied. It is any day better and safer for the millions spread in the seven hundred thousand villages of India, scattered over an area nineteen hundred miles long and fifteen hundred broad, that they manufacture their clothing in their own villages even as they prepare their own food. These villages cannot retain the freedom they have enjoyed from time immemorial, if they do not control the production of prime necessities of life. Western observers hastily argue from Western conditions that what may be true of them must be true of India, where conditions are different in so many material respects. Application of the laws of economics must vary with varying conditions.

The machinery method is no doubt easy. But it is not necessarily a blessing on that account. The descent to a certain place is easy but dangerous. The method of the hand is a blessing, in the present case at any rate, because it is hard. If the craze for the machinery method continued, it is highly likely that a tune will

come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God- Millions cannot keep themselves fit by games and athletics And why should they exchange the useful, productive, hardy occupations for the useless, unproductive and expensive games and exercises? They are all right today for a change and recreation They will jar upon us when they become a necessary occupation in order that we may have the appetite for eating the food in the production of which we had no hand or part

Lastly, I do not subscribe to the belief that everything old is bad. Truth is old and difficult Untruth has many attractions But I would gladly go back to the very old Golden Age of Truth. Good old brown bread is any day superior to the pasty white bread, which has lost much of its nutritive value in going through the various processes of refinement. The list of old and yet good things can be endlessly multiplied. The spinning wheel is one such thing, at any rate for India

When India becomes self-supporting, self-reliant, and proof against temptations and exploitation, she will cease to be the object of greedy attraction for any Power in the West or the East, and will then feel secure without having to carry the burden of expensive armament Her internal economy will be India's strongest bulwark against aggression

—*Young India*- July 2, 1931.

## XLIX

### A RE-STATEMENT OF FAITH

LET THERE BE NO mistake about my conception of *Swaraj*. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So, at one end you have political independence, at the other, economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is *Dhartna*, i e., religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc, but is superior to them all. You may recognize it by the name of Truth, not the honesty of experience, but the living Truth that pervades everything and will survive all destruction and all transformation. Moral and social uplift may be recognized by the term we are used to, i e, Non-violence. Let us call this the square of *Swaraj*, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue. We cannot achieve this political and economic freedom without Truth and Non-violence in concrete terms, without a living faith in God, and hence moral and social elevation.

By political independence I do not mean an imitation of the British House of Commons, or the Soviet rule of Russia, or the Fascist rule of Italy, or the Nazi rule of Germany. They have systems suited to their genius. We must have ours suited to ours. What that can be is more than I can tell. I have described it as *Rama Raj*, i.e., sovereignty of people based on pure moral authority.

Then, take economic independence. It is not a product of industrialization of the modern or the Western



type Indian economic independence means to me the economic uplift of every individual male and female, by his or her own conscious effort Under that system, all men and women will have enough clothing—not the mere loin cloth, but what we understand by the term necessary articles of clothing—and enough food, including milk and butter which are to-day denied to millions.

This brings me to Socialism Real Socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught. "All land belongs to *Gopal*, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line, and he can, therefore, unmake it "<sup>1</sup> *Gopal* literally means shepherd, it also means God In modern language, it means the State, i e the people That the land to-day does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it

I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the wheel with all its implications Land and all property is his who will work it Unfortunately, the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact.

Let us now see how India came to be utterly impoverished History tells us that the East India Company ruined the cotton manufacture and by all kinds of means made her dependent upon Lancashire for her cloth, the next great necessity of man. It is still the

largest item of import. It thus created a huge army of partially unemployed men and women counted in millions, and gave them no other employment in return. With the destruction of hand-ginning, carding, spinning and weaving to a certain extent, perished the other industries of India's villages. Continuous unemployment has induced in the people a kind of laziness which is most depressing. Thus, whilst the alien rule is undoubtedly responsible for the growing pauperism of the people, we are more responsible for it. If the middle class people, who betrayed their trust and bartered away the economic independence of India for a mess of pottage, would now realize their error and take the message of the wheel to the villagers and induce them to shed their laziness and work at the wheel, we can ameliorate the condition of the people to a great extent. It would be a terrible thing if laziness replaces industry and despair triumphs over hope.

The only way I know to prevent such a catastrophe is for the 35 crore<sup>9</sup> to be industrious and wise. This they can only be, if they will take up the spinning wheel and the other village industries. They will not take to them unintelligently. I can tell you from experience that the effort means adult education of the correct type, and requires possession of patience, moral fibre, and a scientific and practical knowledge of the industry the worker seeks to introduce in the village of his choice.

In such a scheme, the spinning wheel becomes its centre. If you call it the solar system, the wheel becomes the golden disc and the industries the planets revolving round it in obedience to the inviolable law of the system. When the Sun lost its illuminating power

by the action of the East India Company, the planets lost their power and became invisible or almost so. The Sun is being reinstated in his past status now, and the planets are regaining their motion in exact proportion to the strength of the Sun

The *Charkha*, understood intelligently, can spin not only economic salvation but can also revolutionize our minds and hearts, and demonstrate to us that the non-violent approach to *Swaraj* is the safest and the easiest. Though the progress may seem slow, it will prove quickest in the long run

—*Harijan* Jan. 2, 1937.

## L

### WHAT IT MEANS

THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT India can be freed and her freedom retained only through non-violence, will surely believe that non-violence on a mass scale can only be observed by the masses being usefully and knowingly occupied for the sake of the country. What is that one thing which all can do easily without any capital worth the name and which in itself is calculated to soothe the nervous system? The answer will unequivocally be hand-spinning and its anterior processes. And it is indigenous to the soil. Millions can easily learn it, and its output is always current com. If there were no mills, yarn would be as much valued as, say, *ghee*. Famine of yarn would be as much felt as that of staples. If the people have the will, they can produce their cloth without much labour\*

In the States of Europe, where war is a recognized institution, adult males are conscripted for military service for a given number of years. In a country that wants to defend itself and regulate its life without war preparation, people have to be conscripted for productive national service. If a country's vital requirements are produced through a centralized industry, it will find it necessary to guard them even as a capitalist guards his treasures. A country, whose culture is based on non-violence, will find it necessary to have every home as much self-contained as possible. Indian society was at one time unknowingly constituted on a non-violent basis. The home life, i e, the village, was undisturbed by the periodical visitations from barbarous hordes.<sup>1</sup> Mayne has shown that India's villages were a congeries of republics. In them there were no ladies and gentlemen, or all were

Unless this argument is accepted, I hold it to be impossible to establish non-violence that will be proof against temptation, and that will stand true no matter how heavy the odds may be against it.

—*Harijan* December 9, 1939.

<sup>1</sup> "I suggest that, if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralize many things. Centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Simple homes, from which there is nothing to take away, require no policing, the palaces of the rich must have strong guards to protect them against dacoity. So must huge factories. Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well equipped with military, naval and air forces."

—*Harijan*

'Dec 30, 1939

## LI

### THE CHARKHA

MY MISSION IS TO convert every Indian, whether he is a Hindu, Muslim or any other, even Englishman and finally the world, to non-violence for regulating mutual relations whether political, economic, social or religious. If I am accused of being too ambitious, I should plead guilty. If I am told that my dream can never materialize, I would answer "that is possible", and go my way. I am a seasoned soldier of non-violence, and I have evidence enough to sustain my faith. Whether, therefore, I have one comrade or more or none, I must continue my experiment.

I am enunciating no new ideas here. They are to be found in *Indian Home Rule (Hind Swaraj)* which was written in 1908 when the technique of *Satyagraha* was still in process of formation. The *Charkha* had become part of this programme of love. As I was picturing life based on non-violence, I saw that it must be reduced to the simplest terms consistent with high thinking. Food and raiment will always remain the prime necessities of life. Life itself becomes impossible, if these two are not assured. For non-violent defence, therefore, society has to be so constructed that its members may be able, as far as possible, to look after themselves in the face of an invasion from without or disturbances within. Just as a domestic kitchen is the easiest thing in such circumstances, the takli or at most the spinning wheel and the loom are the simplest possessions for the manufacture of cloth. Society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled

in villages in which voluntary co-operation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence. A society, which anticipates and provides for meeting violence with violence, will either lead a precarious life or create big cities and magazines for defence purposes. It is not unreasonable to presume from the state of Europe that its cities, its monster factories and huge armaments are so intimately interrelated that the one cannot exist without the other. The nearest approach to civilization based upon non-violence is the erstwhile village republic of India. I admit that it was very crude. I know that there was in it no non-violence of my definition and conception. But the germ was there.

It is from that germ that I have developed the technique of non-violence. If the *Charkha* can bear the ample interpretation I have put upon it, it becomes the most effective weapon in the armoury of *Satyagraha*. The weak thread from the wheel binds the millions in an unbreakable cord. One yard of the thread may be useless, but millions of unending threads, spun by willing and knowing hands, will make a cord strong enough to bear any strain that may be put upon it. But between 1908 and 1914, the idea remained dormant. The whole scheme was conceived for India. Nevertheless, the spirit of it was worked out even in South Africa. The life of the *Satyagrahis* there was reduced to simplest terms. Whether barristers or others, they learnt the dignity of labour. They accepted voluntary poverty as their lot in life and identified themselves with the poor. On my arrival in India, I began single-handed to work for revival of the *Charkha*. In 1921, *Khadi* became one of the chief items of the constructive programme of the Congress. The *Charkha* occupied

the centre of the Congress flag with its vital connection with non-violence. I am, therefore, to-day saying nothing new. But, as has often happened, people have passed by what I have said, until they have been compelled to take action

—*Harijan* Jan. 13, 1940.

## LII

### SOCIAL ORDER OF THE FUTURE

IF I CAN CONVERT the country to my point of view, the social order of the future will be based predominantly on the *Charkha* and all it implies. It will include everything that promotes the well-being of the villagers. It will not exclude the industries, mentioned by my correspondent, so long as they do not smother the villages and village life. I do visualize electricity, ship-building, iron-works, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of dependence will be reversed. Hitherto, the industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the villages and village-crafts. In the State of the future, it will subserve the villages and their crafts.

I do not share the Socialist belief that centralization of the necessities of life will conduce to the common welfare when the centralized industries are planned and owned by the State. The Socialistic conception of the West was born in an environment reeking with violence. The motive lying behind the Western type and the Eastern is the same—the greatest welfare of the whole society and the abolition of the hideous inequali-

ties, resulting in the existence of millions of 'have-nots' and a handful of 'haves' I believe that this end can be achieved only when non-violence is accepted by the best mind of the world as, the basis on which a just social order is to be constructed.

I hold that the coming into power of the proletariat through violence is bound to fail in the end. What is gained by violence must be lost before superior violence. India is within an ace of achieving the end, if only Congressmen will be true to their creed of non-violence and live up to it. The working of the Constructive Programme is the test. Thirty-four years of continuous experience and experimenting in Truth and Non-violence cannot be sustained, unless it is linked to conscious body-labour and finds expression in our daily contact with our neighbours. This is the Constructive Programme. It is not an end, it is an indispensable means and, therefore, is almost convertible with the end. The power of non-violent resistance can only come from honest working of the Constructive Programme<sup>1</sup>

—*Harijan* Jan 27, 1940

iThe Constructive Programme consists of the following items  
 1 Communal Unity, 2 Removal of Untouchability, 3 Prohibition,  
 4 Khadi, 5 Other Village Industries, 6 Village Sanitation, 7 Basic  
 Education, 8. Adult Education, 9 Women, 10 Education in Health  
 and Hygiene, 11 Provincial Languages, 12 National Language,  
 13 Economic Equity, 14 Kisans, 15 Labour, 16. Adivasis,  
 17 Lepers, 18. Students.—*Ed*



## CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME IS the truthful and non-violent way of winning *Purna Swam?*. Its wholesale fulfilment is complete Independence. Imagine all the forty crores of people busying themselves with the whole of the Constructive Programme, which is designed to build up the nation from the very bottom upward<sup>1</sup>. Can anybody dispute the proposition that it must mean complete Independence in every sense of the expression, including the ousting of foreign domination? When the critics laugh at the propositions, what they mean is that forty crores of people will never co-operate in the effort to fulfil the programme. No doubt, there is considerable truth in the scoff. My answer is, it is still worth the attempt. Given an indomitable will on the part of a band of earnest workers, the programme is as workable as any other, and more so than most. Anyway, I have no substitute for it, if it is to be based on non-violence.

Civil Disobedience, mass or individual, is an aid to constructive effort and is a full substitute for armed revolt. Training is necessary as well for Civil Disobedience as for armed revolt. Only the ways are

<sup>1</sup> "The true building up of *Swaraj* consists in the millions of India wholeheartedly working out the Constructive Programme. Without it, the whole nation cannot rise from its age-long torpor. Whether the British remain or not, it is our duty always to wipe out unemployment, to bridge the gulf between rich and poor, to banish communal strife, to exorcize the demon of untouchability, to reform dacoits and save the people from them. If crores of people do not take a living interest in this nation-building work, freedom must remain a dream and unattainable by either non-violence or violence."

different. Action in either case takes place only when occasion demands. Training for military revolt means learning the use of arms, ending perhaps in the Atomic Bombs. For Civil Disobedience, it means the Constructive Programme.

The Constructive Programme may otherwise and more fittingly be called construction of *Pinna Swaraj* or complete Independence by truthful and non-violent means.

Effort for construction of Independence so called, through violent and, therefore, necessarily untruthful means, we know only too painfully. Look at the daily destruction of property, life and truth in the present War.

Complete Independence through Truth and Non-violence means the independence of every unit, be it the humblest of the nation, without distinction of race, colour or creed. This Independence is never exclusive. It is, therefore, wholly compatible with inter-dependence within or without. Practice will always fall short of the theory, even as the drawn line falls short of the theoretical line of Euclid. Therefore, complete Independence will be complete only to the extent of our approach in practice to Truth and Non-violence.

Let the reader mentally plan out the whole of the Constructive Programme, and he will agree with me that, if it could be successfully worked out, the end of it would be the Independence we want.

On the other hand, there is no such thing as an imaginary or even perfect definition of Independence through violence. For, it presupposes only ascendancy of that party of the nation which makes the most effective use of violence. In it, perfect equality, economic or otherwise, is inconceivable.

But, for my purpose, which is to convince the reader of the necessity of following out the Constructive Programme in the non-violent effort, the acceptance of my argument about the ineffectiveness of violence for the attainment of Independence is not required. The reader is welcome to the belief that Independence of the humblest unit is possible under a scheme of violence, if this effort enables him also to admit that it is a certainty through the complete execution of the programme by the nation.

—*Constructive Programme* (1945 Edition) Pp. 5 & 7

## LIV

### SWARAJ OF MY DREAM

FIRM BELIEF THAT ONLY through the spinning wheel and its allied activities could India become a non-violent country prompted the foundation of the AIS A<sup>1</sup> I believed and still believe that if India could attain *Purna Swanaj* by means of the spinning wheel, she would show the way of salvation to the entire world. This conviction could not be brought home by word of mouth only, hence the *Charkha Sangh*. It was hoped that through it the message could penetrate into every village and every home in our country, and that thereby we would be able to show to the world how a non-violent society could be built on the basis of the spinning wheel.

The *Charkha* holds within it a philosophy of life. It is a living symbol of *Ahimsa*. Its goal is to create a non-violent society completely free from all forms of exploitation. If a true awakening had been created

<sup>1</sup> All-India Spinners' Association (Charkha Sangh)

in its seven lakhs of villages, the whole of India would to-day be under self-rule or Home Rule.

Many have taken to the wheel simply because of their faith in me. But I want this faith to be linked with knowledge which can withstand any onslaught. Understanding faith makes the intellect keen. If we are able to understand the strength and effectiveness of non-violence and can cultivate a deep and abiding faith in it, we shall be able to prove to the whole world that it is the greatest living force. Under its influence it is impossible for anyone to remain inactive, just as it is impossible for darkness to prevail in the presence of light. Therefore, if the *Charkha Sangh* is to come up to the expectation, every worker in it must be a living example of *Ahimsa*. Every action of his must be governed by it. His body must be healthy, his mind clear. And if he can order his life thus, the villagers will make the spinning wheel their own without difficulty and communal and class consciousness, untouchability and other evils will disappear like darkness before dawn.

I must confess that I have not, up till now, laid enough emphasis on the fact that the *Charkha* is a symbol of non-violence. But it is never too late to mend. I want to make it clear that mechanized industry neither is going to bring India freedom nor peace and equality. In such an India, the 40 crores can never be happy. The many will be exploited for the benefit of the few. The *Swarnaj*, that will give strength and bring well-being to the suffering humanity of India, is the non-violent *Swaraj* of my dreams through the *Charkha*.

'—*Swaraj Through Charkha*: p. 1.

## WHAT KHADI MENTALITY MEANS

MANY PEOPLE THINK THAT in advocating *Khadi* I am sailing against a head wind and am sure to sink the ship of *Sumaj*, and that I am taking the country to the dark ages. Here I want to show what every Congressman, and for that matter every Indian, can do to advance the cause of *Khadi*. It connotes the beginning of economic freedom and equality of all in the country. The proof of the pudding is in the eating'. Let everyone try, and he or she will find out for himself or herself the truth of what I am saying. *Khadi* must be taken with all its implications. It means a wholesale *Swadeshi* mentality, a determination to find all the necessities of life in India and that, too, through the labour and intellect of the villagers. That means a reversal of the existing process. That is to say that, instead of half a dozen cities of India and Great Britain living on the exploitation and the ruin of the 700,000 villages of India, the latter will be largely self-contained, and will voluntarily serve the cities of India and even the outside world, in so far as it benefits both the parties.

This needs a revolutionary change in the mentality and tastes of many. Easy though the non-violent way is in many respects, it is very difficult in many others. It vitally touches the life of every single Indian, makes him feel aglow with the possession of a power that has lain hidden within himself, and makes him proud of his identity with every drop of the ocean of Indian humanity. This non-violence is not the inanity for which we have mistaken it through all these long ages;

it is the most potent force as yet known to mankind and on which its very existence is dependent. It is that farce which I have tried to present to the Congress and through it to the world. *Khadi*, to me, is the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, of its economic freedom and equality and, therefore, ultimately, in the poetic expression of Jawaharlal Nehru, 'the livery of India's freedom'.

Moreover, *Khadi* mentality means decentralization of the production and distribution of the necessities of life. Therefore, the formula so far evolved is, every village to produce all its necessities and, a certain percentage in addition for the requirements of the cities

Heavy industries will needs be centralized and nationalized. But they will occupy the least part of the vast national activity, which will mainly be in the villages

—*Constructive Programme* (1945 Edition) p. 11.

## LVI

### TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

THERE ARE TWO SCHOOLS of thought current in the world. One wants to divide the world into cities and the other into villages. The village civilization and the city civilization are totally different things. One depends on machinery and industrialization, and the other on handicrafts. We have given preference to the latter.

After all, this industrialization and large scale production are only of comparatively recent growth. We don't know how far it has contributed to the development of our happiness, but we know this much that it

s—9

has brought in its wake the recent world wars. This Second World War is not still over, and even if it comes to an end, we are hearing of a Third World War. Our country was never so unhappy and miserable as it is at present. City people may be getting big profits and good wages, but all that has become possible by sucking the blood of villages. We don't want to collect lakhs and crores. We don't always want to depend on money for our work. If we are prepared to sacrifice our lives for the cause, money is nothing. We must have faith and we must be true to ourselves. If we have these, we shall be able by decentralizing our capital of Rs. 30 lakhs in villages to create national wealth amounting to Rs. 300 crores. To do that mammoth thing, what is necessary is to make the villages self-sufficient and self-reliant. But mind you, my idea of self-sufficiency is not a narrow one. There is no scope for selfishness and arrogance in my self-sufficiency.

I am not preaching isolation. We have to be humble as the dust for the fulfilment of our cause. We have to mix with people even as sugar mixes itself with milk. Though villagers will be self-sufficient so far as it is possible, they will devote their time also to their intellectual development for creation of consciousness for the contemplated non-violent society of the future.

*Hindustan Standard* December 6, 1944.

## LVII

### VILLAGE WORK

THE REAL WORK LIES in the villages. The centre of the village worker's life will be the spinning wheel. We

have not yet sufficiently realized that hand-spinning is a supplementary industry of universal application and scope in India. The idea at the back of *Khadi* is that it is an industry supplementary to agriculture and co-extensive with it. The spinning wheel cannot be said to have been established in its own proper place in our life, until we can banish idleness from our villages and make every village home a busy hive. The unemployment and idleness of millions must lead to a bloody strife. *Khadi* is the only alternative to this and not the so-called Socialism, which presupposes industrialism. This Socialism that India can assimilate is the Socialism of the spinning wheel. Let the village worker, therefore, make the wheel the central point of his activity.

The worker will not only be spinning regularly, but will be working for his bread with the adze or the spade or the last, as the case may be. All his hours, minus the eight hours of sleep and rest, will be fully occupied with some work. He will have no time to waste. He will allow himself no laziness, and allow others none. His life will be a constant lesson to his neighbours in ceaseless and joy-giving industry. Bodily sustenance should come from bodily labour, and intellectual labour is necessary for the culture of the mind. Division of labour there will necessarily be, but it will be a division into various species of bodily labour and not a division into intellectual labour to be confined to one class and bodily labour to be confined to another class. Our compulsory or voluntary idleness has to go, if it does not go, no panacea will be of any avail and semi-starvation will remain the eternal problem that it is. He who eats two grams must produce four. Unless the law is accepted as universal, no amount of reduction in population



would serve to solve the problem. If the law is accepted and observed, we have room enough to accommodate millions more to come

The village worker will thus be a living embodiment of industry. He will master all the processes of *Khadi*, from cotton-sowing and picking to weaving, and will devote all his thought to perfecting them. If he treats it as a science it would not jar on him, but he will derive fresh joy from it everyday, as he realizes more and more its great possibilities. If he will go to the villages as a teacher, he will go there no less as a learner. He will soon find that he has much to learn from the simple villagers. He will enter into every detail of village life, he will discover the village handicrafts and investigate the possibilities of their growth and their improvement. He may find the villagers completely apathetic to the message of *Khadi*, but he will, by his life of service, compel interest and attention. Of course, he will not forget his limitations and will not engage in, for him, the futile task of solving the problem of agricultural indebtedness.

Sanitation and hygiene will engage a good part of his attention. His home and his surroundings will not only be a model of cleanliness, but he will help to promote sanitation in the whole village by taking the broom and the basket round.

He will not attempt to set up a village dispensary or to become the village doctor. These are traps which must be avoided. I happened, during my Harijan tour, to come across a village where one of our workers, who should have known better, had built a pretentious building in which he had housed a dispensary and was distributing free medicine to the villages around. In

fact, the medicines were being taken from home to home by volunteers and the dispensary was described as boasting a register of 1,200 patients a month! I had naturally to criticize this severely. That was not the way to do village work, I told him. His duty was to inculcate lessons of hygiene and sanitation in the village folk, and thus to show them the way of preventing illness, rather than attempt to cure them. I asked him to leave the palace-like building and to hire it out to the Local Board and to settle in thatched huts. All that one need stock in the way of drugs is quinine, castor oil and iodine and the like. The worker should concentrate more on helping people realize the value of personal and village cleanliness and maintaining it at all cost.

Then, he will interest himself in the welfare of the village Harijans. His home will be open to them. In fact, they will turn to him naturally for help in their troubles and difficulties. If the village-folk will not suffer him to have the Harijan friends in his house situated in their midst, he must take up his residence in the Harijan quarters.

A word about the knowledge of the alphabet. It has its place, but I should warn you against a misplaced emphasis on it. Do not proceed on the assumption that you cannot proceed with rural instruction without first teaching the children or adults how to read and write. Lots of useful information on current affairs, history, geography and elementary arithmetic, can be given by word of mouth before the alphabet is touched. The eyes, the ears and the tongue come before the hand. Reading comes before writing, and drawing before tracing the letters of the alphabet. If this natural method is followed, the understanding of the children will have a

much better opportunity of development than when it is under check by beginning the children's training with the alphabet.

The worker's life will be in tune with the village life. He will not pose as a litterateur buried in his books, loath to listen to details of humdrum life. On the contrary, the people whenever they see him, will find him busy with his tools—spinning wheel, loom, adze, spade, etc—and always responsive to their meanest inquiries. He will always insist on working for his bread. God has given to everyone the capacity of producing more than his daily needs and, if he will only use his resourcefulness, he will not be in want of an occupation suited to his capacities, however poor they may be. It is more likely than not that the people will gladly maintain him, but it is not improbable that in some places he may be given a cold shoulder. He will still plod on. It is likely that in some villages he may be boycotted for his pro-Harijan, proclivities. Let him, in that case, approach the Harijans and look to them to provide him with food. The labourer is always worthy of his hire and, if he conscientiously serves them, let him not hesitate to accept his food from the Harijans, always provided that he gives more than he takes. In the very early stages, of course, he will draw his meagre allowance from a central fund where such is possible.

—*Harijan*. August 31, 1934.

# REVIVAL OF THE VILLAGE

**Q.** Is your aim just humanitarian in sitting down in the village, just serving the villagers as best you can?

**A.** I am here to serve no one else but myself, to find my own self-realization through the service of these village-folk. Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour, simply because of the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. And this cannot be done except through one's country. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, so resourceless, so inert that I must concentrate on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in a Himalayan cave, I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity.

**Q.** But some comforts may be necessary even for man's spiritual advancement. One cannot advance himself by identifying himself with the discomfort and squalor of the villager?

**A.** A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary, but, above a certain level, it becomes a hindrance instead of help. Therefore, the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare. The satisfac-

tion of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must meet at a certain point a dead stop, before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness. A man must arrange his physical and cultural circumstances so that they do not hinder him in his service of humanity, on which all his energies should be concentrated.

**Q** What then is the secret of your concentration on the village?

**A.** I have been saying that if untouchability stays, Hinduism goes, even so I would say that if the village perishes, India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers, as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only, they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.

—*Harijan*. August 29, 1936

## LIX

### UNDER NON-VIOLENT SWARAJ

**I**N *Swaraj* BASED ON *Ahimsa* people need not know their rights, but it is necessary for them to know their duties. There is no duty but creates a corresponding

right, and those only are true rights which flow from a due performance of one's duties. Hence, rights of true citizenship accrue only to those who serve the State to which they belong. And they alone can do justice to the rights that accrue to them. Everyone possesses the right to tell lies or resort to *goondaism*. But the exercise of such a right is harmful, both to the exerciser and society. But to him, who observes Truth and Non-violence, comes prestige, and prestige brings rights. And people who obtain rights as a result of performance of duty, exercise them only for the service of society, never for themselves. *Swaraj* of a people means the sum-total of the *Swaraj* (self-rule) of individuals. And such *Swamj* comes only from performance by individuals of their duty as citizens. In it, no one thinks of his rights. They come, when they are needed, for better performance of duty.

Men or women, who would go to the villages, would tell the village people that it would be their duty to keep their villages clean and make them self-supporting. They must not expect the *Swaraj* Government to do these things for them. Our villages are on the verge of destruction owing to the disappearance of village industries. They can be revived only by a revival of village industries. Among these industries, the spinning wheel occupies the centre. The others easily arrange themselves around the wheel. Thus, everybody will learn the value of industry, and if all will engage in industries conducive to the welfare of the State, several lakhs of rupees will be saved for the people by the people. And it can be shown that by putting into practice the ideal of self-help and self-sufficiency, they will have to pay the lowest taxes and realize a greater degree of

happiness in the sum than is possible under any other system. Those who labour for the State pay their taxes just as much as those that pay them in coin. Coins are but a measure of labour performed. They have no other value. If I buy a rupee worth of flour, I have paid for the labour of cultivation, carrying and grinding. Therefore, the real owner of wealth is one who puts in a certain amount of labour with a conscious productive aim. It is the same thing whether I pay the State one rupee or its equivalent for labour as tax. Often, it will be found that payment in labour is of greater value to the State than payment in coin. Payment in labour invigorates the nation. Where people perform labour voluntarily for the service of society, exchange of money becomes unnecessary. The labour of collecting the taxes and keeping accounts is saved and the results are equally good.

Under responsible government everyone, from the king to the poorest citizen, must prosper. Under *Swaraj* based on non-violence, nobody is anybody's enemy, everybody contributes his or her due quota to the common goal, all can read and write, and their knowledge keeps growing from day to day. Sickness and disease are reduced to the minimum. No one is a pauper, and labour can always find employment. There is no place under such a government for gambling, drinking and immorality or for class hatred. The rich will use their riches wisely and usefully, and not squander them in increasing their pomp and worldly pleasures. It should not happen that a handful of rich people should live in jewelled palaces and the millions in miserable hovels, devoid of sunlight or ventilation.

Hindu-Muslim differences, untouchability, vertical

differences between high and low, these must not be. In non-violent *Swaraj*, there can be no more encroachment upon just rights; contrariwise, no one can possess unjust rights. In a well-organized State, usurpation should be an impossibility and it should be unnecessary to resort to force for dispossessing a usurper.

—*Harijan*. March 25, 1939.

## LX

### MY IDEA OF VILLAGE SWARAJ

MY IDEA OF Village *Swaraj* is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet inter-dependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus, every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then, if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding *ganja*, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own water-works ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory upto the final basic course. As far as possible, every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have to-day with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of *Satyagraha* and Non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards



who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by the *Panchayat*<sup>1</sup> of five persons annually elected by the villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this *Panchayat* will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic to-day without much interference. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre, if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The Law of Non-violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For, the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour.

There is nothing inherently impossible in the picture drawn here. To model such a village may be the work of a life-time. Any lover of true democracy and village life can take up a village, treat it as his world and sole work, and he will find good results. He begins by being the village scavenger, spinner, watchman,

<sup>1</sup> "*Panchayat* has an ancient flavour, it is a good word. It literally means an assembly of five elected by villagers. It represents the system, by which the innumerable village republics of India were governed. But the British Government, by its ruthlessly thorough method of revenue collection, almost destroyed these ancient republics, which could not stand the shock of this revenue collection."

—*Young India* May 28, 1931

medicine man and school-master all at once If nobody comes near him, he will be satisfied with scavenging and spinning.

—*Harijan*: July 26, 1942

## LXI

### RECONSTRUCTION OF THE VILLAGES

THE VILLAGERS SHOULD DEVELOP such a high degree of skill that articles prepared by them should command a ready market outside When our villages are fully developed, there will be no dearth in them of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In short, there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the village To-day the villages are dung heaps. To-morrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden, where dwell highly intelligent folk whom no one can deceive or exploit

The reconstruction of the villages along these lines should begin right now That might necessitate some modification of the scheme The reconstruction of the villages should not be organized on a temporary but permanent basis.

Craft, art, health and education should all be integrated into one scheme *Nayt Talim* is a beautiful blend of all the four and covers the whole education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death Therefore, I would not divide village uplift work into water-tight compartments from the very be-

ginning, but undertake an activity which will combine all four. Instead of regarding craft and industry as different from education, I will regard the former as the medium for the latter. *Nayi Talim*, therefore, ought to be integrated into the scheme.

—*Harijan* Nov 10, 1946

## LXII

### MY PICTURE OF INDEPENDENCE

INDEPENDENCE MUST BEGIN at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or *Panchayat* having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on the willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

This society must naturally be based on Truth and Non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God, meaning a self-existent, all-knowing, living Force which inheres every other force known to the world, and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceiv-

ably perish or cease to act, I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing, living Light

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be an ever-widening, never-ascending circle. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the rest or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

In this picture, every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree, whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots, which are deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it.

In this, there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine can be. I have thought of Singer's Sewing Machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture.

—*Harijan* July 28, 1946.

### LXIII

#### BACK TO VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

IT IS SAID THAT through highly industrialized processes every American owns what is equivalent of 36 slaves. If we use America as our model, and if we allowed only 30 slaves to every Indian instead of 36, out of our 31 crores of human beings, 30 crores must perform *hart-km* or be killed off. I know that some enthusiastic patriots will not only not mind such a process, but they will welcome it. They will say that it is better to have one crore of happy, contented, prosperous Indians, armed to the teeth, than to have 30 crores of unarmed creatures who can hardly walk. I have no answer to that philosophy, because, being saturated with the Harijan mentality, I can only think in terms of the millions of villagers and can only make my happiness dependent upon that of the poorest amongst them, and want to live only if they can live. My very simple mind cannot go beyond the little spindle of the little wheel which

**I can carry about with me from place to place, and which I can manufacture without difficulty In this connection, a friend sends me the following paragraph which is going round the Press**

"To relieve unemployment in certain industries, the Nazis have ordered the stoppage of the use of machines which were displacing human labour Commenting on this interdiction, *The Manchester Guardian* remarks 'There has been a great deal of discussion about the effects of machinery in aggravating the unemployment crisis, but it has been left to the Nazis to do the logical thing and stop using it It is only a little while since the world was asked to admire the miraculous triumph of labour-saving rationalization in Germany Now the Government is bent on fighting the machine, either by prohibiting its use or by compelling employers to work shorter hours and employ more men Mr Gandhi's efforts to replace the spinning frame by the hand-wheel and the mechanical loom by the hand-loom are being paralleled closely in the German agar and glass industries' "

***The Guardian* concludes its remarks by observing that, if Germany's 'ethics become mediaeval, there is no reason why her economics should not become mediaeval also' Replying to these comments, a correspondent writes in *The Guardian***

'Hitler, Gandhi and others, who in different ways are endeavouring to slow production to a point at which all goods are consumed, may be reverting to mediaeval methods, but handicrafts are neither retrograde nor barbaric They are taught in every progressive elementary and secondary school Unless unemployment is abolished within a reasonable time, even by means that appear novel and unorthodox, then the machinery age will disappear in revolutions and wars that will destroy us all So long as machinery promotes the happiness and the prosperity of the masses as well as the classes, it is a beneficent agent But **when** it leads to the unemployment and starvation of millions, as is happening in the highly industrialized countries of the

West, it becomes a curse Machinery exists for man, and not *vice versa*, and must be made subservient to the well-being of the people and should not be allowed to become their master"

That the village industries in Germany are being revived at the point of the sword is not relevant here What is relevant is that a country, which has shown the highest technical skill and is amongst the most advanced in the matter of industrialization, is trying to go back to village industries for solving the problem of her terrible unemployment

—*Harijan* Oct 27, 1933

## LXIV

### ABOUT MECHANIZATION

THE VILLAGERS LIVE a lifeless life Their life is a process of slow starvation They are burdened with debts The money-lender lends because he cannot do otherwise He will lose all, if he does not This system of village lending baffles investigation Our knowledge of it is superficial, in spite of elaborate inquiries

Extinction of village industries would complete the rum of the 700,000 villages of India

Advice has been given to me that I must look for salvation in the direction of using the powers of Nature that the inventive brain of man has brought under subjection. The critics say that water, air, oil and electricity should be fully utilized as they are being utilized in the go-ahead West They say that Control

over these hidden powers of Nature enables every American to have 33 slaves

Repeat the process in India, and I dare say that it will thirty-three times enslave every inhabitant of this land, instead of giving everyone thirty-three slaves.

Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. I may not use a plough for digging a few square yards of a plot of land. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabitants of our villages. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year. Strange as it may appear, every mill generally is a menace to the villagers. I have not worked out the figures, but I am quite safe in saying that every mill-hand does the work of at least ten labourers doing the same work in their villages. In other words, he earns more than he did in his village at the expense of ten fellow-villagers. Thus, spinning and weaving mills have deprived the villagers of a substantial means of livelihood. It is no answer in reply to say that they turn out cheaper, better cloth, if they do so at all. For, if they have displaced thousands of workers, the cheapest mill cloth is dearer than the dearest *Khadi* woven in the villages. Coal is not dear for the coal-miner who can use it there and then, nor is *Khadi* dear for the villager who manufactures his own *Khadi*. But if the cloth manufactured in mills displaces village hands, rice mills and flour mills not only displace thousands of poor women workers but damage the health of the whole population in the bargain. Where people have no objection to taking flesh diet



and can afford it, white flour and polished rice may do no harm, but in India, where millions can get no flesh diet even when they have no objection to eating it if they can get it, it is sinful to deprive them of nutritious and vital elements contained in whole wheat meal and unpolished rice. It is time medical men and others combined to instruct the people on the danger attendant upon the use of white flour and polished rice.

I have drawn attention to some broad glaring facts to show that the way to take work to the villagers is not through mechanization, but that it lies through revival of the industries they have hitherto followed.

A critic objects that the ancient plan is purely individualistic and can never bring about corporate effort. This view appears to me to be very superficial. Though articles may be manufactured by villagers in their cottages, they can be pooled together and profits divided. The villagers may work under supervision and according to plan. The raw material may be supplied from common stock. If the will to co-operative effort is created, there is surely ample opportunity for co-operation, division of labour, saving of time, and efficiency of work.

But *Khadi* is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support *Khadi* in return for the heat and the sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, *Khadi* could not make further progress. For villages to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points.

I know that there is a school of thought that does **not**

regard *Khadi* as an economic proposition at all I hope that they will not be scared by my having mentioned *Khadi* as the centre of village activities. I could not complete the picture of my mind without showing the inter-relation between *Khadi* and the other village industries Those who do not see it are welcome only to concentrate their effort on the other industries

—*Harijan* Nov 16, 1934

## LXV

### VILLAGE INDUSTRIES SCHEME

DURING MY EXTENSIVE *Harijan* tour last year, it was clearly borne in upon me that the way in which we were carrying on our *Khadi* work has hardly enough either to universalize *Khadi* or to rejuvenate the villages I saw that it was confined to a very few, and that even those who used *Khadi* exclusively were under the impression that they need do nothing else and that they might use other things irrespective of how and where they were made *Khadi* was thus becoming a lifeless symbol, and I saw that, if the state of things were allowed to go on, *Khadi* might even die of sheer inanition It is not that a concentrated, intensive effort devoted exclusively to *Khadi* would not be conducive to success, but there was neither that concentration nor intensity All did not give ALL their spare time to the *Charkha* or the *Takli*, and all had not taken to the exclusive use of *Khadi*—though their number was larger than that of the spinners But the rest were all idle There were multitudes of men with quantities of enforce-

ed leisure on their hands That I saw was a state which could lead only to our undoing These people', I said to myself, 'could never win *Swaraj*' For, their involuntary and voluntary idleness made them a perpetual prey of exploiters, foreign and indigenous Whether the exploiter was from outside or from the Indian cities, their state would be the same, they would have no *Swaraj* So, I said to myself 'Let these people be asked to do something else, if they will not interest themselves in *Khadi*, let them take up some work which used to be done by their ancestors, but which has of late died out' There were numerous things of daily use which they used to produce themselves not many years ago, but for which they now depend on the outer world There were numerous things of daily use to the town-dweller for which he depended on the villagers, but which he now imports from cities The moment the villagers decided to devote all their spare time to doing something useful and town-dwellers to use those village products, the snapped link between the villagers and the town-dwellers would be restored As to which of the extinct or moribund village industries and crafts could be revived, we could not be sure until we sat down in the midst of the villages to investigate, to tabulate and classify But I picked up two things of the most vital importance articles of diet and articles of dress *Khadi* was there. In the matter of articles of diet, we were fast losing our self-sufficiency. Only a few years ago, we pounded our own paddy and ground our own flour Put aside for the time being the question of health It is an indisputable fact that the flour-mill and the rice-mill have driven millions of women out of employment and deprived them of the means of

eking out their income Sugar is fast taking the place of jaggery, and ready-made articles of diet like biscuits and sweetmeats are freely being imported into our villages This means that all the village industries are gradually slipping out of the hands of the villager, who has become a producer of raw materials for the exploiter He continually gives, and gets little in return Even the little he gets for the raw material he produces, he gives back to the sugar merchant and the cloth merchant His mind and body have become very much like those of the animals, his constant companions When we come to think of it, we find that the villager of to-day is not even half so intelligent or resourceful as the villager of fifty years ago For, whereas the former is reduced to a state of miserable dependence and idleness, the latter used his mind and body for all he needed and produced them at home. Even the village artisan to-day partakes of the resourcelessness that has overtaken the rest of the village Go to the village carpenter and ask him to make a spinning wheel for you, go to the village smith and ask him to make a spindle for you, you will be disappointed This is a deplorable state of things

This cry of 'back to the village', some critics say, is putting back the hands of the clock of progress But is it really so? Is it going back to the village, or rendering back to it what belongs to it? I am not asking the city-dwellers to go to and live in the villages But I am asking them to render unto the villagers what is due to them Is there any single raw material that the city-dwellers can obtain except from the villager? If they cannot, why not teach him to work on it himself.

as he used to before, and as he would do now but for our exploiting inroads

**Q** Will not this programme swamp the *Khadi* programme which has yet to be fulfilled ?

**A** No. *Khadi* cannot be moved from its central place *Khadi* will be the sun of the whole industrial solar system All the other industries will receive warmth and sustenance from the *Khadi* industry.

**Q** What exactly are the industries we must revive or promote ?

**A** I have indicated the lines We must promote every useful industry that was existent a short while ago and the extinction of which has now resulted in unemployment

**Q** Have we to declare a boycott of the rice and the flour-mills ?

**A** We have to declare no boycott, but we shall ask the people to husk their own rice and to grind their own flour, and we shall carry on persistent propaganda in favour of hand-pounded rice and hand-ground flour as better articles of diet from the point of view of health Let us declare a boycott of idleness

—*Harijan* Dec 7, 1934

## LXVI

### VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES STAND ON a different footing from *Khadi* There is not much scope for voluntary labour in than Each industry will take the labour of only a certain number of hands These industries come in as

a handmaid to *Khadi* They cannot exist without *Khadi*, and *Khadi* will be robbed of its dignity without them Village economy cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil-pressing, etc Congressmen can interest themselves in these and, if they are villagers or will settle down in villages, they will give these industries a new life and a new dress All should make it a point of honour to use only village articles whenever and wherever available Given the demand, there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied from our villages When we have become village-minded, we will not want imitations of the West or machine-made products, but we will develop a true national taste in keeping with the vision of a new India in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown

—*Constructive Programme* (1945 Edition) P 14

## LXVII

### WHY VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

"To MY UNAIDED MIND you appear to be opening the first campaign of an endless and Quixotic war against modern civilization Long ago you proclaimed yourself its sleepless enemy, and now you would, if you could, turn it back on the course it has pursued for some millenia I reel at the mere thought"

This is from an intimate letter from a dear friend who wrote in reply to my letter, inquiring if he could extend his co-operation in the effort As the view expressed so

frankly by the friend is, I know, shared by quite a number of friends, it is well for me to explain my position

In seeking to revive such village industries as are capable of being revived, I am making no such attempt as the friend ascribes to me. I am trying to do what every lover of village life, everyone who realizes the tragic meaning of the disintegration of villages is doing or trying to do. Why am I turning back the course of modern civilization, when I ask the villager to grind his own meal, eat it whole, including the nourishing bran, or when I ask him to turn his sugarcane into *gud* for his own requirements, if not for sale? Am I turning back the course of modern civilization, when I ask the villagers not merely to grow raw produce, but to turn it into marketable products and thereby add a few more pies to their daily income?

And, surely, modern civilization is not millenia old. We can almost give its birth an exact date. If I could do it, I would most assuredly destroy or radically change much that goes under the name of modern civilization. But that is an old story of life. The attempt is undoubtedly there. Its success depends upon God. But the attempt to revive and encourage the remunerative village industries is not part of such an attempt, except in so far as every one of my activities, including the propagation of non-violence, can be described as such an attempt. The revival of village industries is but an extension to the *Khadi* effort. Hand-spun cloth, hand-made paper; hand-pounded rice, home-made bread and jam, are not uncommon in the West. Only there they do **not** have one-hundredth of the importance they have in **India**. For, with us, their revival means life, their destruction means death to the villagers, as he who runs

may see. Whatever the machine age may do, it will never give employment to the millions whom the whole-sale introduction of power machinery must displace

—*Harijan* Jan 4, 1985

## LXVIII

### IN DEFENCE OF MACHINERY

A SOCIALIST, HOLDING a brief for machinery, asked Gandhiji if the Village Industries movement was not meant to oust all machinery

"Is not this wheel a machine?" was the counter-question that Gandhiji, who was just then spinning, asked in reply.

"I do not mean this machine, but I mean bigger machinery "

"Do you mean Singer's Sewing Machine ? That, too, is protected by the Village Industries movement, and, for that matter, any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity of labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave "

"But what about the great inventions<sup>7</sup> You would have nothing to do with electricity ?"

"Who said so ? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity But, then, the village communities or the State would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery what are idle hands to do ? Will you give them work,



or would you have their owners cut them down for want of work ?

"I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all There is a difference between invention and invention I should not care for the asphyxiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time The heavy machinery for work of public utility, which cannot be undertaken by human labour, has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the State and used entirely for the benefit of the people I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of many

"But even you as a Socialist would not be in favour of an indiscriminate use of machinery Take printing presses They will go on Take surgical instruments How can one make them with one's hand ? Heavy machinery would be needed for them But there is no machinery for the cure of idleness but this," said Gandhiji pointing to his spinning wheel "I can work it whilst I am carrying on this conversation with you, and am adding a little to the wealth of the country This machine no one can oust"

—*Harijan* June 22, 1935

## LXIX

### MACHINE AGE

**Q** How LONG CAN ALL this village industries business go on in this machine age ?

**A.** I have no such fear, because I have the convic-

tion within me that when all these achievements will have disappeared, these our handicrafts will remain. It is because this faith sustains me that I am going on with my work. Faith in my work sustains me, but there is also added to it the conviction that all the other things that seem to challenge my faith are doomed. Don't you see that if India becomes industrialized we should need a Nadirshah to find out other worlds to exploit, that we shall have to pit ourselves against the naval and military power of Britain and Japan and America, of Russia and Italy? My head reels to think of these rivalries. No. I am clear that whilst this machine age aims at converting men into machines, I am aiming at reinstating man turned machine into his original estate.

—*Harijan* Aug 29, 1936.

## LXX

### UNEMPLOYMENT

IN ONE SENSE, the problem of unemployment in our country is not so difficult as in other countries. The mode of life is a great factor. The Western unemployed worker must have warm clothing, boots or shoes and socks like the rest of the people, he must have a warm house and many other things incidental to the cold climate. We do not want all these things. I have indeed wept to see the stark poverty and unemployment in our country, but I must confess our own negligence and ignorance are largely responsible for it. We do not know the dignity of labour as such. Thus, a shoemaker will not do anything beyond making his shoes-

he will think that all other labour is below his dignity That wrong notion must go There is enough employment in India for all who will work with their hands and feet honestly God has given everyone the capacity to work and earn more than his daily bread, and whoever is ready to use that capacity is sure to find work No labour is too mean for one who wants to earn an honest penny The only thing is the readiness to use the hands and feet that God has given us

—*Harijan* Dec 19, 1936

## LXXI

### LARGE-SCALE INDUSTRIES

**Q** AM I WRONG IN suggesting that, from the resuscitation of dead village industries, such as you contemplate, to the industrialization of India on human, rational and intelligent lines (as opposed to greedy capitalism), it is but a step ?

**A** I do not know if a vast country like India with her millions of people having four months of enforced idleness on their hand, can afford to have large-scale industries and yet live a life of tolerable comfort Large scale, centralized industries in India, except such industries as cannot be possibly earned on in villages, must mean starvation of millions, unless honourable employment is found for the displaced millions.

—*Harijan* Feb 8, 1935

## LXXII

### SMALL-SCALE INDUSTRIES

I HAVE no doubt in my mind that we add to the national wealth if we help the small-scale industries. I have no doubt also that true *Swadeshi* consists in encouraging and reviving these home industries. That alone can help the dumb millions. It also provides an outlet for the creative faculties and resourcefulness of the people. It can also usefully employ hundreds of youths in the country who are in need of employment. It may harness all the energy that at present runs to waste. I do not want any one of those who are engaged in more remunerative occupations to leave them and take to the minor industries. Just as I did with regard to the spinning wheel, I would ask only those who suffer from unemployment and penury to take to some of these industries and add a little to their slender resources.

—*Press Report* July, 1934

## LXXIII

### NON-VIOLENT CRAFTS

STRICTLY SPEAKING, no activity and no industry is possible without a certain amount of violence, no matter how little. Even the very process of living is impossible without a certain amount of violence. What we have to do is to minimize it to the greatest extent possible. Indeed, the very word non-violence, a negative word, means that it is an effort to abandon the violence that

is inevitable in life. Therefore, whoever believes in *Ahimsa* will engage himself in occupations that involve the least possible violence. Thus, for instance, one cannot conceive of a man believing in non-violence carrying on the occupation of a butcher. Not that a meat-eater cannot be non-violent—there are many among meat-eaters who are better observers of non-violence than those who abstain from meat, *eg*, Deenabandhu Andrews—but even a meat-eater believing in non-violence will not go in for *shikar*, and he will not engage in war or war preparations. Thus, there are many activities and occupations which necessarily involve violence and must be eschewed by a non-violent man. But there is agriculture without which life is impossible, and which does involve a certain amount of violence. The determining factor, therefore, is—is the occupation founded on violence? But since all activity involves some measure of violence, all we have to do is to minimize the violence involved in it. This is not possible without a heart-belief in non-violence. Suppose, there is a man who does no actual violence, who labours for his bread, but who is always consumed with envy at other people's wealth or prosperity. He is not non-violent. A non-violent occupation is thus that occupation which is fundamentally free from violence, and which involves no exploitation or envy of others.

Now I have no historical proof, but I believe that there was a time in India when village economics were organized on the basis of such non-violent occupation, not on the basis of the rights of man but on the duties of man. Those who engaged themselves in such occupations did earn their living, but their labour contributed to the good of the community. A carpenter, for instance, ministered to the needs of the village farmer. He got

no cash payment, but was paid in kind by the villagers. There could be injustice even in this system, but it would be reduced to a minimum. I speak from personal knowledge of the life in Kathiawad of over sixty years ago. There was more lustre in people's eyes and more life in their limbs, than you find to-day. It was a life founded on unconscious *Ahimsa*.

Body-labour was at the core of these occupations and industries, and there was no large scale machinery. For, when a man is content to own only so much land as he can till with his own labour, he cannot exploit others. Handicrafts exclude exploitation and slavery. Large-scale machinery concentrates wealth in the hands of one man, who lords it over the rest who slave for him. For, he may be trying to create ideal conditions for his workmen, but it is none the less exploitation which is a form of violence.

When I say that there was a time when society was based not on exploitation but on justice, I mean to suggest that Truth and *Ahimsa* were not virtues confined to individuals, but were practised by communities. To me virtue ceases to have any value, if it is cloistered or possible only for individuals.

*Harijan* Sept 1, 1940.

## LXXIV

### WHAT IS INDUSTRIALISM?

**Q.** THERE IS BERTRAND RUSSELL who says that industrialism is like a force of Nature, and India, too, will be submerged whether we want it or not. Only such people

say we should find our own solution for industrialism. There is truth in what they say. Industrialism is flooding all the world, and after the flood they are finding their own solutions. Take Europe. I do not believe that Europe will perish. I have too much faith in human nature, and human nature will find the remedy sooner or later. Can India, even if she wants to, isolate herself and get out of the clutches of industrialism?

A Of course, industrialism is like a force of Nature, but it is given to man to control Nature and to conquer her forces. His dignity demands from him resolution in the face of overwhelming odds. Our daily life is such a conquest. An agriculturist knows it only too well.

What is industrialism but a control of the majority by a small minority? There is nothing attractive about it, nor is there anything inevitable in it. If the majority simply wills to say 'no' to the blandishments of the minority, the latter is powerless for mischief.

It is good to have faith in human nature. I live because I have that faith. But that faith does not blind me to the fact of history that, whilst in the ultimate all is well, individuals and groups called nations have before now perished. Rome, Greece, Babylon, Egypt and many others are a standing testimony in proof of the fact that nations have perished before now because of their misdeeds. What may be hoped for is that Europe, on account of her fine and scientific intellect, will realize the obvious and retrace her steps, and that from the demoralizing industrialism she will find a way out. It will not necessarily be a return to the old absolute simplicity. But it will have to be a reorganization in which village life will predominate, and in which brute and material force will be subordinated to the spiritual force.

Lastly, we must not be entrapped by false analogies. European writers are handicapped for want of experience and accurate information. They cannot guide us beyond a certain measure if they have to generalize from European examples which cannot be on all fours with Indian conditions, because in Europe they have nothing like the conditions of India, not even excluding Russia. What may be, therefore, true of Europe is not necessarily true of India. We know, too, that each nation has its own characteristics and individuality. India has her own, and if we are to find out a true solution for her many ills, we shall have to take all the idiosyncrasies of her constitution into account and then prescribe a remedy. I claim that to industrialize India in the same sense as Europe, is to attempt the impossible. India has stood many a storm. Each has left its own indelible mark, it is true, but she has hitherto dauntlessly maintained her individuality. India is one of the few nations of the earth which have witnessed the fall of many civilizations, herself remaining scatheless. India is one of the few nations of the earth which have retained some of their ancient institutions, although they have been overlaid with superstition and error. But she has hitherto shown an inherent capacity for purging herself of error and superstition. My faith in her ability to solve the economic problem that faces her millions has never been so bright as it is to-day.

*Young India* Aug. 6, 1925.



## SCIENCE AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

**Q** WHAT IS YOUR ATTITUDE IN general on the question of adopting a sane, humanitarian industrial policy for India? Do you stand for the progress of science, I mean such progress which brings blessings to mankind, *eg.*, the work of Pasteur of France, and that of Dr Benting of Toronto?

**A** I should have no objection, whatsoever, to industrial enterprise such as the student has in view. Only, I would not call it necessarily humanitarian. A humanitarian industrial policy for India means to me a glorified revival of hand-spinning, for through it alone can pauperism, which is blighting the lives of millions of human beings in their own cottages in this land, be immediately removed. Everything else may thereafter be added, so as to increase the productive capacity of this country. I would, therefore, have all young men with scientific training to utilize their skill in making the spinning wheel, if it is possible, a more efficient instrument of production in India's cottages. I am not opposed to the progress of science as such. On the contrary, the scientific spirit of the West commands my admiration, and if that admiration is qualified, it is because the scientist of the West takes no note of God's lower creation. I abhor vivisection with my whole soul. I detest the unpardonable slaughter of innocent life in the name of science and humanity so-called, and all the scientific discoveries stained with innocent blood I count as of no consequence. If the circulation of blood theory could not have been discovered without vivisection, the human

kind could well have done without it And, I see the day clearly dawning when the honest scientist of the West will put limitations upon the present methods of pursuing knowledge. Future measurements will take note not merely of the human family but of all that lives, and even as we are slowly but surely discovering that it is an error to suppose that Hindus can thrive upon the degradation of a fifth of themselves, or that peoples of the West can rise or live upon the exploitation and degradation of the Eastern and African nations, so shall we realize, in the fullness of time, that our dominion over the lower order of creation is not for their slaughter, but for their benefit equally with ours For, I am as certain that they are endowed with a soul, as that I am

—*Young India* Dec 17, 1925.

## LXXVI

### INDIA'S DESTINY

TO MAKE INDIA LIKE England and America is to find some other races and places of the earth for exploitation So far, it appears that the Western nations have divided all the known races outside Europe for exploitation and that there are no new worlds to discover Among the exploited, India is the greatest victim Japan is taking the share of the spoils no doubt But if India and China refuse to be exploited, what will happen to the exploiters? And if the Western nations plus Japan are likely to come to grief, in the event of India and China refusing to be exploited, what can be the fate of

India trying to ape the West? Indeed, the West has had a surfeit of industrialism and exploitation. If they, who are suffering from the distaste, are unable to find a remedy to correct the evils, how shall we, mere novices, be able to avoid them? The fact is that this industrial civilization is a disease because it is *all* evil. Let us not be deceived by catchwords and phrases. I have no quarrel with steamships or telegraphs. They may stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all it connotes. They are not an end. We must not suffer exploitation for the sake of steamships and telegraphs. They are in no way indispensable for the permanent welfare of the human race. Now that we know the use of steam and electricity, we should be able to use them on due occasion and after we have learnt to avoid industrialism. Our concern is, therefore, to destroy industrialism at any cost.

India has withstood the onslaughts of other civilizations because she has stood firm on her own ground. Not that she has not made changes. But the changes she has made have promoted her growth. To change to industrialism is to court disaster. The present distress is undoubtedly insufferable. Pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy. The evil does not lie in the use of bullock carts. It lies in our selfishness and want of consideration for our neighbours. If we have no love for our neighbours, no change however revolutionary can do us any good. And if we love our neighbours, the paupers of India, for their sake we shall use what they make for us, for their sake, we, who should know, shall not engage in an immoral traffic with the West in the shape of buying the foreign fineries and taking them to the villages.

If we would but think seriously and persistently, we shall discover that, before we make any other changes, the one great change to make is to discard foreign cloth and reinstate the ancient cottage industry of hand-spinning. We must thus restore our ancient and health-giving industry, if we would resist industrialism.

I do not fight shy of capital. I fight capitalism. The West teaches one to avoid concentration of capital, to avoid a racial war in another and deadlier form. Capital and labour need not be antagonistic to each other. I cannot picture to myself a time when no man shall be richer than another. But I do picture to myself a time when the rich will spurn to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor, and the poor will cease to envy the rich. Even in a most perfect world, we shall fail to avoid inequalities, but we can and must avoid strife and bitterness. There are numerous examples extant of the rich and the poor living in perfect friendliness. We have but to multiply such instances.

India's destiny lies not along the bloody way of the West, of which she shows signs of tiredness, but along the bloodless way of peace that comes from a simple and godly life. India is in danger of losing her soul. She cannot lose it and live. She must not, therefore lazily and helplessly say 'I cannot escape the onrush from the West'. She must be strong enough to resist it for her own sake and that of the world.

—*Young India* Oct. 7, 1926.

## INDUSTRIALISM

**Q** "WHAT IS YOUR VIEW about the industrialization of India?"

**A** Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. It is because these factors are getting less and less every day for England, that its number of unemployed is mounting up daily. The Indian boycott was but a flea-bite. And if that is the state of England, a vast country like India cannot expect to benefit by industrialization. In fact India, when it begins to exploit other nations—as it must, if it becomes industrialized—will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrializing India to exploit other nations? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation, viz, that we can find work for our 300 millions unemployed, but England can find none for its three millions and is faced with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England? The future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, Japan, France and Germany. It has competitors in the handful of mills in India, and as there has been an awakening in India, even so there will be an awakening in South Africa with its vastly richer resources natural, mineral and human. The mighty English look quite pigmies before the mighty races of Africa. They are noble savages after all, you will say. They are certainly noble,

but no savages, and in the course of a few years the Western nations may cease to find in Africa a dumping ground for their wares. And if the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for India?

—*Young India* Nov 12, 1931.,

## LXXVIII

### NO EXPLOITATION NO INDUSTRIALIZATION

*Dr De Boer* THERE IS ONE THING now which I do not understand I am a Socialist, and whilst as a believer in non-violence the Scheme<sup>1</sup> appeals to me most, I feel as a Socialist that the Scheme would cut India adrift from the world, whereas we have to integrate with the whole world, and Socialism does it as nothing else does

*Gandhiji* I have no difficulty We do not want to cut adrift from the whole world We will have a free interchange with all nations, but the present forced interchange has to go We do not want to be exploited, neither do we want to exploit any other nation Through the Scheme, we look forward to making all children producers and so to change the face of the whole nation, for, it will permeate the whole of our social being But that does not mean that we cut adrift from the whole world There will be nations that will want to interchange with others, because they cannot produce certain things They will certainly depend on other nations for them, but the nations that will provide for them should not exploit them

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Wardha Education Scheme

*Dr. De Boer* But if you simplify your life to such an extent that you need nothing from other countries, you will isolate yourself from them, whereas I want you to be responsible for America also

*Gandhi*. It is by ceasing to exploit and to be exploited that we can be responsible for America For, America will then follow our example and there will be no difficulty in a free interchange between us

*Dr De Boer.* But you want to simplify life and cut out industrialization

*Gandhiji* If I could produce all my country's wants by means of the labour of 30,000 people instead of 30 million I should not mind it, provided that the thirty million are not rendered idle and unemployed I know that Socialists would introduce industrialization to the extent of reducing working hours to one or two in a day but I do not want it

*Dr De Boer* They would have leisure

*Gandhiji* Leisure to play hockey?

*Dr De Boer* Not only for that, but for creative handicrafts for instance

*Gandhiji* Creative handicrafts I am asking them to engage in But they will produce with their hands by working eight hours a day

*Dr. De Boer.* You do not, of course, look forward to a state of society when every house will have a radio and everyone a car. That was President Hoover's formula He wanted not one, but two radios and two cars.

*Gandhiji:* If we had so many cars, there would be very little room for walking

*Dr De Boer-* I agree We have about 40,000 deaths by accidents every year, and thrice as many cases of people being maimed.

*Gandhiji* At any rate, I am not going to live to see the day when all villages in India will have radios

*Dr. De Boer.* Pandit Jawaharlal seems to think in terms of the economy of abundance

*Gandhiji.* I know But what is abundance? Not the capacity to destroy millions of tons of wheat as you do in America?

*Dr. De Boer'* Yes, that's the nemesis of capitalism. They do not destroy now, but they are being paid for NOT producing wheat. People indulged in the pastime of throwing eggs at one another, because the prices of the eggs had gone down

*Gandhiji* That is what we do not want. If by abundance you mean everyone having plenty to eat and drink and to clothe himself with, enough to keep his mind trained and educated, I should be satisfied. But I should not like to pack more stuff in my belly than I can digest, and more things than I can ever usefully use But neither do I want poverty, penury, misery, dirt and dust in India

*Dr De Boer* But Pandit Jawaharlal says in his Auto-biography you worship *Daridranarayana* and extol poverty for its own sake

*Gandhiji* I know

—*Harijan* Feb 12, 1938.

## LXXIX

### LIMITS OF INDUSTRIALIZATION

Q. WHAT ATTITUDE SHOULD I, as a realist, adopt with regard to the tide of industrialization that is sweeping over the world? The ultimate ideal of having self-



sufficient villages is, of course, there But that can come about only when everyone is cultured in the Indian sense of the word Does not industrialization serve to level the ground? Is it not waste of energy merely to oppose it? Would it not be better to try to change its direction?

A You are an engineer You will, therefore, appreciate an illustration from mechanics You know the parallelogram of forces There the forces do not neutralize each other Each force acts freely along its own line and we get the resultant which indicates the final direction of motion It is the same with the problem you have mentioned As I look at Russia, where the apotheosis of industrialization has been reached, the life there does not appeal to me To use the language of the *Bible*: "What shall it avail a man if he gam the whole world and lose his soul?" In modern terms, it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine I want every individual to become a full-blooded, fully developed member of society The villages must become self-sufficient I see no other solution if one has to work in terms of *Ahimsa* Now I have that conviction I know there are others who believe in industrialization I work with all my being for my conviction The process of adjustment goes on all the time. I do not know what the outcome of it will be But whatever it is, it will be to the good

Q But, is no compromise with industrialization possible without imperilling the ideal of self-sufficient villages?

A. Oh yes, railways are there. I do not avoid them I hate motor cars, but I make use of them willy-nilly all the same Again, I dislike fountain pens, but just now I am making use of one, though I C?TV a reed pen about

in my box Every time I use the fountain pen it hurts me, and I think of the neglected reed pen in my box. Compromise comes in at every step, but one must realize that it is a compromise, and keep the final goal constantly in front of the mind's eye.

Q When I turn from the busy West to masses in the Indian villages, I seem to be moving in a different world altogether in which stagnation reigns

A Yes, so long as you look on the surface. But the moment you talk to them and they begin to speak, you will find that wisdom drops from their lips Behind the crude exterior, you will find a deep reservoir of spirituality I call this culture You will not find such a thing in the West You try to engage a European peasant in conversation, and you will find that he is uninterested in things spiritual In the case of the Indian villager, an age-old culture is hidden under an encrustment of crudeness Take away the encrustation, remove his chronic poverty and his illiteracy, and you have the finest specimen of what a cultured, cultivated, free citizen should be

-*Harijan* Jan 28, 1939.-

LXXX

## AN AMERICAN'S QUESTIONS

*American Correspondent* WHY NOT HAVE Indian people use Indian hand-spun cloth and keep her mills busy for the export of manufactured cloth and yarn\* Don't you think that this would help the cotton-grower\*

*Gandhiji* I would not mind such a thing, but it must be in order to supply the felt needs of the coun-

try which received our cloth. I have no idea of exploiting other countries for the benefit of India. We are suffering from the poisonous disease of exploitation ourselves, and I would not like my country to be guilty of any such thing. If Japan, say, as a free country wanted India's help, and said we could produce certain goods cheaper, and we might export them to Japan, we would gladly do so. But under my scheme of things, all dumping of goods by one country in another, supported by her army and navy, has to cease

*American Correspondent* Apart from export of merchandise, what has India to give America, and in turn what does India expect from America?

*Gandhiji.* I must correct your question for you India sends no merchandise to America, she sends only raw material, and that is a matter for serious consideration for every nationalist. For, we cannot suffer our country remaining an exporter of raw produce, for it means (as it has meant) extinction of handicrafts and art itself. I would expect America to treat India, not as though India was a country for American exploitation, but as if India was a free country, although unarmed, and deserving, therefore, the same treatment that America would wish at the hands of India.

*American Correspondent* You are repeating, Sir, the message of Jesus.

*Gandhiji* I agree we are poor in technical skill, but as soon as you accept and consent to follow Jesus' teaching, I would not have to complain of all the skill being monopolized by America. You will then say, 'Here is a sister country poor in technical skill, let us offer our skilled assistance not for exploitation, not for a terrific price, but for its benefit, and so for nothing.

And here let me say a word about your missionaries. You send them here for nothing, but that also is part of imperialist exploitation. For, they would like to make us like you, better buyers of your goods and unable to do without your cars and luxuries. So, the Christianity that you send us is adulterated. If you established your schools, colleges and hospitals without the object of adding to the number of so-called Christian population, your philanthropy would be untainted.

As regards technical skill, I cannot afford to do what the Tatas are doing. They can afford to bring an American expert manager at Rs 20,000 a month. But whilst they represent the spirit of adventure, they do not represent poor India. India has seven lakhs of villages which take in 90 percent of her population. America has to think of these. America ought, if she will be of real help, to exercise her resourcefulness in this direction. And for that purpose America will have to cease to be the premier exporting country that she is. My views on national planning differ from the prevailing ones. I do not want it along industrial lines. I want to prevent our villages from catching the infection of industrialization. American exploitation has added neither to the moral height of the exploited countries, nor of the exploiting country. On the contrary, it has impeded their march towards spiritual progress, and deadened America's real spirit of philanthropy. A phenomenon, like the one that America witnesses, cannot happen in India. I mean the destruction of tons of sugar and other agricultural products. You might have supplied other countries the sugar and the wheat or fed America's own unemployed.

*American Correspondent* But, you could not have taken our pigs

*Gandhiji:* I know But all do not think like me. Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them

—*Harijan*- Sept. 29, 1940.

## LXXXI

### LARGE-SCALE PRODUCTION

Q ARE YOU AGAINST large scale production ?

A I never said that This belief is one of the many-superstitions about me What I am against is large-scale production of things villagers can produce without difficulty

Q Do you think that cottage industries and big industries can be harmonized?

A Yes, if they are planned so as to help the villages\* Key industries, industries which the nation needs, may be centralized But, then, I would not choose anything as a 'key industry' that can be taken up by the villages with a little organizing For instance, I did not know the possibilities of handmade paper Now I am so hopeful that I believe that every village can produce its own paper, though not for newspapers, etc Supposing the State controlled paper-making and centralized it, I would expect it to protect all the paper that villages can make

Q. What is meant by protecting the villages ?

A. Protecting them against the inroads of the cities. At one time, cities were dependent on the villages. Now, it is the reverse. There is no inter-dependence. Villages are being exploited and drained by the cities<sup>1</sup>

Q. Don't the villages need a lot of things that the cities produce ?

A. I wonder. In any case, under my scheme, nothing will be allowed to be produced by cities which can be equally well produced by the villages. The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing houses for village products

Q. Can we harmonize cloth-mill activity with handloom production ?

A. So far as I know, my answer is an emphatic 'no'. All the cloth we need can easily be produced in the villages

Q. But the number of mills is increasing

A. That is a misfortune

—*Harijan* Jan 28, 1939.

<sup>1</sup> "We have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination. To-day the cities dominate and drain the villages so that they are crumbling to ruin. My Khadi mentality tells me that cities must subserve villages. Exploiting of villages is itself organized violence. If we want *Swaraj* to be built on non-violence, we will have to give the villages their proper place."

—*Harijan* Jan 20, 1940

MASS PRODUCTION v PRODUCTION BY THE  
MASSES

"REVIVAL OF VILLAGE INDUSTRIES and handicrafts is all right", remarked a young friend the other day, with the air of one making a big concession to the earnestness of his adversary's conviction rather than its correctness "It will beautify life which our poor villagers badly need But I very much doubt, sir, whether our 'expanding universe', as Mr Jeans has put it, can do without mass production No, sir, in 'mass production' coupled with mass control lies the only hope of the toiling millions What has Gandhiji to offer in its place?"

The poser put me in mind of a conversation on the question of machinery that Gandhiji had with an American Press correspondent in London during the Second Round Table Conference "Production by the masses", I replied, repeating an expression that Gandhiji had used on that occasion

About a year prior to the meeting, the American friend in question had met Mr Ford in America and, in the course of his talk with him, had among other things mentioned to him his view that the current European conditions were opposed to the continuance of mass production Mr Ford had replied that those conditions were bound to pass away in a short time and that a demand for cheaper things would soon spring up. "It is a question of raising the standard of living of the people", had concluded Mr Ford

"Do you feel, Gandhiji," asked the friend, "that mass

production will raise the standard of living of the people?"

"I do not believe in it at all", replied Gandhiji, "There is a tremendous fallacy behind Mr Ford's reasoning. Without simultaneous distribution on an equally mass scale, the production can result only in a great world tragedy. Take Mr Ford's cars. The saturation point is bound to be reached, soon or late. Beyond that point, the production of cars cannot be pushed. What will happen then?"

"Mass production takes no note of the real requirement of the consumer. If mass production were in itself a virtue, it should be capable of indefinite multiplication. But it can be definitely shown that mass production carries within it its own limitations. If all countries adopted the system of mass production, there would not be a big enough market for their products. Mass production must then come to a stop."

"I wonder," proceeded the interlocutor, "whether you feel that this saturation point has already arrived in the Western world. Mr Ford says that there never can be too many articles of quality, that the needs of the world are constantly increasing and that, therefore, while there might be saturation in the market for a given commodity, the general saturation would never be reached."

"Without entering upon an elaborate argument," replied Gandhiji, "I would categorically state my conviction that the mania for mass production is responsible for the world crises. Granting for the moment that the machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still it would concentrate production in particular areas, so that you would have to go in a round-about way to



regulate distribution, whereas, if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where things are required, it is automatically regulated, and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation "

The American friend mentioned Mr. Ford's favourite plan of decentralization of industry by the use of electric power conveyed on wires to the remotest corner, instead of coal and steam, as a possible remedy and drew up the picture of hundreds and thousands of small, neat, smokeless villages, dotted with factories, run by village communities "Assuming all that to be possible," he finally asked Gandhiji, "how far will it meet your objection?" "My objection won't be met by that," replied Gandhiji, "because while it is true that you will be producing things in innumerable areas, the power will come from one selected centre That, in the end, I think, would be found to be disastrous It would place such a limitless power in one human agency that I dread to think of it The consequence, for instance, of such a control of power would be that I would be dependent on that power for light, water, even air, and so on. That, I think, would be terrible "

The friend was struck by the argument "Mr. Gandhi," he remarked, "this is a particularly appropriate moment, it seems to me, for you to be visiting London, because, apart from the political question, it seems to me to be a time when the Western world is disillusioned in regard to machinery in general, in regard to the mass production system we have built up in Germany and America in particular, and people are feeling somewhat bewildered and doubtful as to their value and asking themselves whether we have not, after all, overdone it Have you any idea as to what Europe **and**

America should do to solve the problem presented by too much machinery?"

"You see," answered Gandhiji, "that these nations are able to exploit the so-called weaker or unorganized races of the world. Once those races gain this elementary knowledge and decide that they are no more going to be exploited, they will simply be satisfied with what they can provide themselves. Mass production, then, at least where the vital necessities are concerned, will disappear."

"As a world organization?"

"Yes."

"But even these races will require more and more goods as their needs multiply?"

"They will then produce for themselves. And when that happens, mass production, in the technical sense in which it is understood in the West, ceases."

"You mean to say it becomes local?"

"When production and consumption both become localized, the temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears. All the endless difficulties and problems that our present-day economic system presents, too, would then come to an end. Take a concrete instance. England to-day is the cloth shop of the world. It, therefore, needs to hold a world in bondage to secure its market. But under the change that we have envisaged, she would limit her production to the actual needs of her 45 millions of population. When that need is satisfied, the production would necessarily stop. It won't be continued for the sake of bringing in more gold, irrespective of the needs of a people and at the risk of their impoverishment. There would be no unnatural accumulation of hoards in the pockets of

the few, and want in the midst of plenty in regard to the rest, as is happening to-day, for instance, in America. America is to-day able to hold the world in fee by selling all kinds of trinkets, or by selling her unrivalled skill, which she has a right to do. She has reached the acme of mass production, and yet she has not been able to abolish unemployment or want. There are still thousands, perhaps millions, of people in America who live in misery, in spite of the phenomenal riches of the few. The whole of the American nation is not benefitted by this mass production."

"The fault lies in distribution," observed the journalist friend. "It means that whilst our system of production has reached a high pitch of perfection, the distribution is still defective. If distribution could be equalized, would not mass production be sterilized of its evil?"

"No," replied Gandhiji, "the evil is inherent in the system. Distribution can be equalized when production is localized, in other words, when the distribution is simultaneous with production. Distribution will never be equal so long as you want to tap other markets of the world to dispose of your goods. That does not mean that the world has no use for the marvellous advances in science and organization that the Western nations have made. It only means that the Western nations have to use their skill. If they want to use their skill abroad, from philanthropic motives, America would say: 'Well, we know how to make bridges, we won't keep it a secret, but we say to the whole world, we will teach you how to make bridges and will charge you nothing.' America says. 'Where other nations can grow one blade of wheat, we can grow two thousand.' Then, America

should teach that art free of charge to those who will learn it, but not aspire to grow wheat for the whole world, which would spell a sorry day for the world indeed."

The American friend next asked Gandhiji, referring to Russia, whether it was not a country that had developed mass production without exploiting, in Gandhiji's sense, the less industrialized nations, or without falling into the pit of unequal distribution

"In other words," replied Gandhiji, "you want me to express opinion on State-controlled industry, i e. an economic order in which both production and distribution are controlled and regulated by the State, as is being to-day done in Soviet Russia Well, it is a new experiment. How far it will ultimately succeed, I do not know If it were not based on force, I would dote on it But to-day, since it is based on force, I do not know how far and where it will take us "

"Then, you do not envisage mass production as an ideal future of India?" questioned the American friend

"Oh yes, mass production, certainly," replied Gandhiji, "but not based on force After all, the message of the spinning wheel is that It is mass production, but mass production in people's own homes If you multiply individual production to millions of times, would it not give you mass production on a tremendous scale? But I quite understand that your "mass production" is a technical term for production by the fewest possible number through the aid of highly complicated machinery. I have said to myself that that is wrong. My machinery must be of the most elementary type which I can put in the homes of the millions. Under my system, again, it is labour which is the current coin,

not metal. Any person who can use his labour has that coin, has wealth. He converts his labour into cloth, he converts his labour into gram. If he wants paraffin oil, which he cannot himself produce, he uses his surplus grain for getting the oil. It is exchange of labour on free, fair and equal terms—hence it is no robbery. You may object that this is a reversion to the primitive system of barter. But is not all international trade based on the barter system?

"Look, again, at another advantage that this system affords. You can multiply it to any extent. But concentration of production *ad infinitum* can only lead to unemployment. You may say that workers thrown out of work by the introduction of improved machinery will find occupations in other jobs. But in an organized country, where there are only fixed and limited avenues of employment, where the worker has become highly skilled in the use of one particular kind of machinery, you know from your own experience that this is hardly possible. Are there not over three millions unemployed in England to-day? A question was put to me only the other day: 'What are we doing to-day with these three million unemployed?' They cannot shift from factory to field in a day. It is a tremendous problem."

This brought the discussion to the employment of machinery in agriculture.

"Would not machine agriculture make a great difference to India, as it has to America and Canada?" asked the American friend.

"Probably," replied Gandhiji, "but that is a question I do not consider myself fit to answer. We in India have not been able to use complicated machinery in agricul-

ture with profit so far. We do not exclude machinery. We are making cautious experiments. But we have not found power-driven agricultural machinery to be necessary."

The American friend, in common with the rest, had *come* imbued with the belief that Gandhiji was a sworn enemy of all machinery. "Some people have the impression", he remarked, "that you are opposed to machinery in general. That is not true, I believe?"

"That is quite wrong," answered Gandhiji. "The spinning wheel is also machinery. It is a beautiful work of art. It typifies the use of machinery on a universal scale. It is machinery reduced to the terms of the masses."<sup>1</sup>

"So you are opposed to machinery, only because and when it concentrates production and distribution in the hands of the few," finally summed up the American friend.

"You are right. I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me. That is all," answered Gandhiji.

—*Harijan* Nov 2, 1934

<sup>1</sup> " 'Are you against all machinery?' My answer is emphatically 'No'. But, I am against its indiscriminate multiplication. I refuse to be dazzled by the seeming triumph of machinery. I am uncompromisingly against all destructive machinery. But simple tools and instruments and such instruments and such machinery as saves individual labour and lightens the burden of the millions of cottagers, I should welcome."

## LXXXIII

### MASS PRODUCTION

A FACTORY EMPLOYS a few hundreds and renders thousands unemployed I may produce tons of oil from an oil-mill, but I also drive thousands of oil-men out of employment I call this destructive energy, whereas production by the labour of millions of hands is constructive and conducive to the common good. Mass production through power-driven machinery, even when State-owned, will be of no avail

But why not, it is asked, save the labour of millions, and give them more leisure for intellectual pursuits? Leisure is good and necessary upto a point only God created man to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and I dread the prospect of our being able to produce all that we want, including our food-stuffs, out of a conjurer's hat

—*Harijan* May 16, 1936.

## LXXXIV

### AN UNNATURAL POSITION

*Japanese Friend* Japan and India have many things in common

*Gandhiji* Well, East is East, but not now Japan is Americanized. In fact, Japan is beating America and England hollow in exploiting India You know the quantity of fents that are dumped here by Japan?

*Japanese Friend:* (Taken rather aback) We provide cheap goods, Sir. Are they harmful?

*Gandhiji.* I will not say that they are harmful because they are cheap But they leave us poorer

*Japanese Friend.* Is it not good to provide cheap-goods?

*Gandhiji* No You have no business to deprive us of our hands and feet

*Japanese Friend.* So, then, you are against this machine age, I see'

*Gandiji* To say that is to caricature my views I am not against machinery as such, but I am totally opposed to it when it masters us Japan and America and England are doing it to-day The agreement between India and Japan is a misnomer It is an agreement between England and Japan Japan must wash its hands off this competition It is harmful to us and harmful to you No one can make bond-slaves of others without degrading himself Only a few years ago we manufactured our own cloth, and now we get it from Japan and England It is an unnatural position We could make enough cloth for ourselves and the whole world. Our country abounds in natural resources There is something most hideously wrong in sending one's own cotton out and getting manufactured goods Nine crore rupees worth of cattle hides are exported from here, only to return to us as manufactured products There is no reason why this should happen

*Japanese Friend* You would not industrialize India?

*Gandhiji* I would indeed, in my sense of the term The village communities should be revived Indian villages produced and supplied to the Indian towns and cities all their wants. India became impoverished when our cities became foreign markets and began to drain



the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands.

*Japanese Friend.* You would then go back to the natural economy?

*Gandhiji.* Yes Otherwise, I should go back to the city. I am quite capable of running a big enterprise, but I deliberately sacrificed the ambition, not as a sacrifice, but because my heart rebelled against it For, I should have no share in the spoliation of the nation which is going on from day to day But I am industrializing the village in a different way

—*Harijan* Feb 27, 1937

## LXXXV

### THE PRINCIPLE OF PLANNING

**Q.** THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN introducing schemes of industrializing the country for the maximum utilization of her raw materials, not of her abundant and unused manpower which is left to take care of itself as best as it can Can such schemes be considered *Swadeshi* ?

**A.** The question has been well put I do not exactly know what the Government plan is But I heartily endorse the proposition that any plan which exploits the raw materials of a country and neglects the potentially more powerful man-power is lop-sided and can never tend to establish human equality

America is the most industrialized country in the world, and yet it has not banished poverty and degradation That is because it neglects the universal man-power and concentrates power in the hands of the few who amass

fortunes at the expense of the many. The result is that its industrialization has become a menace to its own poor and to the rest of the world

If India is to escape such disaster, it has to imitate what is best in America and the other Western countries and leave aside its attractive-looking but destructive economic policies. Therefore, real planning consists in the best utilization of the whole man-power of India and the distribution of the raw products of India in her numerous villages, instead of sending them outside and re-buying finished articles at fabulous prices

—*Harijan* March 23, 1947.

## LXXXVI

### RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF LABOUR

I ENTERTAIN SUCH A great respect for the dignity of labour that I have thrown in my lot with the labourers and for many, many years now I have lived in their midst like them labouring with my hands and with my feet. In labouring with your bodies, you are simply following the law of your being, and there is not the slightest reason for you to feel dissatisfied with your lot. On the contrary, I would ask you to regard yourselves as trustees for the nation for which you are labouring. A nation may do without its millionaires and without its capitalists, but a nation can never do without its labour. But there is one fundamental distinction between your labour and my labour. You are labouring for someone else. But I consider that I am labouring for myself. Then, I am my own master. And, in a-

natural state, we should all find ourselves our own masters. But such a state of things cannot be reached in a day. It, therefore, becomes a very serious question for you to consider how you are to conduct yourselves as labourers serving others. Just as there is no shame in being a labourer for one's self, so also is there no shame in labouring for others

But it becomes necessary to find out the true relationship between master and servant. What are your duties and what are your rights? It is simple to understand that your right is to receive higher wages for your labour. And it is equally simple to know that your duty is to work to the best of your ability for the wages you receive. And it is my universal experience that, as a rule, labour discharges its obligations more effectively and more conscientiously than the master who has corresponding obligations towards the labourers. It, therefore, becomes necessary for labour to find out how far labour can impose its will on the masters. If we find that we are not adequately paid or housed, how are we to receive enough wages, and good accommodation? Who is to determine the standard of wages, and the standard of comfort required by the labourers? The best way, no doubt, is that you labourers understand your own rights, understand the method of enforcing your rights and enforce them. But for that you require a little previous training—education. You have been brought to a certain point from the various parts of the country and find yourselves congregated together. But you find that you are not getting enough, you are not properly housed. I, therefore, venture to suggest to those who are leading you and advising you that their first business is to guide you, not by giving you a know-

ledge of letters, but of human affairs and human relations. I make this suggestion respectfully and in all humility because my survey of labour in India, in so far as I have been able to undertake it, and my long experience of conditions of labour in South Africa lead me to the conclusion that, in a large majority of cases, leaders consider that they have to give labour the knowledge of the 3 R's That undoubtedly is a necessity of the case But it is to be preceded by a proper knowledge of your own rights and the way of enforcing them And in conducting many a strike I have found that it is possible to give this fundamental education to the labourers within a few days

And that brings me to the subject of strikes Strikes are now in the air to-day throughout the world and on the slightest pretext labour goes in for strikes My own experience is that many strikes have done harm to labour rather than good I have studied, so far as I can, the strikes in Bombay, a strike at Tata Iron Works, and the celebrated strike of the railway labourers in the Punjab There was a failure in all these strikes Labour was not able to make good its points to the fullest extent. What was the reason? Labour was badly led I want you to distinguish between two classes of leaders You have leaders derived from yourselves and they are in their turn advised and led by those who are not themselves labourers, but who are in sympathy, or expected to be in sympathy with labour Unless there is perfect correspondence between these three, there is bound to be a failure In all these four strikes, that perfect correspondence between them was lacking. There is another substantial reason which I discovered. Labourers look to pecuniary support from their Unions

for their maintenance. No labour can prolong a strike indefinitely so long as labour depends on the resources of its Unions, and no strike can absolutely succeed which cannot be indefinitely prolonged. In all the strikes that I have ever conducted, I have laid down one indispensable rule that labourers must find their own support. And therein lies the secret of success, and therein consists your education. You should be able to perceive that, if you are able to serve one master and command a particular wage, your labour must be worthy and fit to receive that wage anywhere else. Strikers, therefore, cannot expect to be idlers and succeed. Your attempts must be just. And there should be no pressure exerted upon those whom you call 'black legs'. Any force of this kind exerted against your own fellow-labourers is bound to react upon yourselves. And I think your advisers will tell you that these three conditions being fulfilled, no strike need fail. But they at once demonstrate to you the necessity of thinking a hundred times before undertaking a strike. So much for your rights and the method of enforcing them. But as labour becomes organized, strikes must be few and far between. And as your mental and collective development progresses, you will find that the principle of arbitration replaces the principle of strikes and the time has now arrived when we should reach this state.

[From an address to Madras Central  
Labour Board in 1920]

—*Speeches and Writings of M. Gandhi*: p. 1045.

## LXXXVII

### CONDITIONS OF A SUCCESSFUL STRIKE

STRIKES ARE THE ORDER of the day. They are a symptom of the existing unrest. All kinds of vague ideas are floating in the air. A vague hope inspires all, and great will be the disappointment if that vague hope does not take definite shape. The labour world in India, as elsewhere, is at the mercy of those who set up as advisers and guides. The latter are not always scrupulous, and not always wise even when they are scrupulous. The labourers are dissatisfied with their lot. They have every reason for dissatisfaction. They are being taught, and justly, to regard themselves as being chiefly instrumental in enriching their employers. And so it requires little effort to make them lay down their tools. The political situation, too, is beginning to affect the labourers of India. And there are not wanting labour leaders who consider that strikes may be engineered for political purposes.

In my opinion, it will be a most serious mistake to make use of labour strikes for such a purpose. It does not require much effort of the intellect to perceive that it is a most dangerous thing to make political use of labour, until labourers understand the political condition of the country and are prepared to work for the common good. This is hardly to be expected of them all of a sudden and until they have bettered their own condition so as to enable them to keep body and soul together in a decent manner. The greatest political contribution, therefore, that labourers can make is to improve their own condition, to become better informed, to insist on

their rights, and even to demand proper use by the employers of the manufactures in which they have *hi* such an important hand. The proper evolution, therefore, would be for the labourers to raise themselves the status of part-proprietors. Strikes, therefore, for the present should only take place for the direct betterment of the labourers' lot, and, when they have acquired the spirit of patriotism, for the regulation of prices their manufactures

The conditions of a successful strike are simple. *An* when they are fulfilled, a strike need never fail

(1) The cause of the strike must be just  
 (2) There should be practical unanimity among the strikers

(3) There should be no violence used against non strikers

(4) Strikers should be able to maintain themselves during the strike period without falling back upon Union funds and should, therefore, occupy themselves in some useful and productive temporary occupation

(5) A strike is no remedy when there is enough other labour to replace strikers. In that case, in the event of unjust treatment or inadequate wages or the like, resignation is the remedy

(6) Successful strikes have taken place even when all the above conditions have not been fulfilled, but that merely proves that the employers were weak and had a guilty conscience. We often make terrible mistakes by copying bad examples. The safest thing is not to copy examples of which we have rarely complete knowledge, but to follow the conditions which we know and recognize to be essential for success.

—*Young India*- Feb 16, 1921

## CONDITION OF LABOUR

TWO PATHS ARE OPEN before India to-day, either to introduce the Western principles of 'Might-is right', or to uphold the Eastern principle that Truth alone conquers, that Truth knows no mishap, that the strong and the weak have alike a right to secure justice. The choice is to begin with the labouring class. Should the labourers obtain an increment in their wages by violence? Even if that be possible, they cannot resort to anything like violence, howsoever legitimate may be their claims. To use violence for securing rights may seem an easy path, but it proves to be thorny in the long run. Those who live by sword die also by sword. The swimmer often dies by drowning. Look at Europe. No one seems to be happy there, for, not one is contented. The labourer does not trust the capitalist and the capitalist has no faith in the labourer. Both have a sort of vigour and strength, but even the bulls have it. They fight to the very bitter end. All motion is not progress. We have got no reason to believe that the people of Europe are progressing. Their possession of wealth does not argue the possession of any moral or spiritual qualities. King Duryodhana was a master of untold wealth, but with all that he was a pauper in comparison to Vidura and Sudama. To-day the world adores Vidura and Sudama, whereas Duryodhana's name is remembered only as a by-word for the evil qualities one should shun.

What shall we do then? In the struggle between capital and labour, it may be generally said that more often than not the capitalists are in the wrong box. But



when labour comes fully to realize its strength, I know it can become more tyrannical than capital. The mill-owners will have to work on the terms dictated by labour, if the latter could command intelligence of the former. It is clear, however, that labour will never attain to that-intelligence. If it does, labour will cease to be labour and become itself the master. The capitalists do not fight on the strength of money alone. They do possess intelligence and tact.

The question before us is this. When the labourers, remaining what they are, develop a certain consciousness, what should be their course? It would be suicidal if the labourers rely only upon their numbers or brute-force i.e., violence. By so doing, they will do harm to industries in the country. If, on the other hand, they take their stand on pure justice and suffer in their person to secure it, not only will they always succeed but they will reform their masters, develop industries and both master and men will be as members of one and the same family. A satisfactory solution of the condition of labour must include the following —

(1) The hours of labour must leave the workmen some hours of leisure

(2) They must get facilities for their own education.

(3) Provision should be made for an adequate supply of milk, clothing and necessary education for their children

(4) There should be sanitary dwellings for the workmen

(5) They should be in a position to save enough to maintain themselves during their old age

None of these conditions is satisfied to-day. For this, both the parties are responsible. The masters care **only**

for the service they get. What becomes of the labourer does not concern them. All their endeavours are generally confined to obtaining maximum service with minimum payment. The labourer, on the other hand, tries to hit upon all tricks whereby he can get maximum pay with minimum work. The result is that although the labourers get an increment there is no improvement in the work turned out. The relations between the two parties are not purified, and the labourers do not make proper use of the increment they get.

A third party has sprung up between these two parties. It has become the labourers' friend. There is need for such a party. Only to the extent to which this party has disinterested friendship for the labourers, can it befriend them.

A time has come now when attempts will be made to use labour as a pawn in more ways than one. The occasion demands consideration at the hands of those that would take part in politics. What will they choose? Their own interest or the service of labour and the nation? Labour stands in sore need of friends. It cannot proceed without a lead. What sort of men give this lead will decide the condition of labour.

Strikes, cessation of work and *Hartal* are wonderful things no doubt, but it is not difficult to abuse them. Workmen ought to organize themselves into strong Labour Unions, and on no account shall they strike work without the consent of these Unions. Strikes should not be risked without previous negotiations with the mill-owners. If the mill-owners resort to arbitration, the principle of *Panchayat* should be accepted. And once the *Panch* are appointed, their decision must be accepted by both the parties alike, whether they like it or not.

Readers, if you are interested in ameliorating the condition of labour, if you want to befriend the workmen and serve them, you will see from the above that there is only one royal road before you, viz, to elevate the workmen by creating between the two parties family relationship. And to secure this end there is no path like Truth. Mere increase in wages should not satisfy you, you must also watch by what means they get it and how they spend it.

—*Young India* June 1, 1921.

## LXXXIX

### TO THE MILL-HANDS

IN THE WEST, an eternal conflict has set up between capital and labour. Each party considers the other as his natural enemy. That spirit seems to have entered India also, and if it finds a permanent lodgment, it would be the end of our industry and of our peace. If both the parties were to realize that each is dependent upon the other, there will be little cause for quarrel.

I do not propose to examine the duty of the capitalist. If the labourer alone were to understand his rights and responsibilities and confine himself to the purest means, both must gain. But two things are needful: both the demands and the means adopted to enforce them must be just and clear. It is an unlawful demand which seeks merely to take advantage of the capitalists' position. But it is an altogether lawful demand when the labourer asks for enough wages to enable him to maintain himself and to educate his children decently. To seek justice without resorting to violence and by an ap-

peal to the good sense of the capitalists by arbitration is lawful means

I know that strikes are an inherent right of the workingmen for the purpose of securing justice, but they must be considered a crime immediately the capitalists accept the principle of arbitration. Wages are improving and there is every possibility of continuous improvement. But there is equal need for reducing hours of labour. The mill-hands seem to be working twelve hours or more. Those who have to work so many hours per day, can have no time left for mental or moral betterment. Their condition, therefore, must be reduced to that of the beast. It is our duty to escape the peril and yet in every step we take, we must guard ourselves against damaging our industries.

The mill-owners tell me that the mill-hands are lazy, they do not give full time to their work and they are inattentive. I for one cannot expect attention and application from those who are called upon to work twelve hours per day. But I would certainly hope that when the hours are reduced to ten, the labourers will put in better and almost the same amount of work as in twelve hours. Reduction in hours of labour has brought about happy results in England. When mill-hands learn to identify themselves with the interest of the mill-owners, they will rise and with them will rise the industries of our country. I would, therefore, urge the mill-owners to reduce the hours of labour to ten, and urge the mill-hands to give as much work in ten as they have been doing in twelve.

It is now time to examine the use we should make of the increasing wages and the hours saved. It would be like going into the frying pan out of the fire to use

the increase in wages in grog-shops, and the hours saved, in the gambling dens. The money received, it is clear, should be devoted to the education of our children, and the time saved to our education. In both these matters, the mill-owners can render much assistance. They can open cheap restaurants for the workingmen, where they can get pure milk and wholesome refreshments. They can open reading-rooms and provide harmless amusements and games for them. Provided in such healthy surroundings, the craving for drink and gambling will leave them. The Unions also should attempt similar things. They will be better employed in devising means of improvement from within than in fighting the capitalists.

It is a sign of national degradation when little children are removed from schools and are employed in earning wages. No nation worthy of the name can possibly afford so to misuse her children. At least up to the age of sixteen, they must be kept in schools. Similarly, women also must be gradually weaned from mill-labour. If man and woman are partners in life and complementary each of the other, they become good householders only by dividing their labour, and a wise mother finds her time fully occupied in looking after her household and children. But when both husband and wife have to labour for mere maintenance, the nation must become degraded. It is like a bankrupt living on his capital.

And just as it is necessary for the labourers to develop their minds by receiving education and to educate their children, so it is necessary to develop the moral faculty in them. Development of the moral faculty means that of the religious sense. The world does not quarrel with those who have a true faith in God and

who understand the true nature of religion. And if it does, such, men turn away the wrath of their adversaries by their gentleness. Religion here does not mean merely offering one's *namaz* or going to the temple. But it means knowledge of one's self and knowledge of God, and just as a person does not become a weaver unless he knows the art of weaving, so does he fail to know himself unless he complies with certain rules. Chief amongst these are three that are of universal observance.

The first is observance of Truth. He, who does not know what it is to speak the truth, is like a false coin valueless.

The second is not to injure others. He who injures others is jealous of others, is not fit to live in the world. For, the world is at war with him and he has to live in perpetual fear of the world. We are all bound by the tie of love. There is in everything a centripetal force without which nothing could have existed. Scientists tell us that without the presence of the cohesive force amongst the atoms that comprise this globe of ours, it would crumble to pieces and we would cease to exist, and even as there is cohesive force in blind matter, so must there be in all things animate, and the name for that cohesive force among animate beings is Love. We notice it between father and mother, between brother and sister, friend and friend. But we have to learn to use that force among all that lives, and in the use of it consists our knowledge of God. Where there is love, there is life, hatred leads to destruction.

The third rule is that we have to conquer our passions. It is called *Brahmacharya* in Sanskrit. I do not use it merely in its accepted narrow sense. He is not a *Brahmachari*, who although he may be celibate or may

be living a chaste life as a married man, otherwise gives himself up to a variety of indulgences. He alone is capable of knowing himself who brings under complete subjection all his passions. He, who exercises self-restraint in its widest sense, is also a *Brahmachari*—a man of faith, a true Hindu or a true Mohammedan,

It is a breach of *Brahmacharya* to hear questionable language or obscene songs. It is a licentiousness of the tongue to utter foul abuse instead of reciting the name of God, and so with the other senses. He alone can be considered a true man who, having subjected his passions, becomes perfectly self-restrained. We are like a rider who cannot keep his horse under control and is quickly brought down. But one who, drawing in the reins, keeps the animal under subjection, stands a fair chance of reaching his destination. Even so does a man who can control his passions make for the goal. He alone is fit for *Swaraj*. He alone is a seeker after Truth. He alone becomes capable of knowing God.

It is my earnest wish that you will not reject these remarks, as if they were copy-book maxims. I ask you to believe that we shall never go forward, until we have learnt the value of observing these truths. What I have told you is a fragment of my own experiences. My service of you is due simply to my love for you, and I partake of your sorrows because I hope thereby to justify myself before my Maker. What though your wages were quadrupled and you had to work only a quarter of the time you are doing now, if notwithstanding, you did not know the value of true speech, if the *rakshasa* in you injured others and gave the reins to your passions. We must have more wages, we must have less work, because we want clean houses, dean

bodies, clean minds and a clean soul, and both are essential for this four-fold cleanliness. But if that be not the object to be achieved, it would be sin to attempt and get better wages and reduce the hours of labour. May-God grant you the power to achieve the end

[From an address to the mill-hands of Ahmedabad]

—*Young India* Oct. 6, 1921

## XC

## STRIKES

WHEN *Hartal* TAKES PLACE what should mill-hands and other employees do, who cannot get leave from their unsympathetic or alien employers? In terms of non-violence, there can be but one answer. An employee who gives himself leave uses violence, for he commits a criminal breach of the contract of his service. He cannot absent himself without the permission of his employer. All he can do is to resign, if he is not satisfied with his employer. But this, too, a body of employees, may not do all of a sudden. For, they may not, in order to enforce their political opinion, threaten to leave without due notice. In short, mill-hands and such other employees should not be encouraged to coerce their employers into giving leave. Non-violent action is not quite so simple as one may imagine. I have heard men describing as non-violent the holding tight of the legs of persons proceeding to drink-shops. Similarly, youngsters have classed foul abuse of liquor dealers among non-violent acts. This is merely playing with language. We must be true to ourselves if we wish to give non-violence a fair trial. Even if we cannot make our



thought non-violent, we must so regulate our speech and action as to make them completely innocuous. If we find it impossible or too difficult to practise, we must give up the attempt, but we must not blame one of the greatest doctrines of life for our incapacity. If failure has to be written against us, it won't be failure of non-violence but of the violent to respond to it.

—*Young India* Dec 1, 1921

## XCI

### LABOUR AND CAPITAL

I AM A LABOURER myself, I pride myself on calling myself a scavenger, weaver, spinner, farmer and what not, and I do not feel ashamed that some of these things I know but indifferently. It is a pleasure to me to identify myself with the labouring classes, because without labour we can do nothing. There is a great Latin saying of which the meaning is 'To labour is to pray' and one of the finest writers of Europe has said that a man is not entitled to eat unless he labours, and by labour he does not mean labour with the intellect, but labour with the hands. The same thought runs throughout Hindu religion. 'He who eats without labour eats sin, is verily a thief.' This is the literary meaning of a verse in *Bhagavad Gita*. I, therefore, pride myself on the fact that I can identify myself with labour throughout the world.

I have always said that my ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and help each other. They should be a great family living in unity and harmony,

capital not only looking to the material welfare of the labourers but their moral welfare also,—capitalists being, trustees for the welfare of the labouring classes under them

I have sought the friendship of the capitalists in order to induce them to regard themselves as trustees for the benefit of the labourers, and that they may take their own food after feeding them To-day capital is afraid of the labour, and labour scowls at capital I want to replace that relationship by one of mutual trust and respect

—*Young India* August 20, 1925

## XCII

### LABOUR IN INDIA

LABOUR IN INDIA IS still extremely unorganized The labourers have no mind of their own when it comes to national policy or even the general welfare of labour itself Labourers in various parts of India have no social contact and no other mutual ties It is provincial and, even in the same city, it is highly communal. It is not everywhere wisely guided In many places, it is under selfish and slightly unscrupulous guidance

There is no absolute cohesion amongst provincial labour leaders, and there is little discipline among sub-leaders The latter do not uniformly tender obedience to their provincial chiefs. Leaders in different provinces have no single policy to follow In these circumstances, an All-India Union can only exist on paper

If the Ahmedabad Labour Union can succeed in per-

fecting its own organization, it is bound to serve as a model to the rest of India, and its success is bound to prove highly infectious

But I am free to confess that there is as yet no assurance of success in the near future. The energy of the workers is sorely tried in combating disruptive forces that ever continue to crop up

One word as to policy. It is not anti-capitalistic. The idea is to take from capital labour's due share and no more, and this, not by paralyzing capital, but by reform among labourers from within and by their own self-consciousness, not again through the cleverness and manoeuvring of non-labour leaders, but by educating labour to evolve its own leadership and its own self-reliant, self-existing organization. Its direct aim is not in the least degree political. Its direct aim is internal reform and evolution of internal strength. The indirect result of this evolution, when and if it ever becomes complete, will naturally be tremendously political

I have not, therefore, the remotest idea of exploiting labour or organizing it for any direct political power of first-class importance when it becomes a self-existing unit. Labour, in my opinion, must not become a pawn in the hands of the politician on the political chessboard. It must, by its sheer strength, dominate the chessboard.

This is my dream. I hug it because it gives me all the consolation I need, and the policy I have outlined is a direct outcome of my implicit belief in an acceptance of non-violence. It may be all a delusion, but it is as much a reality with me as life itself so long as I do not see it as delusion, but see it as the only life-giving force.

**[From a letter dated May 10, 1927]**

**— *Is India Different ?* P 25**

## XCIH

### TO MILL-OWNERS

IN THE WEST, there is still a water-tight division between the employer and the employees. I know it is impertinent to talk of our ideal, while the curse of untouchability still stalks through the land. But I should be untrue to myself and be failing in my duty to you, if I did not place before you what I regard as the highest ideal.

The relation between mill-agents and mill-hands ought to be one of father and children, or as between blood-brothers. I have often heard the mill-owners of Ahmedabad refer to themselves as 'masters' and their employees as their 'servants'. Such loose talk should be out of fashion in a place like Ahmedabad which prides itself on its love of religion and love of *ahimsa*. For, that attitude is a negation of *ahimsa*, inasmuch as our ideal demands that all our power, all our wealth and all our brains should be devoted solely to the welfare of those who, through their own ignorance and our false notions of things, are styled labourers or 'servants'.

What I expect of you, therefore, is that you should hold all your riches as a trust to be used solely in the interest of those who sweat for you, and to whose industry and labour you owe all your position and prosperity. I want you to make your labourers co-partners of your wealth. I do not mean to suggest that unless you legally bind yourselves to do all that, there should be a labour insurrection. The only sanction that I can think of in this connection is of mutual love and regard as between father and son, not of law. If

only you make it a rule to respect these mutual obligations of love, there would be an end to all labour disputes, the workers would no longer feel the need for organizing themselves into unions. But that cannot happen until there is a single mill-hand who does not regard the mill in which he works as his own, who complains of sweating and overwork, and who, therefore, nurses in his breast nothing but ill-will towards his employers.

And where is the difficulty?

As our experience gradually broadens, we are beginning to see more and more clearly that the more we give to our workers the more we stand to gain. From the moment your men come to realize that the mills are theirs no less than yours, they will begin to feel towards you as blood-brothers, there would be no question of their acting against the common interest and the need for having a heavy supervisory establishment over them.

—*Young India* May 10, 1928.

## XCIV

### LABOUR IS CAPITAL

Q How CAN WORKERS OBTAIN justice without violence? If capitalists use force to suppress their efforts, why should the workers not try to destroy their oppressors?

A. This, of course, is the old law, the law of the jungle—blow against blow, I am endeavouring to make the non-violent experiment, which I consider essential viz., that of getting rid of the law of the jungle which is ill-suited to man.

In my humble opinion, labour can always vindicate itself if labour is sufficiently united and self-sacrificing. No matter how oppressive the capitalists may be, I am convinced that those who are connected with labour and guide the labour movement have themselves no idea of the resources that labour can command and which capital can never command. If labour would only understand and recognize that capital is perfectly helpless without labour, labour will immediately come to its own

We have unfortunately come under the hypnotic suggestion and the hypnotic influence of capital, so that we have come to believe that capital is all in all on this earth. But a moment's thought would show that labour has at its disposal capital which the capitalists will never possess. Ruskin taught in his age that labour had unrivalled opportunities. But he spoke above our heads. At the present moment there is an Englishman, Sir Daniel Hamilton, who is really making that very experiment. He is an economist. He is a capitalist also, but through his economic research and experiments he has come to the same conclusion as Ruskin had arrived at intuitively, and he has brought to labour a vital message. He says it is wrong to think that a piece of metal constitutes capital, but he adds that if we go to the very source, it is labour that is capital, and that living capital is inexhaustible. It is upon that law that we have been working in the Labour Union at Ahmedabad. It has been that law under which we have been working in our fight against the Government. It is that law, the recognition of which delivered 1,700,000 people in Champaran inside six months from a century-long tyranny. I must not tarry to tell you what that

s—14

tyranny was, but those who are interested in that problem will be able to study every one of the facts that I have put before them. Now I will tell you what we have *done*. There is in English a very potent word, and you have it in French also, all the languages of the world have it—it is 'No'. And the secret that we have hit upon is that when capital wants labour to say 'Yes', labour roars out 'No', if it means 'No'. And immediately labour comes to recognize that it has got the choice before it of saying 'Yes' when it wants to say 'Yes', and 'No' when it wants to say 'No', labour is free of capital and capital has to woo labour. And it would not matter in the slightest degree that capital has guns and even poison gas at its disposal. Capital would still be perfectly helpless if labour would assert its dignity by making good its 'No.' The labour does not need to retaliate, but labour stands defiant receiving the bullets and poison gas and still insists upon its 'No'. The whole reason why labour so often fails is that instead of sterilizing capital as I have suggested, labour (I am speaking as a labourer myself) wants to seize that capital and become capitalist itself in the worst sense of the term. And the capitalist, therefore, who is properly entrenched and organized, finding among the labourers also candidates for the same office, makes use of a portion of these to suppress labour. If we really were not under this hypnotic spell, every one of us, men and women, would recognize this rock-bottom truth without the slightest difficulty. Having proved it for myself, through a series of experiments earned on in different departments of life, I am speaking to you with authority (you will pardon me for saying so) that *when* I put this scheme before you, it was not as something

super-human, but as something within the grasp of every labourer, man or woman. Again, you will see that what labour is called upon to do under this scheme of non-violence is nothing more than what the Swiss soldier does under gun-fire, or the ordinary soldier who is armed from top to toe is called upon to do. While he undoubtedly seeks to inflict death and destruction upon his adversary, he also carries his own life in his pocket. I want labour, then, to copy the courage of the soldier without copying the brute in the soldier, namely the ability to inflict death, and I suggest to you that a labourer who courts death and has the courage to die without even carrying arms, with no weapon of self-defence, shows a courage of a much higher degree than a man who is armed from top to toe

—*India's Case for Swaraj*: P. 392

## XCV

### SUBSIDIARY MEANS OF SUBSISTENCE

A MILL-HAND'S LIFE IS ever full of vicissitudes. Thrift and economy no doubt provide a sort of remedy, and it would be criminal to neglect them. But the savings thus made cannot carry one far, seeing that vast bulk of our mill-labourers are always struggling on the margin of bare subsistence. Moreover, it would never do for a working man, during strike or unemployment, to rest idly at home. There is nothing more injurious to his morale and self-respect than enforced idleness. The working class will never feel secure or develop<sup>4</sup> a sense of self-assurance and strength unless its members are



armed with an unfailing subsidiary means of subsistence to serve as a second string to their bow in a crisis.

I hold that a working knowledge of a variety of occupations is to the working class what metal is to the capitalist. A labourer's skill is his capital. Just as the capitalist cannot make his capital fructify without the co-operation of labour, even so the working man cannot make his labour fructify without the co-operation of capital. And if both labour and capital have the gift of intelligence equally developed in them and have confidence in their capacity to secure a fair deal, each at the hands of the other, they would get to respect and appreciate each other as equal partners in a common enterprise. They need not regard each other as inherently irreconcilable antagonists. But the difficulty is that whilst to-day capital is organized and seems to be securely entrenched, labour is not. The intelligence of the working man is cramped by his soulless, mechanical occupation which leaves him little scope or chance to develop his mind. It has prevented him from realizing the power and full dignity of his status. He has been taught to believe that his wages have to be dictated by capitalists instead of his demanding his own terms. Let him only be organized along right lines and have his intelligence quickened, let him learn a variety of occupations, and he will be able to go about with his head erect and never be afraid of being without means of sustenance.

—*Harijan*. July 3, 1937.

## NON-VIOLENCE—THE ONLY INSURANCE

WITHOUT NECESSARY DISCIPLINE IN non-violence, the labourers would have internecine strife, and would never be ready to develop the strength that is needed to enable them to realize the power that they possess. Organization, technical skill, and everything else would follow the acceptance of the fundamental principle of non-violence. Class collaboration would also follow as a matter of course. They are strong in numbers and yet they feel so dependent, so very much at the mercy of their employers. That is because they\* do not know their own inherent strength. Otherwise, what is there to prevent them from pooling their own resources and dictate terms as employers do now. The thing that they have to realize is that labour is as much capital as metal. That realization can come only through acceptance of non-violence.

But after that realization has come, and they have come to their own, non-violence does not become superfluous. If they were to bid good-bye to it, they would be as bad as capitalists and turn exploiters themselves. The realization of their strength, combined with adherence to non-violence, would enable them to co-operate with capital and turn it to proper use. Then, they will not regard it as a conflicting interest, they will not regard the mill and the machinery as belonging to the exploiting agents and grinding them down, but as their own instruments of production, and will, therefore, protect them as well as they would their own property. They will not steal time and turn out less work, but will

put in the most they can. In fact, capital and labour will be mutual trustees, and both will be trustees of consumers. The trusteeship theory is not unilateral, and does not in the least imply superiority of the trustee. It is, as I have shown, a perfectly mutual affair, and each believes that his own interest is best safeguarded by safeguarding the interest of the other. 'May you propitiate the Gods and may the Gods propitiate you, and may you reach the highest good by this mutual propitiation,—says the *Bhagavad Gita*. There is no separate species called gods in the universe, but all who have the power of production and will work for the community using that power are gods—labourers no less than the capitalists.

—*Harijan* June 25, 1938.

## XCVII

### ELEVATION OF LABOUR

HERE LABOUR MEANS industrial labour and, therefore concentrated and centralized and much more limited in scope. Moreover, it lends itself readily to political handling. Being necessarily confined to cities, it attracts workers more easily than *Kisan* work. As part of constructive programme, its primary aim is elevation of labour to its deserved status. Therefore, a labour worker's aim should be to raise the moral and intellectual height of labour and thus by sheer merit to make him or her capable not merely of bettering his or her material condition, but making labour master of the means of production instead of being the slave that it is. Capital

**should be labour's servant, not its master Labour should be made conscious of its duty from whose performance rights follow as a matter of course In a concrete form:**

- (a) Labour should have its own unions
- (b) Education, both general and scientific, of both men and women, should be regularly undertaken through night schools
- (c) Children of labourers should be educated after the Basic Education style
- (d) There should be a hospital, a *creche* and a maternity home attached to every centre
- (e) Labour should be able to support itself during strikes, (Labour should be taught the science of conducting a successful non-violent strike)

**All the work I have mentioned could be only done through unions mentioned in (a) To my knowledge, the Ahmedabad Union is the best managed union This does not mean that it has reached my idea It is trying to If all the unions worked in the same direction, the lot of labour would be infinitely better than it is to-day. Labour, united and morally and intellectually trained, would any day be superior to capital**

**—*Press Report* Oct 27, 1944**

## XCVIII

### CLASS STRUGGLE

**THE CORRESPONDENT IS WRONG in suggesting that I do not believe in the existence of class struggle. What I do not believe in is the necessity of fomenting and keeping it up I entertain a growing belief that it is perfectly possible to avoid it There is no virtue in fomenting it, as**

there is in preventing it. The conflict between monied classes and labourers is merely seeming. When labour is intelligent enough to organize itself and learn to act as one man, it will have the same weight as money if not much greater. The conflict is really between intelligence and unintelligence. Surely, it will be folly to keep up such a conflict. Unintelligence must be removed.

Money has its use as much as labour. After all, money is a token of exchange. A person having 25 rupees has, say, 50 labourers pay per day at his disposal regarding 8 as. as the wage for a day of eight hours. A labourer who has 49 fellow-labourers working in unison with him is even with the person who has Rs. 25. The advantage, if any, will be with the one who has monopoly of labour. If both are even, there will be harmony. The problem, therefore, is not to set class against class, but to educate labour to a sense of its dignity. Monied men after all form a microscopic minority in the world. They will act on the square, immediately labour realizes its power and yet acts on the square. To inflame labour against monied men is to perpetuate class hatred and all the evil consequences flowing from it. The strife is a vicious circle to be avoided at any cost. It is an admission of weakness, a sign of inferiority complex. The moment labour recognizes its own dignity, money will find its rightful place, *i.e.*, it will be held in trust for labour. For, labour is more than money.

—*Harijan* Oct 16, 1945

## XCIX

### CAPITALISM AND STRIKES

How SHOULD CAPITAL behave when labour strikes? This question is in the air and has great importance at the present moment. One way is that of suppression named or nicknamed 'American'. It consists in suppression of labour through organized *goondaism*. Everybody would consider this as wrong and destructive. The other way, right and honourable, consists in considering every strike on its merits and giving labour its due—not what capital considers as due, but what labour itself would so consider and enlightened public opinion acclaims as just.

One preliminary question will justly arise. Why should there be a strike at all in any well-regulated concern? Strikes ought to be impossible when there is perfect understanding between capital and labour, mutual respect and recognition of equality. And since differences there would be sometimes between employers and employed even in the best-regulated concerns, why should there not be a system of arbitration between the parties so that they will always readily carry out in perfect good faith awards of arbitrators?

But we have to consider things not as they should be, but as they are. As time progresses, the labour world is getting more insistent in its demands which are daily increasing, and it does not hesitate to resort to violence in its impatient enforcement of those demands. New methods of enforcing them are being employed. Workers do not hesitate to injure the property of the employers, dislocate machinery, harass old men and women who would not join the strike and forcibly keep

out black-legs In these circumstances, how are the employers to behave?

In my opinion, employers and employed are equal partners, even if employees are not considered superior. But what we see to-day is the reverse The reason is, that the employers harness intelligence on their side. They have the superior advantage which concentration of capital brings with it, and they know how to make use of it One individual rupee has very little potency but when money combines as capital, the combine derives a power different from, and far in excess of, the mere sum-total of the individual rupee A million drops individually are negligible But in combination they make the ocean, carrying on its bosom a fleet of ocean hounds Whilst capital in India is fairly organized, labour is still in a more or less disorganized condition in spite of Unions and the Federation Therefore, it lacks the power that true combination gives

Moreover, it lacks intelligence, so much so that individuals fight against individuals, unions against unions Lack of intelligence leads to its exploitation by selfish and unscrupulous men, even to the point of creating and promoting mischief They know no better, being ignorant of the secret of non-violence The net result is that the workers suffer If labour were to understand the working of non-violence, the power generated by combination would any day exceed the power of dead metal in the hands of a few capitalists

Hence, my advice to the employers would be that they should willingly regard workers as the real owners of the concerns which they fancy they have created, they should further regard it as their duty to equip the employees with sound education that would draw out

the intelligence dormant in them, and gladly promote and welcome the power that this combination of the workers gives them

This noble work cannot be done in a day by the employers. Meanwhile, what should those do who have to face the destruction wrought by strikers in their concerns? I would unhesitatingly advise such employers that they should at once offer the strikers full control of the concern, which is as much the strikers' as theirs. They will vacate their premises not in a huff but because it is right, and, to show their goodwill, they would offer the employees the assistance of their engineers and other skilled staff. The employers will find in the end that they will lose nothing. Indeed, their right action will disarm opposition and they will earn the blessings of their men. They will have made proper use of their capital. I would not consider such action as benevolent. It would be an intelligent use by the capitalists of their resources, and honest dealing in regard to the employees whom they would have converted into honourable partners.

—*Harijan* March 31, 1946

## C

### LABOUR STRIKES

STRIKES HAVE TO-DAY become a universal plague. There are strikes everywhere, America and England not excepted. But in India, they have a special significance. We are living under an unnatural condition. As soon as the lid is removed and there is a crevice letting in the



fresh air of freedom, there will be an increasing number of strikes. The fundamental reason for this spreading strike fever is that life, here as elsewhere, is to-day uprooted from its basis—the basis of religion and, what an English writer has called, 'cash nexus' has taken its place. And that is a precarious bond. But even when the religious basis is there, there will be strikes, because it is scarcely conceivable that religion will have become for all the basis of life. So, there will be attempts at exploitation on the one hand, and strikes on the other. But these strikes will then be of a purely non-violent character. Such strikes never do harm to anyone. It was such a strike perhaps that brought General Smuts to his knees. "If you had hurt an Englishman," said Jan Smuts, 'I would have shot you, even deported your people. As it is, I have put you in prison and tried to subdue you and your people in every way. But how long can I go on like this, when you do not retaliate?' And so he had to come to terms with a mere *coolie* on behalf of *coolies*, as all Indians were then called in South Africa.

—*Harijan* Sept 22, 1946

## CI

### LABOUR'S ROLE

I WANT TO SAY a few words to the workmen. I hope that there is no distinction between the Hindus and the Muslims in labour. We are all labourers. If the communal canker enters the labour ranks, it would weaken

labour and, therefore, yourselves and the country—Labour is a great leveller of all distinctions. If you realized that truth, I would like you to go a step further. Labour, because it chose to remain unintelligent either becomes subservient or insolently believes in damaging capitalists' goods and machinery or even in killing capitalists. I am a labourer by conviction and a *bhangi*. As such, any interests are bound with those of labour. As such, I wish to tell you that violence will never save you. You will be killing the goose that lays golden egg. What I have been saying for years is, that labour is far superior to capital. Without labour gold, silver and copper are a useless burden. It is labour which extracts precious ore from the bowels of the earth<sup>1</sup>. I can quite conceive labour existing without metal. Labour is priceless, not gold. I want marriage between capital and labour. They can work wonders in co-operation. But that can happen only when labour is intelligent enough to co-operate with itself, and then offer co-operation with capital on terms of honourable equality. Capital controls labour because it knows the art of combination. Drops in separation can only fade away, drops in co-operation make the ocean which carries on its broad bosom ocean grey-hounds. Similarly, if all the labourers in any part of the world combine together, they cannot be tempted by higher wages or helpless-

—*Harijan* Sept 18, 1947.

<sup>1</sup> "Workmen should have no communalism among them. Have I not said that if they knew their power and used it wisely and constructively, they would become the real rulers and the employers would be their trustees and friends in need and deed? This happy state of things would come only when they knew that labour was more real capital than the capital in the shape of gold and silver which labour extracted from the bowels of the earth."

ly allow themselves to be attracted for, say, a pittance. A true and non-violent combination of labour will act like a magnet, attracting to it all the needed capital. Capitalists will then exist only as trustees. When that happy day dawns, there will be no difference between capital and labour. The labour will have ample food, good and sanitary dwellings, all the necessary education for their children, ample leisure for self-education and proper medical assistance.

—*Harijan* Sept 7, 1947

## CII

### RIGHTS OR DUTIES?

I WANT TO DEAL with one great evil that is afflicting society to-day. The capitalist and the *zamindar* talk of their rights, the labourer on the other hand of his, the prince of his divine right to rule, the *ryot* of his to resist it. If all simply insist on rights and no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos.

If, instead of insisting on rights, everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. There is no such thing as the divine right of kings to rule, and the humble duty of the *ryots* to pay respectful obedience to their masters. Whilst it is true that these hereditary inequalities must go, as being injurious to the well-being of society, the unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions is equally injurious, if not more so, to the same well-being. The latter behaviour is probably calculated to injure the millions, rather than the few cla-

mants of divine or other rights They could but die a brave or cowardly death but, those few dead would not bring in the orderly life of blissful contentment It is, therefore, necessary to understand the correlation of rights -and duties I venture to suggest that rights, that *do* not flow directly from duty well-performed, are not worth having They will be usurpations, sooner discarded the better A wretched parent, who claims obedience from his children without first doing his duty by them, excites nothing but contempt It is distortion of religious precept for a dissolute husband to expect compliance in every respect from his dutiful wife But the children who flout their parent, who is ever ready to do his duty towards them, would be considered ungrateful and would harm themselves more than their parent The same can be said about husband and wife If you apply this simple and universal rule to employers and labourers, landlords and tenants, the princes and their subjects or the Hindus and the Muslims, you will find that the happiest relations can be established in all walks of life without creating disturbance in and dislocation of life and business which you see in India as in the other parts of the world What I call the Law of *Satyagraha* is to be deduced from an appreciation of duties and rights flowing therefrom

What, for example, is the duty of the Hindu towards his Muslim neighbour? His duty is to befriend him as man, to share his joys and sorrows and help him in distress He will then have the right to expect similar treatment from his Muslim neighbour and will probably get the expected response Supposing the Hindus are in a majority in a village with a sprinkling of Muslims in their midst, the duty of the majority towards the few

Muslim neighbours is increased manifold, so much so that the few will not feel that their religion makes any difference in the behaviour of the Hindus towards them. The Hindus will then earn the right, not before, that the Muslims will be natural friends with them and in times, of danger both the communities will act as one man. But suppose that the few Muslims do not reciprocate the correct behaviour of the many Hindus and show fight in every action, it will be a sign of unmanliness. What is then the duty of the many Hindus? Certainly not to over-power them by the brute strength of the many, that will be usurpation of an unearned right. Their duty will be to check their unmanly behaviour, as they would that of their blood brothers. It is unnecessary for me to dilate further upon the illustration. I will close it by saying that the application will be exactly the same if the position is reversed. From what I have said, it is easy enough to extend the application with profit to the whole of the present state which has become baffling because people do not apply in practice the doctrine of deriving every right from a prior duty well performed.

The same rule applies to the princes and the *ryots*. The former's duty is to act as true servants of the people. They will rule not by right granted by some outside authority, never by the right of the sword. They will rule by right of service, of greater wisdom. They will then have the right to collect taxes voluntarily rendered, not for themselves but for the sake of the people under their care. If they fail to perform this simple and primary duty, the *ryots* not only owe no return duty, but the duty devolves on them of resisting the princely usurpation. It may be otherwise said that the *ryots* earn the right of resisting the usurpation or

misrule. But the resistance will become a crime against man in terms of duty if it takes the form of murder, rapine and plunder. Force that performance of duty naturally generates, is the non-violent and invincible force that *Satyagraha* brings into being

—*Harijan* July 6, 1947

### CIII

#### UNDER SWARAJ

I AM AFRAID THAT for years to come India would be engaged in passing legislation in order to raise the down-trodden, the fallen, from the mire into which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by the landlords, by the so-called higher classes, and then, subsequently and scientifically, by the British rulers. If we are to lift these people from the mire, then it would be the bounden duty of the National Government of India, in order to set its house in order, continually to give preference to these people and even free them from the burdens under which they are being crushed. And, if the landlords, *Zamindars*, moneyed men and those who are to-day enjoying privileges—I do not care whether they are Europeans or Indians—if they find that they are discriminated against, I shall sympathize with them, but I will not be able to help them, even if I could possibly do so, because I would seek their assistance in that process, and without their assistance it would not be possible to raise these people out of the mire.

Look at the condition, if you will, of the untouchables, if the law comes to their assistance and sets apart

s—15

miles of territory At the present moment, they hold no land, they are absolutely living at the mercy of the so-called higher castes, and also, let me say, at the mercy of the State They can be removed from one quarter to another without complaint and without being able to seek the assistance of law Well, the first act of the Legislature will then be to see that, in order somewhat to equalize conditions, these people are given grants freely

From whose pockets are those grants to come? Not from the pockets of Heaven Heaven is not going to drop money for the sake of the State They will naturally come from the moneyed classes, including the Europeans

It will be, therefore, a battle between the 'haves' and 'have-nots', and if that is what is feared, I am afraid the National Government will not be able to come into being if all the classes hold the pistol at the head of the dumb millions and say 'You shall not have a Government of your own unless you guarantee our possessions and our rights'

—*Nation's Voice* P 71

## CIV

### A MODEL ZAMINDAR

IF INDIAN SOCIETY IS to make real progress along peaceful lines, there must be a definite recognition on the part of the moneyed class that a *ryot* possesses the same soul that they do, and that their wealth gives them no superiority over the poor They must regard

themselves, even as the Japanese nobles did, as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their wards, the *ryots*.<sup>1</sup> Then, they would take no more than a reasonable amount as commission for their labours. At present, there is no proportion between the wholly unnecessary pomp and extravagance of the moneyed class and the squalid surroundings and the grinding pauperism of the *ryots* in whose midst the former are living. A model *Zamindar* would at once, therefore, reduce much of the burden the *ryot* is now bearing. He would come in intimate touch with the *ryots* and know their wants and inject hope into them in the place of despair which is killing the very life out of them. He will not be satisfied with the *ryots*' ignorance of the laws of sanitation and hygiene. He would reduce himself to poverty, in order that the *ryots* may have the necessities of life. He will study the economic condition of the *ryots* under his care, establish schools in which he will educate his own children side by side with those of the *ryots*. He will purify the village well and the village tank. He will teach the *ryot* to sweep his roads and clean his latrines by himself doing this necessary labour. He will throw open without reserve his own gardens for the unrestricted use of the *ryot*. He will use as hospital, school, or the like, most of the unnecessary buildings which he keeps for his pleasure. If

<sup>1</sup> "If only the rich people, whether titled or not, will act as trustees, they should soon be perfectly happy. The dream I want to realize is not spoliation of the property of private owners, but to restrict its enjoyment so as to avoid all pauperism, consequent discontent and the hideously ugly contrast that exists to-day between the lives and surroundings of the rich and the poor. The latter must be enabled to feel that they are co-partners with their *zamindars* and not their slaves, to be made to labour at the latter's sweet will, and to be made to pay all kinds of exactions on all conceivable occasions."



only the capitalist class will read the signs of the times, revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps, which to-day pass muster as villages, can be turned into abodes of peace, health and comfort I am convinced that the capitalist, if he follows the Samurai of Japan, has nothing really to lose and everything to gain There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and, on the other, the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which not even the armed force that a powerful Government can bring into play, can avert I have hoped that India will successfully avert the disaster

—*Young India* Dec 5, 1929.

## CV

### ADVICE TO ZAMINDARS

MANY ZAMINDARS ARE SYMPATHETIC to their tenants. They try to make common cause with them But the process has to be much faster than it has been With the great awakening among the *Kisans*, there must be growing dissatisfaction with their lot, and a growing assertion of their rights. I would like the *Zamindars* to recognize the correctness of the *Kisans'* position and make a corresponding change in their own outlook

The *Zamindars* would do well to take the time by

the forelock Let them cease to be mere rent collectors They should become trustees and trusted friends of their tenants. They should limit their privy purse Let them forego the questionable perquisites they take from the tenants in the shape of forced gifts on marriage and other occasions, or *nazrana* on transfer of holding from one *Kisan* to another, or on restoration to the same *Kisan* after eviction for non-payment of rent They should give them fixity of tenure, take a lively interest in their welfare, provide well-managed schools for their children, night schools for adults, hospitals and dispensaries for the sick, look after the sanitation of villages and in a variety of ways make them feel that they, the *Zamindars*, are their true friends taking only a fixed commission for their manifold services In short, they must justify their position They should trust Congressmen They may themselves become Congressmen and know that the Congress is a bridge between the people and the Government All who have the true welfare of the people at heart can harness the services of the Congress Congressmen will, on their part, see to it that *Kisans* scrupulously fulfil their obligations to the *Zamindars* I mean not necessarily the statutory, but the obligations which they have themselves admitted to be just They must reject the doctrine that their holdings are absolutely theirs to the exclusion of the *Zamindars* They are, or should be, members of a joint family in which the *Zamindar* is the head, guarding their rights against encroachment Whatever the law may be, the *Zamindari* to be defensible must approach the conditions of a joint family.

I like the ideal of Rama and Janaka They owned

nothing against the people Everything, including themselves, belonged to the people They lived in their midst a life not above theirs, but in correspondence with theirs But these may not be regarded as historical personages Then, let us take the example of the great Caliph Omar Though he was monarch of a vast realm, created by his great genius and amazing industry, he lived the life of a pauper and never considered himself owner of the vast treasures that lay at his feet He was a terror to those officials who squandered people's money in luxuries

—*Young India* May 28, 1931.

## CVI

### INSTITUTION OF KINGSHIP

SWARAJ, AS CONCEIVED BY ME, does not mean the end of kingship I have staked my all in the movement of *Swaraj* in the hope that *Swaraj* is a certain cure for all maladies As darkness vanishes at sunrise, so when the sun of *Swaraj* rises, the dark anarchy of the rulers as well as of the subjects will disappear in an instant.

If the institution of kingship has a moral basis, princes are not independent proprietors but only trustees of their subjects for revenue received from them It can, therefore, be spent by them, only as trust money It may be said that this principle has been almost completely carried out in the English Constitution Abu Bakar and Hazrat Omar collected revenue running into crores, and yet personally they were as good as *fakirs* They received not a pie from the public treasury They were

ever watchful to see that the people got justice. It was their principle that one may not play false even with the enemy, but must deal justly with him.

That prince is acceptable to me who becomes a prince among his people's servants. The subjects are the real master. But what is the servant to do, if the master goes to sleep? Everything, therefore, is included in trying for a true national awakening.

In my humble opinion, I have done my duty by the princes in saying a few words about them. A word now to the people. The popular saying 'As is the king, so are the people' is only a half-truth. That is to say, it is not more true than its converse, 'As are the people, so is the prince'. Where the subjects are watchful, a prince is entirely dependent upon them for his status. Where the subjects are overtaken by sleepy indifference, there is every possibility that the prince will cease to function as a protector and become an oppressor instead. Those who are not wide awake have no right to blame their prince. The prince as well as the people are mostly creatures of circumstances. Enterprising princes and peoples mould circumstances for their own benefit. Manliness consists in making circumstances subservient to ourselves. Those who will not heed themselves perish. To understand this principle is not to be impatient, not to reproach Fate, not to blame others. He who understands the doctrine of self-help blames himself for failure. It is on this ground that I object to violence. If we blame others where we should blame ourselves and wish for or bring about their destruction, that does not remove the root cause of the disease which, on the contrary, sinks all the deeper for the ignorance thereof.

We, then, see that the people themselves are as responsible as, and even more responsible than, the princes for the defects pointed out by me. If public opinion is opposed to a particular line of action, it should be impossible for the prince to adopt it. Opposition here does not mean merely inaudible murmur. Public opposition is effective only where there is strength behind it.

Such being my ideal, there is room for Indian States in *Swaraj* as conceived by me, and there is full protection guaranteed to the subjects for their rights. The true source of rights is duty. I have, therefore, spoken only about the duties of princes as well as the peoples. I have not dealt with the questions of the ideal constitution for the States as you alone can be its fashioners. My duty lies in discovering and employing means by which the nation may evolve the strength to enforce its will. When once the nation is conscious of its strength, it will find its own way or make it.

I Extracts from the speech delivered as President of the Kathiawad Political Conference ]

—*Young India* Jan 8, 1925

## CVII

### APPEAL TO THE PRINCES

FOR MY PART, I desire not abolition but conversion of a princes' autocracy into trusteeship, not in name but in reality. The arbitrary powers they enjoy should go. The liberty of the people should not depend upon the will of an individual, however noble and ancient may be his descent. Nor can any person, whether prince

-or a princely *Zamindar* or merchant, be the sole owner and disposer of possessions hereditary or self-acquired. Every individual must have the fullest liberty to use his talents consistently with equal use by his neighbours, but no one is entitled to the arbitrary use of the gains from the talents. He is part of the nation or, say, the social structure surrounding him. Therefore, he can only use his talents not for self only, but for the social structure of which he is but a part and on whose sufferance he lives. The present inequalities are surely due to people's ignorance. With a growing knowledge of their natural strength, the inequalities must disappear. If the revolution is brought about by violence, the position will be reversed but not altered for the better. With non-violence, *i.e.* conversion, the new era which people hope for must be born. My approach and appeal are in terms of non-violence, pure and undefiled. The French have a noble motto in Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. It is a heritage not for the French only, but for all mankind.

What the French never realized is open to us to do. Will the Princes and the princely land-holders and merchants take the lead? It is for them to take the lead not for the have-nots, who have nothing to share with anybody except their pauperism and abjectness.

—*Harijan* August 2, 1942

## CVIII

### TO THE ZAMINDARS

LET ME ASSURE YOU that I shall be no party to dispossessing propertied classes of their private property

without just cause My objective is to reach your heart and convert you so that you may hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare. I am aware of the fact that within the ranks of the Congress a new party, called the Socialist Party is coming into being, and I cannot say what would happen if that party succeeds in carrying the Congress with it But I am quite clear that, if strictly honest and unchallengeable referendum of our millions were to be taken, they would not vote for the wholesale expropriation of the propertied classes I am working for the co-operation and co-ordination of capital and labour, of landlord and tenant

But I must utter a note of warning I have always told millowners that they are not exclusive owners of mills and workmen are equal sharers in ownership In the same way, I would tell you that ownership of your land belongs as much to the *ryots* as to you, and you may not squander your gains in luxurious or extravagant living, but must use them for the well-being of *ryots* Once you make your *ryots* experience a sense of kinship with you, and a sense of security that their interest as members of a family will never suffer at your hands, you may be sure that there cannot be a clash between you and them and no class war

Class war is foreign to the essential genius of India, which is capable of evolving Communism on the fundamental rights of all on equal justice *Rama Raj* of my dream ensures rights alike of prince and pauper.

You may be sure that I shall throw the whole weight of my influence in preventing class war Supposing that there is an attempt unjustly to deprive you of your property, you will find me fighting on your side.

There is nothing in the Congress creed or policy that need frighten you. All your fears and misgivings, permit me to tell you, are those of guilty conscience. Wipe out injustices you may have been consciously or unconsciously guilty of, and shed all fear of Congress and Congressmen. Once you turn a new leaf in relations between *Zamindars* and *ryots*, you will find us on your side guarding your private rights and property.

When I say 'us', I have Pandit Jawaharlal also in mind, for I am sure, that on this essential principle of non-violence there is no difference between us. He does indeed talk of nationalization of property, but it need not frighten you. The nation cannot own property except by vesting it in individuals. It simply ensures its just and equitable use, and prevents all possible misuse, and I do not think you can have any possible objection to holding your property for the benefit of the *ryots*. *Ryots* themselves have no greater ambition than to live in peace and freedom and they will never grudge your possession of property, provided you use it for them.

—*Amrita Bazar Patrika* Aug 2, 1934

## CIX

### THE RICH AS TRUSTEES

WHILE WE BELIEVE in the principle that we can control only the means, the end or result is not in our hands; the Socialists look to the end, and are prepared to adopt any means to achieve it. But, if we shall fully preserve the purity of our means, I have no doubt that the lead-



ership over the masses will remain with us, the Socialists will not succeed. If they get the power, they will resort to confiscation of property, repudiation of debts and similar extreme methods. But if we keep proper control over the means, power will never go to the Socialists. At present, they will not be able to achieve anything beyond startling the propertied class by their unrestrained language. I do not want just to startle them, I want to reform them. For myself, I would laugh at the Socialists' talks. If we are vigilant and honest, they can never succeed in our country.

So far what we have done is so very trivial indeed, and yet we have been able to bring about some change in people like—though, to a very insignificant extent, they have begun to act as trustees. It is true that the amount of commissions which they take as trustees is on a royal scale, but by and by we shall succeed in getting that also reduced—has converted himself into a true trustee, and when the control of the Government passes into the hands of masses, all of them (capitalists) will quickly accept their obligations, and will be willing to carry out the duties assigned to them. But if we needlessly startle them to-day, they will just organize themselves and establish Fascism in our country. In a way, Fascism does exist in our country even to-day, but so far not many of the rich have joined it. Those who have understood that I am their friend do not join any such organization. How can they organize against me?

It is not that people would necessarily be unhappy under Fascism. We may leave aside Hitler, but, under Mussolini, Italy is certainly better off than before.

Some of the public utility works undertaken there are commendable. The standard of living has improved. But what does it all avail? There is no freedom there. Whoever dares to oppose Mussolini's policy invites death. And now even killing has become unnecessary. People have adapted themselves to new condition *and* are content with it. He has done the work more cleverly than Hitler. His personal life is extremely simple. But he has the eyes of a cat. A person gets dazed in his presence. I was not to be dazed like that, but I noticed that he had so arranged things about him that a visitor would easily get stricken with terror. The walls of the passage, through which one has to pass to reach him, are all overstudded with various types of swords and other weapons. In his own room, too, there is not a single picture or anything of that kind on the walls but they are all covered with weapons. He keeps no arms on his person. But his eyes move about in every direction as if in constant rotation. The [visitor](#) would totally succumb before the awe of his gaze, like a rat running directly into the mouth of a cat out of mere fright. What is happening in our own country in Bengal to-day? Anderson says that he is taking the mildest possible steps to check the terrorist activity there. But even these steps might be oppressive enough. Yet people may grow insensible when it is not quite visible, and the people in Bengal seem to have got used to the high-handed rule going on there to-day. Darjeeling was once a resort of the Bengalis. Englishmen had almost left it. But to-day no Bengali can even enter Darjeeling without a passport. This is not a desirable condition of existence, even if people are economically well off. There is danger of this type

of Fascism established in India, and I want to save the country from it by winning the rich over and making them our friends

So in our efforts, we must strictly guard the means of attaining control over the masses. These must always be pure. If at the time people obtain control over Government, the leadership is in our hands, there will be no difficulty in settling the problem of rural indebtedness.

The moneyed class will readily accept the position of trustees. If we do not waste our wealth and energy, the climate and the natural resources of our country are such that we can become the happiest people in the world.

[From Notes of a 'Talk with Gandhiji' dated August 22, 1934.]

—*Harijan* Oct 24, 1948

CX

## NEED NOT DISPOSSESS THEM

**Q** Do NOT YOU THINK that these *Zamindars* and *Talukdars* are a pest in the country? Cannot we solve the problem of dispossessing these *Zamindars* and distributing their land among the poor?

**A** We may not forcibly dispossess the *Zamindars* and *Talukdars* of their thousands of *bighas*. And among "whom shall we distribute them? We need not dispossess

them. They only need a change of the heart. When that is done, and when they learn to melt at their tenants' woe, they will hold their lands in trust for them, will give them a major part of the produce, keeping only sufficient for themselves. 'We had better wait for that day until the Greek Kalends', someone will say. I do not think so. I think that the world is moving towards peace, *i.e.* *Ahimsa*. The way of violence has been tried for ages and has been found wanting. Let no one believe that the people in Russia, Italy, and other countries are happy or are independent. The sword of Damocles is always hanging over their heads. Those who have the good of the Indian agriculturist at heart, must pin their faith on non-violence and plod on. Those who think of other methods are vainly flattering themselves with hope of success. The agriculturist never figures in their calculations, or, at any rate, they do not know his condition.

What I have said above applies equally to the *sawkar* and other exploiters. Nothing but their own profit appeals to them. But there, too, the remedy is the moral education of both. The oppressed need no other education except in *Satyagraha* and Non-co-operation<sup>1</sup>. A slave is a slave because he consents to slavery. If training in physical resistance is possible, why should that in spiritual resistance be impossible? If we know

<sup>1</sup> "Exploitation of the poor can be extinguished not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires, but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-co-operate with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also. I have even suggested that ultimately it will lead to both being equal partners. Capital as such is not evil, it is its wrong use that is evil. Capital, in some form or other, will always be needed"

the use of the body, why can we not know the use and power of the soul?

—*Young India*. Feb 4, 1926.

## CXI

### BOLSHEVISM

I AM YET IGNORANT of what exactly Bolshevism is I have not been able to study it I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run But I *do* know that, in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me I do not believe in short, violent cuts to success Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that however much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods, even to serve the noblest of causes There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself But my creed of non-violence not only does not preclude me but compels me even to associate with anarchists and all those who believe in violence But that association is always with the sole object of weaning them from what appears to me to be their error For, experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence Even if my belief is a fond delusion, it will be admitted that it is a fascinating delusion

—*Young India* Dec 11, 1924

## SOCIAL ECONOMICS OF BOLSHEVISM

**Q** WHAT IS YOUR OPINION about the social economics of Bolshevism, and how far do you think they are fit to be copied by our country?

**A** I must confess that I have not yet been able fully to understand the meaning of Bolshevism. All that I know is that it aims at the abolition of institution of private property. This is only an application of the ethical ideal of non-possession in the realm of economics, and if the people adopted this ideal of their own accord, or could be made to accept it by means of peaceful persuasion, there would be nothing like it. But, from what I know of Bolshevism, it not only does not preclude the use of force, but freely sanctions it for the expropriation of private property and maintaining the collective State-ownership of the same. And if that is so, I have no hesitation in saying that the Bolshevik regime, in its present form, cannot last for long. For, it is my firm conviction that nothing enduring can be built on violence. But be that as it may, there is no questioning the fact that the Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who have given up their all for its sake, and an ideal that is sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain. The noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever, and quicken and purify the ideal as time passes.

—*Young India* Nov 15, 1928

## CXIII

### TO THE COMMUNISTS

YOU CLAIM TO BE COMMUNISTS, but you do not seem to live the life of Communism. I may tell you that I am trying my best to live up to the ideal of Communism<sup>1</sup> in the best sense of the term. And Communism does not, I fancy, exclude courtesy. If you want to carry the country with you, you ought to be able to react on it by reasoning with it. You cannot do so by coercion. You may deal destruction to bring the country round to your view. But how many will you destroy? Not tens of millions. You may kill a few thousands, if you had millions with you. But to-day you are no more than a handful. I ask you to convert the Congress if you can, and to take charge of it. But you cannot do so by bidding good-bye to the elementary rules of courtesy. And there is no reason why you should be lacking in ordinary courtesy when it is open to you to give the fullest vent to your views, when India is tolerant enough to listen patiently to anyone who can talk coherently.

I claim that none of my activities has ever harmed the workers, can ever harm them. Long before the Communist Party came into existence, the Congress

<sup>1</sup> "What does Communism mean in the last analysis? It means classless society—an ideal that is worth striving for. Only I part company with it when force is called to aid for achieving it. We are all born equal, but we have all these centuries resisted the will of God. The idea of inequality, of 'high and low', is an evil, but I do not believe in eradicating evil from the human breast at the point of the bayonet. The human breast does not lend itself to that means."

**had** decided that the *Swaraj* would have no meaning which was not the *Swaraj* for workers and peasants. Perhaps, none of you workers here gets less than a monthly wage of Rs 20, but, I am working for winning *Swaraj* not only for you, but for those toiling and unemployed millions who do not get even a square meal a day, and have to scratch along with a piece of stale *roti* and a pinch of salt. But I do not want to deceive you. I must warn you that I do not bear any ill to the capitalists, I can think of doing them no harm. But I want, by means of suffering, to awaken them to their sense of duty, I want to melt their hearts and get them to render justice to their less fortunate brethren. They are human beings and my appeal to them will not go in vain. The history of Japan reveals many an instance of self-sacrificing capitalists. During the last *Satyagraha*, quite a number of capitalists went in for considerable sacrifice, went to jail and suffered. Do you want to estrange them? Don't you want them to work with you for the common end?

God has given you intellect and talent. Turn them to proper account. I beseech you not to lay an embargo on your reason. God help you.

-*Young India* March 26, 1931

## CXIV

### CAN YOU AVOID CLASS WAR?

**Q** IF YOU WILL BENEFIT the workers, the peasant and the factory hand, can you avoid class war?

**A** I can, most decidedly, if only the people will follow



the non-violent method By the non-violent method we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism<sup>1</sup> We invite the capitalist to regard himself as trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention and the increase of his capital. Nor need the worker wait for his conversion If capital is power, so is work Either power can be used destructively or creatively Either is dependent on the other Immediately the worker realizes his strength, he is in a position to become a co-sharer with the capitalist instead of remaining his slave If he aims at becoming the sole owner, he will most likely be killing the hen that lays golden eggs Inequalities in intelligence and even opportunity will last till the end of time A man living on the banks of a river has any day more opportunity of growing crops than one living in an arid desert But if inequalities stare us in the face, the essential equality, too, is not to be missed Every man has an equal right to the necessities of life, even as birds and beasts have And since every right carries with it a corresponding duty and the corresponding remedy for resisting any attack upon it, it is merely a matter of finding out the corresponding duty and remedies to vindicate the elementary fundamental equality. The corresponding duty is to labour with my limbs, and the corresponding remedy is to non-co-operate with him who deprives me of the fruit of my labour And if I would recognize the fundamental equality, as I must, of the capitalist and

i "Those who seek to destroy men rather than their manners, adopt the latter and become worse than those whom they destroy under the mistaken belief that the manners will die with the men. They do not know the root of the evil"

—*Young India* March 17, 1927.

the labourer, I must not aim at his destruction. I must strive for his conversion. My non-co-operation with him will open his eyes to the wrong he may be doing. Nor need I be afraid of someone else taking my place when I have non-co-operated. For, I expect to influence my co-workers so as not to help the wrong-doing of employer. This kind of education of the mass of workers is no doubt a slow process, but as it is also the surest, it is necessarily the quickest. It can be easily demonstrated that destruction of the capitalist must mean destruction in the end of the worker, and as no human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption, no human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him whom he wrongly considers to be wholly evil

—*Young India* March 26, 1931

## CXV

### POSITION OF PRIVILEGED CLASSES

Q. How EXACTLY DO YOU THINK the Indian Princes, landlords, millowners and money-lenders and other profiteers are enriched?

A At the present moment by exploiting the masses.

Q. Can these classes be enriched without the exploitation of the Indian workers and peasants?

A To a certain extent, Yes

Q. Have these classes any social justification to live more comfortably than the ordinary worker and peasant who does the work which provides their wealth?

A No justification. My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal-

opportunity, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence, etc, therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more, and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be Used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father goes to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees. It may be that I would fail miserably in this. But that is what I am sailing for.

**Q** Don't you think that the peasants and workers are justified in carrying on a class war for economic and social emancipation, so that they can be free once and for all from the burden of supporting parasitic classes in society?

**A.** No. I myself am carrying on a revolution on their behalf. But it is a non-violent revolution.

**Q** How, then, will you bring about the trusteeships? Is it by persuasion?

**A** Not merely by verbal persuasion. I will concentrate on my means. Some have called me the greatest revolutionary of my time. It may be false, but I believe myself to be a revolutionary—a non-violent revolutionary. My means are non-co-operation. No person can amass wealth without the co-operation, willing or forced, of the people concerned.

**Q** Who constituted the capitalists trustees? Why are

they entitled to a commission, and how will you fix the commission?

A They will be entitled to a commission because money is in their possession- Nobody constituted them trustees I am inviting them to act as trustees- I am inviting those people who consider themselves as owners to-day to act as trustees, i e, owners, not in their own right, but owners, in the right of those whom they have exploited I will not dictate to them what commission to take, but ask them to take what is fair, e g, I would ask a man who possesses Rs 100 to take Rs 50, and give the other Rs 50 to the workers But to him who possesses Rs 10,000,000 I would perhaps say take 1% yourself So you see that my commission would not be a fixed figure, because that would result in atrocious injustice

Q The *Maharajas* and landlords sided with the British. But, you find your support in the masses The masses, however, see in them their enemy What would be your attitude if the masses decided the fate of these classes when they are in power?

A. The masses do not to-day see in landlords and other profiteers their enemy But the consciousness of the wrong done to them by these classes has to be created in them I do not teach the masses to regard the capitalists as their enemies, but I teach them that they are their own enemies Non-co-operators never told the people that the British or Gen. Dyer was bad, but that they were the victims of a system So that, the system must be destroyed and not the individual

—*Young India*- Nov. 26, 1931

## NO INEVITABILITY OF CLASS CONFLICT

"BUT WHAT ABOUT THE *Zamindar*? Would you eliminate him? Would you destroy him?"

I do not want to destroy the *Zamindar*, but neither do I feel that the *Zamindar* is inevitable. I will illustrate how I work out my trusteeship theory here. In this village, Jamnalalji has a 75 per cent share. Of course, I have come here not by design but by accident. When I approached Jamnalalji for help, he built me the required hut and out-houses and said: "Whatever profit there is from Segaon, you may take for the welfare of the village. If I can persuade other *Zamindars* to do likewise, village improvement becomes easy. Of course, the next question is that of the land system and that of Government exploitation. I regard the difficulties surrounding that aspect of the question as, for the moment, necessary evils. If the present programme is earned through, I shall perhaps know how to deal with the Government exploitation."

"Your actual economic policy would differ from Mr. Nehru's? He, so far as I understand him, would wipe out the *Zamindar*."

Yes, we seem to differ in our ideas of village uplift and reconstruction. The difference is of emphasis. He does not mind the village uplift movement. He believes in industrialization; I have grave doubt about its usefulness for India. He believes in the ultimate inevitability of class conflict, though he would avoid it, if he could. I expect to convert the *Zemindars* and other capitalists by the nonviolent method, and, there-

fore, there is for me nothing like an inevitability of class conflict. For, it is an essential part of non-violence to go along the line of least resistance. The moment the cultivators of the soil realize their power, the *Zamindari* evil will be sterilized. What can the poor *Zamindar* do when they say that they will simply not work the land, unless they are paid enough to feed and clothe and educate themselves and their children in a decent manner? In reality, the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. That is how I do not see the necessity of class conflict. If I thought it inevitable, I should not hesitate to preach it and teach it.

—*Harijan* Dec 5, 1936

## CXVII

### SYSTEM OF ZAMINDARI

Q. BUT CAN'T WE SAY the system of *Zamindari* is an anachronism and should go, by non-violent means of course?

A. Of course, we can. The question is 'must we?' Why can we not say to the *Zamindars*. These are the evils which we ask you to remove yourselves? I admit that this presumes trust in human nature.

Q. Would you say that the Permanent Settlement should remain?

A. No, it has to go. The way to make the *Kisans* happy and prosperous is to educate them to know the reason of their present condition and how to mend it.

We show them the non-violent way or the violent The latter may look tempting, but it is the way to perdition in the long run.

Q But don't you agree that the land belongs to him who tills it?

A I do But that need not mean that the *Zamindar* should be wiped out The man who supplies brains and metal is as much a tiller, as the one who labours with his hands What we aim at, or should, is to remove the present terrible inequality between them.

Q But the mending process may be very long

A Seemingly the longest process is often the shortest.

Q But why not parcel out the land among the tillers<sup>7</sup>

A That is a hasty thought The land is to-day in their hands But they know neither their rights, nor how to exercise them Supposing they were told neither to move out of the land, nor to pay their dues to the *Zamindars*, do you think their misery would be over<sup>7</sup> Surely, much will still remain to be done. I suggest that that should be undertaken now and the rest will follow as day follows night

—*Harijan* April 23, 1938

## CXVIII

### THE KISAN

THE KISAN OR THE PEASANT, whether as a landless labourer or a labouring proprietor, comes first He is the salt of the earth which rightly belongs or should belong to him, not to the absentee landlord or *Zamindar*. But, in the non-violent way, the labourer cannot forcibly eject the absentee landlord. He has so

to work as to make it impossible for the landlord to\* exploit him. Closest co-operation amongst the peasants is absolutely necessary. To this end, special organizing bodies or committees should be formed where there are none and those already in existence should be re-formed where necessary. The *Kisans* are, for the most part, illiterate. Both adults and young persons of school-going age should be educated. This applies to men and women. When they are landless labourers, their wages should be brought to a level that would ensure a decent living which should mean balanced food, dwelling-houses and clothing, which should satisfy health requirements.

Land laws should be investigated. The peasant indebtedness offers a limitless field for research. The problem of cattle, too, is an integral part of agriculture in India and, therefore, requires the attention of workers skilled in this very intricate and somewhat baffling problem.

—*Press Report* Oct. 28, 1944

## CXIX

### KISAN PRAJA RAJ

**Q** You SAY THAT THE EARTH rightly belongs or should belong to the peasant. By this, do you mean only that the peasant ought to gain control over the land he cultivates, or that he should also gain effective voice and power in society and over the State in which he is obliged to live? If the *Kisms* are to have only land and not effective political power, their position will be just as bad as in Soviet Russia, where political power has been



monopolized by the proletariat dictatorship.

A. I don't know what has happened in Soviet Russia, But I have no doubt that if we have democratic *Swaraj*, as it must be if freedom is won through non-violence, the *Kisan* must hold power in all its phases including political power

Q Am I right in interpreting your statement that "land should not belong to the absentee landlord or *Zamindar*" that ultimately the *Zamindari* System has to be abolished?

A Yes But you should remember that I visualize a system of trusteeship regulated by the State In other words, I do not want to antagonize the *Zamindars*, and for the matter, any class without cause

Q When you say that a peasant has so to work as to make it impossible for the landlord to exploit him, does it include, apart from the *Satyagrahic* campaigns, the legislative and administrative reforms that peasants may oblige the State through the exercise of their franchise, and political influence to improve their individual and collective conditions and minimize the powers of the landlords?

A Civil Disobedience and Non-co-operation are designed for use when people, that is, the tillers of the soil, have no political power But immediately they have political power, naturally their grievances, whatever their character, will be ameliorated through legislative channels But they might not have all that political power, you will perhaps say. My reply is that, if *Swaraj* is attained by the efforts of the whole people, as it must be under non-violence, the *Kisans* must come into their own and have the uppermost voice But, if It is not so, and there is a sort of workable compromise

between the people and the Government on the basis of a limited franchise, the interests of the tiller of the soil will need close watching. If the Legislature proves itself to be incapable of safeguarding *Kisans'* interests, they will, of course, always have the sovereign remedy of Civil Disobedience and Non-co-operation. But, as I said, as early as 1922, in connection with Chirala Perala, ultimately it is not paper legislation, nor brave words or fiery speeches, but the power of non-violent organization, discipline and sacrifice that constitute the real bulwark of the people against injustice or oppression.

—*Press Report*: Dec 6, 1944

## CXXX

### THE CLASSES AND THE MASSES

I DO NOT BELIEVE that the capitalists and the landlords are all exploiters by an inherent necessity, or that there is a basic or irreconcilable antagonism between their interests and those of the masses. All exploitation is based on co-operation, willing or forced, of the exploited. However much we may detest admitting it, the fact remains that there would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiter. But self comes and we hug the chains that bind us. This must cease. What is needed is not the extinction of landlords and capitalists, but a transformation of the existing relationship between them and the masses into something healthier and purer.

I would like to use the landlords and the capitalists

for the service of the masses. We must not sacrifice the interests of the masses to the capitalists. We must not play their game. We must trust them to the measure of their ability to surrender their gains for the service of the masses. Do you think that the so-called privileged classes are altogether devoid of nationalistic sentiment? If you think so, you will be doing grave injustice to them and disservice to the cause of the masses. Are not they, too, exploited by the rulers? They are not insusceptible to the higher appeal. It has been my invariable experience that a kind word uttered goes home to them. If we win their confidence and put them at their ease, we will find that they are not averse to progressively sharing their riches with the masses.

Moreover, let us ask ourselves how much we have done to identify ourselves with the masses. Have we bridged the gulf between the surging millions and us? Let us, who live in glass houses, not throw stones. To what extent do you share the life of the masses? I confess that with me it is still an aspiration. We ourselves have not completely shed the habits of living that we say that the capitalists are notorious for.

The idea of class war does not appeal to me. In India, a class war is not only not inevitable, but it is avoidable if we have understood the message of non-violence. Those who talk about class war as being inevitable, have not understood the implications of non-violence or have understood them only skin-deep.

—*Amrita Bazar Patrika* August 3, 1934

## CXXI

### WHO IS TO JUDGE?

Q. How TO DISPOSSESS PEOPLE of ill-gotten gains—which is what the Socialists are out to do?

A. Who 19 to judge what gains or riches are ill-gotten or well-gotten? God alone can judge, or a competent authority appointed both by the "haves" and the "have-nots" can judge. Not anyone and everyone. But if you say that *All* property and possession is theft, all must give up property and wealth. Have we given it up? Let us make a beginning, expecting the rest to follow. For, those who are convinced that their own possessions are ill-gotten, there is, of course, no other alternative but to give them up.

—*Harijan* August 1, 1936

## CXXII

### HOW CAN RICH HELP THE POOR?

Q. How CAN THE RICH help the poor without the rich being poor themselves? Richness or capitalism is a system which tries to perpetuate the colossal difference between capital and labour in order to maintain its position and status. Is it, therefore, possible to effect any compromise between them without greatly injuring the interests of either?

A. The rich can help the poor by using their riches not for selfish pleasure, but so as to subserve the interests of the poor. If they do so, there will not be that

unbridgable gulf that to-day exists between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.' Class divisions there will be, but they will then be horizontal, not vertical

Let us not be obsessed with catch-words and seductive slogans—imported from the West. Have we not our distinct Eastern tradition? Are we not capable of finding our own solution to the question of capital and labour? What is the system of *Varnashrama* but a means of harmonizing the difference between high and low, as well as between capital and labour? All that comes from the West on this subject is tarred with the brush of violence. I object to it because I have seen the wreckage that lies at the end of this road. The more thinking set, even in the West to-day, stand aghast at the abyss for which their system is heading. And I owe whatever influence I have in the West to my ceaseless endeavour to find a solution which promises an escape from the vicious circle of violence and exploitation. I have been a sympathetic student of the Western social order, and I have discovered that underlying the fever that fills the soul of the West, there is a restless search for Truth. I value that spirit. Let us study our Eastern institutions in that spirit of scientific enquiry, and we shall evolve a truer Socialism and a truer Communism than the world has yet dreamed of. It is surely wrong to presume that Western Socialism or Communism is the last word on the question of mass poverty

-Amrita Bazar Patrika August 3, 1934.

## CXXIII

### SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it for I know that the essential difference between man and the brute is that the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute, and, therefore, superior to selfishness and violence, which belong to the brute nature and not to the immortal spirit of man. That is the fundamental conception of Hinduism, which has years of penance of austerity at the back of discovery of this truth. That is why, whilst we have had saints who have worn out their bodies and laid down their lives in order to explore the secrets of the soul, we have had none, as in the West, who laid down their lives in exploring the remotest or the highest regions of the earth. Our Socialism or Communism should, therefore, be based on non-violence and on harmonious co-operation of labour and capital, landlord and tenant.

—*Amrita Bazar Patrika*. August 2, 1934.

## CXXIV

### THE GOLDEN KEY

I HAVE BEEN ASKED by several workers as to the essence of Hinduism. We have no simple *Raima*, they said that we find in Islam, nor have we 3 16 John of the

s—17

*Bible* Have we or have we not something that will answer the demands of the most philosophic among the Hindus or the most matter-of-fact among them? Some have said, and not without good reason, the *Gayatri* answers that purpose. I have perhaps recited the *Gayatri Mantra* a thousand times, having understood the meaning of it. But still, it seems to me that it did not answer the whole of my aspirations. Then, as you are aware, I have, for years past, been swearing by the *Bhagavad Gita*, and have said that it answers all my difficulties and has been my *Kamadhenu*, my guide, my open sesame on hundreds of moments of doubt and difficulty. I cannot recall a single occasion when it has failed me. But it requires a prayerful study before the *Kamadhenu* yields the rich milk she holds in her udders.

But I have fixed upon one *mantra* as containing the whole essence of Hinduism. Many of you, I think, know the *Ishopanishad*. I read it years ago with translation and commentary. I learnt it by heart in Yeravda Jail. But it did not then captivate me, as it has done during the past few months, and I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the *Upantshads* and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse in the *Ishopanishad* were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever.

Now this *mantra*<sup>1</sup> divides itself in four parts. The first part is ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्। It means, as I would translate, all this that we see in this great Universe is pervaded by God. Then come the second and third parts which read together, as I read them: तेन त्यक्तेन भुजीथा। I divide these into two and translate

them thus: Renounce it and enjoy it. There is another rendering which means the same thing, though. Enjoy what He gives you. Even so, you can divide it into two parts. Then follows the final and most important part, **मा गृध कस्यस्विद्धनम्** which means Do not covet anybody's wealth or possession. All the other *mantras* of that ancient *Upamshad* are a commentary or an attempt to give us the full meaning of the first *mantra*.

As I read the *mantra* in the light of the *Gita* or the *Gita* in the light of the *mantra*, I find that the *Gita* is a commentary on this *mantra*. It seems to me to satisfy the cravings of the Socialist and the Communist, of the philosopher and the economist. I venture to suggest to all who do not belong to the Hindu faith that it satisfies their cravings also. And if it is true—and I hold it to be true—you need not take anything in Hinduism which is inconsistent with or contrary to the meaning of this *mantra*. What more can a man in the street want to learn than this, that the one God and Creator and Master of all that lives pervades the Universe?

The three other parts of the *mantra* follow directly from the first. If you believe that God pervades everything that He has created, you must believe that you cannot enjoy anything that is not given by Him. And seeing that He is the Creator of His numberless child-

“ ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किंच जगत्या जगत् ।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुजीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥ ”

[“God, the Ruler, pervades all there is in this Universe. Therefore, renounce and dedicate all to Him and then enjoy or use the portion that may fall to thy lot. Never covet anybody's Possession.”]



ren, it follows that you cannot covet anybody's possession. If you think that you are one of His numerous creatures, it behoves you to renounce everything and lay it at His feet. That means that the act of renunciation of everything is not a mere physical renunciation, but represents a second or new birth. It is a deliberate act, not done in ignorance. It is, therefore, a regeneration. And then since he who holds the body must eat and drink and clothe himself, he must naturally seek all that he needs from Him. And he gets it as a natural reward of that renunciation.

As if this was not enough, the *mantra* closes with this magnificent thought. Do not covet anybody's possession. The moment you carry out these precepts you become a wise citizen of the world, living at peace with all that lives. It satisfies one's highest aspirations on this earth and hereafter. No doubt, it will not satisfy the aspiration of him who does not believe in God and His undisputed sovereignty. If all the princes would call themselves servants of God, they would be correctly describing themselves, but they cannot be servants of God unless they are servants of the people. And if *Zamindars* would treat themselves as trustees and perform the act of renunciation that I have described, this world would indeed be a blessed world to live in.

—*Harijan* Jan 30, 1937.

## CXXV

### ALL-COMPREHENSIVE MANTRA

LATTERLY, I HAVE BEEN endeavouring to describe to vast assemblages of men and women I have addressed what

I regard as the essence of Hinduism, and I have been suggesting to them one incredibly simple *mantra* of the *Ishopanishad*, and, as you know, it is one of the *Upamshads* that enjoy the sanctity of the *Vedas*. The very first verse of the *Ishopanishad* means simply this. God pervades everything that is to be found in this Universe down to the tiniest atom. The *mantra* describes God as the Creator, the Ruler, and the Lord<sup>1</sup>

The seer to whom this *mantra* or verse was revealed was not satisfied with the magnificent statement that God was to be found everywhere. But he went further and said 'Since God pervades everything, nothing belongs to you, not even your own body. God is the undisputed, unchallengeable Master of everything you possess'. And so when a person who calls himself a Hindu goes through the process of regeneration or a second birth, as Christians would call it, he has to perform a dedication or renunciation of all that he has in ignorance called his own property. And, then, when he has performed this act of dedication or renunciation, he is told that he will win a reward in the shape of God taking good care of what he will require for food, clothing or housing. Therefore, the condition of enjoyment or use of the necessities of life is their dedication or renunciation. And that dedication or renunciation has got to be done from day to day, lest we may in this busy world forget the central fact of life. And, to crown all, the seer says 'Covet not anybody's riches'.

I suggest to you that the truth that is embedded in this very short *mantra* is calculated to satisfy the highest cravings of every human being—whether they have reference to this world or to the next. I have in my search of the scriptures of the world found nothing to

add to this *mantra* Looking back upon all the little I have read of the scriptures—it is precious little I confess—I feel that everything good in all the scriptures is derived from this *mantra* If it is universal brotherhood—not only brotherhood of all human beings, but of all living beings—I find it is in this *mantra* If it is unshakable faith in the Lord and Master—and all the adjectives you can think of—I find it in this *mantra* If it is the idea of complete surrender to God and of the faith that He will supply all that I need, then again I say I find it in this *mantra* Since He pervades every fibre of my being and of all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth, and it should satisfy the cravings of all philosophical Communists This *mantra* tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God, and if my life and that of all who believe in this *mantra* has to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service of our fellow-creatures

—*Harijan* Jan 30, 1937.

## CXXVI

### COMMUNISM

Q "WHAT DO YOU think of Communism? Do you think it would be good for India?"

A Communism of the Russian type, that is Communism which is imposed on a people, would be repugnant to India I believe in non-violent Communism.

Q But Communism in Russia is against private property Do you want private property?

A If Communism came without any violence, it would be welcome For, then no property would be held by anybody except on behalf of the people and for the people A millionaire may have his millions, but he will hold them for the people The State could take charge of them whenever they would need them for the common cause

Q Is there any difference of opinion between you and Jawaharlal in respect of Socialism?

A There is, but it is a difference in emphasis He perhaps puts an emphasis on the result, whereas I put on the means Perhaps, according to him, I am putting an over-emphasis on non-violence, whereas he, though he believes in non-violence, would want to have Socialism by other means, if it was impossible to have it by non-violence Of course, my emphasis on non-violence becomes one of principle Even if I was assured that we could have independence by means of violence, I should refuse to have it It won't be real independence.

Q But do you think the English will leave India to you and go back peacefully as a result of your non-violent agitation?

A I do think so

Q. What is the basis of your belief?

A. I base my faith in God and His justice

Q You are more Christian than we so-called Christians I will write these words down in block letters

A. You must, otherwise God would not be God of Love but God of Violence

—*Harijan*. Feb. 13, 1937.

## CXXVII

### SO-CALLED INCONSISTENCIES

"WHENEVER ECONOMIC TROUBLES ARISE and whenever questions have been put to you on the economic relations of capital and labour, you have put forth the theory of trusteeship which has always puzzled me. You want the rich to hold all their property in trust for the poor and expend it for their benefit. If I ask you whether this is possible, you will tell me that my question arises from a belief in the essential selfishness of human nature and that your theory is based on the essential goodness of human nature. However, in the political sphere, you do not hold such views without, at the same time, losing your faith in the fundamental goodness of human nature. The British claim the same trusteeship for their domination of India. But you have lost faith in the British Empire long ago, and to-day there is no greater enemy to it than you. Is it consistent to have one law for the political world and another for the economic world? Or, do you mean to say that you have not lost faith in capitalism and capitalists, just as you have lost faith in British Imperialism and the British? For, your trusteeship theory sounds very much like the Divine Right theory of kings which has been exploded long ago. When one man, who was allowed to hold political power in trust for the others and who derived it from them, misused it, people revolted against it and Democracy was born. Similarly now when a few, who ought to hold the economic power in trust for the others from whom they derive it, use it for their own self-aggrandizement and to the detriment of the rest, the inevitable result is the deprivation of the few of the means of economic power by the many, i.e., the birth of Socialism.

"Hitherto, violence was the only recognized means to attain anything good or bad. When violence is employed even with a view to achieve good, it brings evil in its train and compromises the good achieved. Now I take it that your definite contribution to the world lies in your having successfully demonstrated the efficacy of another means, namely, non-violence which is superior to violence and does not poison human relations. Therefore, my fondest hope is that you

**should fight and end the present economic order non-violently and help to create a new one."**

I see no inconsistency in my treatment of capitalism-or Imperialism. My correspondent has been led into a confusion of thought. I have not talked or thought of what kings, imperialists or capitalists claim and have claimed. I have talked and written of how capital may be treated. And, then, it is one thing to make a claim and another to live up to it. Not everyone like me (say) who claims to be a servant of the people becomes that by the mere assertion. And yet all would appreciate persons like me, if we were found to be living up to our claim. Similarly would all rejoice if a capitalist were to divest himself of exclusive ownership and declare himself to be in possession as a trustee for the people. It is highly probable that my advice will not be accepted and my dream will not be realized. But who can guarantee that the Socialists' dream will be realized? Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, Socialism, even Communism, is explicit in the first verse of the *Ishopanishad*. What is true is, that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific Socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problem that faces scientific Socialists. It is true, however, that my approach, is always and only through unadulterated non-violence. It may fail. If it does, it will be because of my ignorance of the technique of non-violence. I may be a bad exponent of the doctrine in which my faith is daily increasing. Trusteeship, as I conceive it, has yet to prove its worth. It is an attempt to secure the best use of property for the people by competent hands.

—*Harijan*— Feb. 20, 1937.

## CXXVIII

### THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

I AM NOT ASHAMED to own that many capitalists are friendly towards me and do not fear me. They know that I desire to end capitalism almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced Socialist or even Communist. But our methods differ, our languages differ. My theory of 'trusteeship' is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it. That possessors of wealth have not acted upto the theory does not prove its falsity, it proves the weakness of the wealthy. No other theory is compatible with non-violence. In the non-violent method the wrong-doer compasses his own end, if he does not undo the wrong. For, either through Non-violent Non-co-operation he is made to see his error, or he finds himself completely isolated. And so the wise Socialists and Leftists, when the time for action arrives, are not likely to stand in my way. They know that the poor and the down-trodden will be happy if my method succeeds. They are not ready for action with their method; and they are too patriotic to interfere with me, so long as they believe in my honesty and love of the country.

—*Harijan* Dec 16, 1939

## CXXIX

### ADVICE TO THE RICH

THE RICH SHOULD PONDER well as to what is their duty to-day. They who employ mercenaries to guard their

wealth may find those very guardians turning on them. The moneyed classes have got to learn how to fight either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence. For those who wish to follow the latter way, the best and most effective *mantram* is: **तेन त्यक्तेन भुजीथा** (Enjoy the wealth by renouncing it) Expanded it means "Earn your crores by all means But understand that your wealth is not yours, it belongs to the people Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society" This truth has hitherto not been acted upon, but, if the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who overpower them

But I have visions that the end of this War will mean also the end of the rule of capital I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence Let it be remembered that physical force is transitory, even as the body is transitory But the power of the spirit is permanent, even as the spirit is everlasting

—*Harijan* Feb 1, 1942

### CXXX

#### NOT NECESSARILY IMPURE

Q You SAY TO THE RICH- "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours, it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society." When I read this, the first question that arose in my



mind was. "Why first earn crores and then use them for society?" As society to-day is constituted, the means of earning crores are bound to be impure; and one who earns crores by impure means cannot be expected to follow the *mantram* तेन त्यक्तेन भुजीथा because in the very process of earning crores by impure means, the man's character is bound to be tainted or vitiated. And, moreover, you have always been emphasizing the purity of means But I am afraid that there is a possibility of people misunderstanding that you are laying an emphasis here more on the ends than on the means

I request you to emphasize as much, if not more, the purity of means of earning money as on spending If purity of means is strictly observed, then, according to me, crores could not be accumulated at all and the difficulty of spending for society will assume a very minor prospect

A I must demur Surely, a man may conceivably make crores through strictly pure means, assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches For the purpose of my argument, I have assumed that private possession itself is not held to be impure If I own a mining lease and I tumble upon a diamond of rare value, I may suddenly find myself a millionaire without being held guilty of having used impure means This actually happened when Cullian diamond, much more valuable than the Kohinoor, was found Such instances can be easily multiplied My argument was surely addressed to such men I have no hesitation in endorsing the proposition that generally rich men, and for that matter most men, are not particular as to the way they make money In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every per-

son, however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response. Is it not conducive to the well-being of society that every member uses all his talents, not only for personal aggrandisement but for the good of all? We do not want to produce a dead equality, where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish. I, therefore, suggest that my advice, that moneyed men may earn their crores (honestly only, of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all, is perfectly sound.

**तेन त्वक्तेन भुंजीथा** is a mantra based on uncommon knowledge. It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit, in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to\* what happens to his neighbour.

—*Harijan* Feb 22, 1942

### CXXXI

#### RICHES v POVERTY

**Q** How is IT POSSIBLE to earn lakhs in a righteous, way? Jamnalalji, the merchant prince, used to say it was not. Moreover, however careful a rich man is, he is bound to spend more on himself than his actual requirements merit. Therefore, why not lay more stress on not becoming wealthy than on trusteeship of riches?

**A.** The question is apt and has been put to me before. What Jamnalalji could have meant was, in the *Gita* sense, that every action is tainted. It is my conviction that it is possible to acquire riches without con-

sciously doing wrong. For example, I may light on a gold mine in my one acre of land. But I accept the proposition that it is better not to desire wealth than to acquire it and become its trustee. I gave up my own long ago, which should be proof enough of what I would like others to do. But what am I to advise those who are already wealthy, or who would not shed the desire for wealth? I can only say to them that they should use their wealth for service. It is true that generally the rich spend more on themselves than they need. But this can be avoided. Jamnalalji spent far less on himself than men of his own economic status and even than many middle class men. I have come across innumerable rich persons who are stingy on themselves. For some, it is part of their nature to spend next to nothing on themselves, and they do not think that they acquire merit in so doing.

The same applies to the sons of the wealthy. Personally, I do not believe in inherited riches. The well-to-do should educate and bring up their children, so that they may learn how to be independent. The tragedy is that they do not do so. Their children do get some education, they even recite verses in praise of poverty, but they have no compunction about helping themselves to parental wealth. That being so, I exercise my common sense and advise what is practicable. Those of us, however, who consider it a duty to adopt poverty and believe in and desire economic equality, may not be jealous of the rich but should exhibit real happiness in our poverty which others may emulate. The sad fact is that those who are thus happy are few and far between.

—Hartjan: March 8, 1942.

## CXXXII

### A QUESTION

Q. FROM YOUR WRITINGS one gathers the notion that your 'trustee' is not anything more than a very benevolent philanthropist and donor, such as the first Parsi Baronet, the Tatas, the Wadias, the Birlas, Shri Bajaj and the like. Is that so? Will you please explain whom you regard as the primary or rightful beneficiaries of the possessions of a rich man? Is there to be a limit to the amount or part of the income and capital which he can spend upon himself, his kith and km and for non-public purposes? Can one who exceeds such limit be prevented from doing so. If he is incompetent or otherwise fails to discharge his obligations as a trustee, can he be removed and called upon to render accounts by a beneficiary or the State? Do the same principles apply to Princes and *Zamindars*, or is their trusteeship of a different nature?

A If the trusteeship idea catches, philanthropy, as we know it, will disappear. Of those you have named only Jamnalalji came near, but only near, it. A trustee has no heir but the public. In a State built on the basis of non-violence, the commission of trustees will be regulated. Princes and *Zemindars* will be on a par with the other men of wealth.

—*Harijan*. April 12, 1942

## CXXXIII

### ECONOMIC CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Q. What, in your opinion, ought to be the basis of India's future economic constitution?

A According to me, the economic constitution of India, and for the matter of that of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And, this ideal can be universally realized only if the means of production of elementary necessities of life remain under the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are, or ought to be, they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others. Their monopolization by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution that we witness to-day, not only in this unhappy land, but other parts of the world, too.

—*Young India*. Nov 15, 1928

## CXXXIV

### EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

THE REAL IMPLICATION of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example, if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of a

pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being, the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to realize the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it<sup>1</sup> To the same extent as we progress towards our goal, we shall find contentment and happiness, and to that extent, too, shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a non-violent society.

It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individuals can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasize the fact that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right course. Men generally hesitate to make a beginning, if they feel that the objective cannot be had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is in reality a bar to progress.

Now, let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The first step towards it is for him, who has made this ideal part of his being, to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earning would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. When he has done all that

<sup>1</sup> "My ideal is equal distribution, but, so far as I can see, it is not to be realized. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution"

—*Young India* March 17, 1927\*

is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

Indeed, at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must be that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For, according to the doctrine, they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or, should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this, we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore, the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for society. In this argument, honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earnings and there is *Ahimsa* in his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.

It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point them in a whole society. But this only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale on non-violence. Somehow or other, the wrong belief has taken possession of us that *Ahimsa* is pre-eminently a weapon for indivi-

duals and its use should, therefore, be limited to that sphere. In fact, this is not the case. *Ahimsa* is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment. In this age of wonders, no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult, is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen, the impossible is ever becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. The history of religion is full of such examples. To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild-goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean the destruction of society. Superstition, evil customs and other imperfections creep in from age to age and mar religion for the time being. They come and go. But religion itself remains, because the existence of the world, in a broad sense, depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be obedience to the Law of God. God and His Law are synonymous terms. Therefore, God signifies an unchanging and living Law. No one has ever really found Him. But *avatars* and prophets have, by means of their *tapasya*, given to mankind a faint glimpse of the Eternal Law.

If, however, in spite of the utmost efforts, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term, and the latter are more and more crushed and **die** of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle, I have lighted on Non-violent



Non-co-operation and Civil Disobedience as the right and infallible means The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society Man has been conversant with violence from the beginning, for he has inherited this strength from the animal in his nature It was only when he rose from the state of a quadruped (animal) to that of a biped (man), that the knowledge of the strength of *Ahimsa* entered into his soul This knowledge has grown within him slowly but surely If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation

—*Harijan* August 25, 1940.

## CXXXV

### ECONOMIC EQUALITY

WORKING FOR ECONOMIC EQUALITY means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and the levelling up of the semi-starved, naked millions on the other A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby, cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land.

A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day, unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good

I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach So is non-violence. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate that steep ascent We have found it worth the effort It involves a daily growing appreciation of the working of non-violence It is expected that Congressmen will make a diligent search and reason out for themselves the why and the wherefore of non-violence They should ask themselves how the existing inequalities can be abolished, violently or non-violently I think we know the violent way It has not succeeded anywhere

This non-violent experiment is still in the making we have nothing much yet to show by way of demonstration It is certain, however, that the method has begun to work though ever so slowly in the direction of equality And since non-violence is a process of conversion, the conversion, if achieved, must be permanent A society or a nation constructed non-violently must be able to withstand attack upon its structure from without and within We have moneyed Congressmen in the organization. They have to lead the way. This fight provides an opportunity for the closest heart-searching on the part of every individual Congressman If ever we are to achieve equality, the foundation has to be laid now Those who think that the major reforms will come after the advent of *Swaraj* are deceiving themselves as to the elementary working of non-violent *Swaraj*. It will not drop from heaven all of a sudden

one fine morning. But it has to be built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort. We have travelled a fair way in that direction. But a much longer and weary distance has to be covered before we can behold *Swaraj* in its glorious majesty. Every Congressman has to ask himself what he has done towards the attainment of economic equality.

—*Constructive Programme* (1945 Edition) P. 20,

## CXXXVI

### MEANING OF ECONOMIC EQUALITY

Q What exactly do you mean by economic equality, and what is statutory trusteeship as conceived by you?

A. Economic equality of my conception does not mean that everyone would literally have the same amount. It simply means that everybody should have enough for his or her needs. For instance, I require two *shawls* in winter, whereas my grand-nephew Kanu Gandhi, who stays with me and is like my own son, does not require any warm clothing whatsoever. I require goats milk, oranges and other fruit. Kanu can do with ordinary food. I envy Kanu, but there is no point in it. Kanu is a young man, whereas I am an old man of 76. The monthly expense of my food is far more than that of Kanu, but that does not mean that there is economic inequality between us. The elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So, the real meaning of economic equality is: "To each according to his need" That is the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with wife and four children, that **would** be a violation of economic equality.

Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and the pauper, by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument. The contrast between the rich and the poor to-day is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen—the city-dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Everyone must have balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief. This constitutes my picture of economic equality<sup>1</sup>. I do not want to taboo everything above and beyond the bare necessities, but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first.

As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make their choice between class war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Economic equality must never be supposed to mean possession of an equal amount of worldly goods by everyone. It does mean, however, that everyone will have a proper house to live in, sufficient and balanced food to eat, and sufficient *khadi* with which to cover himself. It also means that the cruel inequality that obtains to-day will be removed by purely non-violent means"

—Horijan August 18, 1940

<sup>2</sup> "It can be asked whether the present *Rajas* and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When *Panchayat Rai* is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the *Zamindars*, the capitalists and the *Rajas* can hold sway only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of *Zamin-*

They, would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the nation and, therefore, without exploitation. The State would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the services rendered and its value to society. Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it.

Supposing India becomes a free country to-morrow, all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees. But such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves, beginning with *Gram Panchayats*, will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing coming from below is easy to swallow. Coming from above, it is liable to prove a dead-weight

—*Harijan* March 31, 1946

*can* or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In *Panchayat Raj* only the *Panchayat* will be obeyed and the *Panchayat* can only work through the law of their making "

—*Harijan* June 1, 1947

## CXXXVII

### MY DIFFERENCE WITH THE SOCIALISTS

**Q** WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE between your technique and that of the Communists or Socialists for realizing the goal of economic equality?

**A** The Socialists and Communists say they can do nothing to bring about economic equality to-day. They

will just carry on propaganda in its favour, and to that end they believe in generating and accentuating hatred. They say. 'When they get control over the State, they will enforce equality/ Under my plan, the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view, but will straightway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of ten *bighas* of land. For that, I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost Communist although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it.

—*Harijan*- March 31, 1946

## CXXXVIII

### INEQUALITY IN SALARIES

WHY SHOULD A MINISTER draw Rs. 1,500 and a *chaprast* or a teacher Rs. 15 per month? The question cannot be solved by the mere raising of it. Such differences have existed for ages. Why should an elephant require an enormous quantity of food and a mere grain

suffice for the ant? The question carries its own answer. God gives to each one according to his need. If we could as definitely know the variations in the needs of men as those of the elephant and the ant, no doubts would arise. Experience tells us that differences in requirements do exist in society. But we do not know the law governing them. All, therefore, that is possible to-day is to try to reduce the differences as far as possible. The reduction can be brought about by peaceful agitation and by the creation of public opinion. It cannot be done by force or by *duragraha* in the name of *Satyagraha*. The Ministers are the people's men. Their wants, even before they took office, were not those of *chappmsts*. I would love to see a *chaprast* become worthy of holding the office of a Minister and yet not increase his needs. It should also be clearly understood that no Ministers need draw up to the maximum of the salary fixed.

—*Harijan* April 21, 1946

## CXXXIX

### EQUAL WAGES

Q Do YOU HOLD THAT all persons who perform useful and necessary service in society, whether farmer or *bhangji*, engineer or accountant, doctor or teacher, have a moral right only to equal wages with the rest? Of course, it is understood, educational or other expenses shall be a charge on the State. Our question is: Should not all persons get the same wages for their personal needs? Do you not think that if we work for this

equality, it will cut sooner under the root of untouchability than any other process?

A. I have no doubt that if India is to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the *bhangis*, doctors, lawyers, teachers merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work. Indian society may never reach the goal, but it is the duty of every Indian to set his sail towards that goal and no other, if India is to be a happy land<sup>1</sup>

—*Harijan*: March 16, 1947

## CXL

### SAME PAYMENT

I, FOR ONE, BELIEVE that under ideal conditions the barrister and the *bhangi* should both get the same payment. But I know, as everybody else does, that society all the world over is far from the ideal. It is not possible to pay everyone Rs 100 per day. I know, too, that the barrister does not deserve what he gets. But clients gladly pay fabulous fees. Coming lower down, people will gladly pay four rupees a day to a tailor, but not

<sup>1</sup> "I hold that whoever devotes eight hours daily to any socially useful productive work is entitled to get a living. My ideal of Socialism is that everyone should get the same wages. A lawyer, a physician, a teacher, a labourer or a sweeper—all should get equal wages. To-day not only wages are not equal, but there is difference of heaven and earth between the highest and the lowest incomes. At present, the condition is that while a lawyer might get a thousand rupees a day, a sweeper might not get even eight annas."

[From Notes of a Talk with Gandhiji dated August 22, 1934 J]

—*Harijan* Oct 24, 1948.



more than eight annas per day to a sweeper. Society needs patient and sustained education to bring it to the same level in earning. It requires much advanced training to reach that state of equality. Meanwhile, every effort must be made to bridge the gulf between the payments of the higher and the lower ranks. There is no such thing as an abrupt ascent in life. Let us not kill the goose that lays the golden egg. This process would spell insolvency of the land.

—*Harijan* July 27, 1947

## CXLI

### THE LURE OF LEISURE

**Q.** WHY DO YOU INSIST on eight hours' manual work a day? Is it not possible in a well-ordered society to reduce the working day to two hours and leave the citizen ample leisure for intellectual and artistic pursuits?

**A.** We know that those who get all that leisure—both the working and the intellectual classes—do not make the best use of it. In fact, we too often find the idle mind being turned into the Devil's Workshop.

**Q.** No; he would not be idling away. Supposing we divided the day into two hours' physical labour and six hours' intellectual labour; would it not be good for the nation?

**A.** I do not know that it would be feasible. I have not mathematically calculated it, but if a man will do the intellectual labour only for profit and not for the nation, I am sure that the scheme will break down; unless, of course, the State pays him amply for the two

hours' labour and compels him to do other work without paying him anything. That would be a fine thing, but it cannot be done without a kind of State conscription.

Q But take, for instance, you. You cannot in the nature of things do eight hours' physical labour, and have to do eight hours' or more intellectual work. You, do not abuse your leisure<sup>9</sup>

A It is compulsory work and leaves no leisure, as, for instance, it would if I was going out to play tennis. But I tell you, even taking my case, that I am sure our minds would have been infinitely better if we had laboured with our hands for eight hours. We would not have a single idle thought, and I may tell you that *my* mind is not entirely free from idle thoughts. Even now I am what I am, because I realized the value of physical labour at a very early stage of my life.

Q But, then, if physical work has such inherent virtue, our people have been working more than eight hours a day, not with any appreciable effect on the purity or strength of their minds.

A Physical labour by itself is not an education, even as mental labour is not. It has been with our people deadly drudgery without their knowing this, and that deadens one's finer instincts. That is where I have my strongest complaint against the *Savarna* Hindus. They have rendered work for the proletariat a task of hard drudgery, from which they have no pleasure and in which they have no interest. If they had been considered members of the society enjoying the same status as they, theirs would have been the proudest position in life. This is supposed to be the *Kaliyuga*. In the *Satyayuga*, or Golden Age, whenever it was, the society, I daresay, was better ordered than to-day. Ours is an

ancient land where civilizations have come and gone, and it is difficult to say what exactly we were like at the particular age. But there is no doubt that we are where we are because we have long neglected the *Shudras*. To-day's village culture, if culture it can be called, is an awful culture. The villagers live as worse than animals. Nature compels animals to work and live naturally. We have so debased our working classes, that they cannot work and live naturally. If our people had laboured intelligently and with joy, we should have been quite different to-day.

**Q** Work and culture cannot be separated, then?

**A.** No. They tried to do it in ancient Rome and failed miserably. Culture without labour, or culture which is not the fruit of labour, would be 'Vomitoria' as a Roman Catholic writer says. The Romans made indulgence a habit, and were ruined. Man cannot develop his mind by simply writing and reading, or making speeches all day long. All my reading, I tell you, was done in the leisure hours I got in jails, and I have benefited by it because all of it was done not desultorily but for some purpose. And though I have worked physically for days and months for eight hours on end, I don't think I suffered from mental decay. I have often walked as much as 40 miles a day and yet never felt dull.

**Q** But you had this mental equipment

**A** No fear. You don't know how mediocre I was at school and in England. I had never the courage to speak at debating society meetings, or even in a gathering of vegetarians. No, don't you run away with the thought that I was blessed with any extraordinary powers. God, I think advisedly, did not give me then

**the** power to speak    You must know, among us, I am  
**the** least **read** man.

—*Harijan*: August 1, 1936.

## CXLII

## LEGAL TRUSTEESHIP

Q. Is IT POSSIBLE TO DEFEND by means of non-violence anything which can only be gained through violence?

A. What is gained by violence can not only not be defended by non-violence, but the latter requires the abandonment of the ill-gotten gains

Q. Is the accumulation of capital possible except through violence, whether open or tacit?

A. Such accumulation by private persons is impossible except through violent means, but accumulation by the State in a non-violent society is not only possible, it is desirable and inevitable

Q. Whether a man accumulates material or moral wealth, he does so only through the help or co-operation of other members of society. Has he, then, the moral right to use any of it mainly for personal advantage?

A. No, he has no moral right.

Q. How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Will he only have the right of proposing a name, the right of finalization being vested in the State?

A. Choice should be given to the original owner who becomes the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.

Q When the replacement of private by public property thus takes place through the operation of if theory of trusteeship, will the ownership vest in the Stat which is an instrument of violence or in associations a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may, of course, derive their final authority from State-made laws?

A That question involves some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition vests II the trustee, not in the State It is to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship comes into play, re, taming for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right Nor do I hold that the State must always be based on violence It may be so in theory but the practice of the theory demands a State which will, for the most part, be based on non-violence.

—*Harijan* Feb 16, 1947

### CXLIII

#### TRUSTEESHIP

Q You HAVE ASKED Rich men to be trustees Is it implied that they should give up private ownership it their property and create out of it a trust valid in th eyes of the law and managed democratically? How w the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise?

A I adhere to the position taken by me years ago that everything belongs to God and is from God. Therefore, it is for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual When an individual has more than his pro-

'ortionate portion, he becomes a trustee of that portion or God's people

God, who is all-powerful, has no need to store. He Creates from day to day, hence men also should in heory live from day to day and not stock things. If his truth is imbibed by the people generally, it would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. I wish it becomes a gift from India to the world. Then, there will be no exploitation and no reserves as in Australia and other countries for White nen and their posterity. In these distinctions lies the eed of a war more virulent than the last two. As to the successor, the trustee in office will have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction.

—*Harijan* Feb 23, 1947

## CXLIV

### TRUSTEESHIP FORMULA

*The following 'simple, practical trusteeship formula' has had the approval of Gandhiji*

1 Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the Resent capitalist order of society into an egalitarian

It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the oresent owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

2 It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property, except inasmuch as it may be permitted by societv for its own welfare

3 It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth

4 Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.

5 Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable! and variable from time to time, so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference

6 Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed (Pyarelal)

—*Harijan*. Oct 25, 1952



















