

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWO ANNAS

## THE REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL OF BHOODAN MOVEMENT

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

I have before me two communications from reader-friends challenging the statement of Shri Nargolkar that "the success of the Bhoodan Movement largely depends on the change of heart of the numerous *big* landlords who are expected to donate one-sixth of the entire land in their ownership." (*Harijan*, April 4, 1953, p. 36, col. 1). As the main criticism in this remark, I thought, was against the need of *change of heart*, the coming about of which is a matter of doubt in the minds of some educated classes, I had answered that point and said that it was no drawback but rather the essence of the movement which is aimed to be peaceful and non-violent. The two correspondents point to the other part of Shri Nargolkar's remark and say that it would be wrong to say that the movement depends largely on *big* landlords. Because, as one correspondent says, "the genuine success of the Bhoodan Movement depends in fact largely, if not entirely, on the response of the *small* landlords and even *poor* landlords in the first place. In fact this is the experience gained so far."

Now it must not be forgotten that the movement is not a narrow class movement; it is aimed to be a movement of our whole people to solve our land problem and therethrough the question of poverty and unemployment in our country. As such, it does not depend for its success on the small little mercies of the upper few landlords or the haves of our society. If these people do not understand the signs of the times well may our social picture begin to shape itself as a challenge to these classes from the landless or the have-nots but really the toiling and moiling masses who work in fields and factories. It is here that the land-gift movement has in it the potential of a revolutionary urge.

The other correspondent analyses the nature of the donors and their motives and says:

"Would you please allow me to express my views in the matter formed on the basis of a theoretical study of this great movement and of some practical work in my own district of Allahabad? Broadly the donors can be classified into three categories:

(a) Donation to Shri Vinobha;

(b) Donation to political leaders like Shri Shantkarrao and Jayaprakash Babu and to Congress Ministers; and

(c) Donation to ordinary *Sarvodaya* workers.

Respectfully my submission is that in category (a) come those who offer donations to the great Acharya with pious, religious devotion, (b) includes those donors who donate very much in the manner they gave large sums of money to leaders for and during the freedom struggle. Some of them inspired by official fear or favour, would like to receive a return, directly or indirectly, in some form or other some day. This is perhaps why sometimes they refuse to donate land to one leader while do so to another. To the category (c) belongs the very matter-of-fact donor who donates after mature thought and intelligent conviction and as his dutiful share in the great *Yajna*. On the other hand, it has also been observed that sometimes, in their *yatras* even our political leaders, let apart Congress Ministers, got no land at all. To say that the ordinary worker gets no land is to do him injustice."

Let us not forget one thing that in a mass movement or a movement which is aimed to be so, it is its leaders who can be expected to have clear and ideologically true aims and motives with them. The ordinary worker and the common man will take up from it the broad lines of the appeal and the argument and heeding to that begin to respond. In such a group-process of making up a mass movement, those among the people who have a vested interest or are said to have a stake in it seem to be important at the moment, as they have in their hold the key-position of the situation or the *status quo*. But in a revolutionary situation this is the very thing which is most deceptive. One should not therefore mind it too much, but go on with faith and courage of conviction, because ultimately the land question does not depend on the mere sweet will or benevolence of the landowner. The main thing is that land has to be tilled and made to produce. That is the real social need and purpose and he who fulfils it is really the man that counts in the ultimate analysis. Maybe such a person might not be its legal owner. We wish that it should make no difference. A revolutionary situation has its own law. It demands the fulfilment of that law. And what does it demand? It asks that the tiller must get land as his own, and if he is a tenant, at least, he must not be defrauded of the full benefit of his labours on it. To achieve it peacefully and non-violently, it is necessary that

the land-owning class of today also must heed to it and understand to have a share in it, because this movement is not to be a class conflict which a communist-cum-socialist envisages or swears by, but it is a common affair of all classes who are bound from their respective states in society to work as trustees for whatever they hold or possess with themselves, i.e. they should make the best of it for the common social good, and in no selfish or exclusive manner. This is the fundamental distinction between the Gandhian way and the socialist or the communist way. The Bhoodan Movement is not conceived nor carried on in the manner of the doctrine of class war but is based on the broader and more fundamental truth of the doctrine of trusteeship. It asks for a peaceful settlement of the land-problem, wherein both the landowner as well as the landless are equally concerned and are called upon to play their respective parts immediately and with full understanding and knowledge of the situation.

7-5-53

### AVOIDABLE MISERY

(By Gandhiji)

From a correspondent's long letter of wail I take the following :

"I am a schoolmaster (aged 67) with lifelong service (46 years) in the educational line, born of a poor but highly respectable Kayastha family in Bengal which knew better days but is now reduced to poverty. I am blessed (?) \* with 7 daughters and 2 sons; the eldest son aged 20 died in October last leaving behind him his miserable and helpless parents to mourn his loss! He was a promising youth—the only hope of my life. Of my 7 daughters 5 have already been given in marriage. My sixth and seventh daughters aged 18 and 16 are yet unmarried. My younger son is a minor aged 11 years. My pay is Rs 60. It hardly allows me to make the two ends meet. I have no savings. I have less than nothing, being in debt. The match of my sixth daughter has been settled. The cost of the marriage will be not less than Rs 900 in ornaments and dowry (Rs 300). I have a life policy in the Sun Life Assurance of Canada for Rs 2,000. The policy was issued in 1914. The company has agreed to give me a loan of Rs 400 only. It is only half the amount required. I am absolutely helpless in respect of the other half. Could you not help this poor father with the other half?"

This letter is one out of many such. The majority of letters are written in Hindustani. But we know that English education has made things no better for parents of daughters. In some cases they have become worse in that the market price of possible young men who would suit an English educated daughter of an English educated father suffers an appreciable increase.

In a case like the Bengali father's the best help that can be rendered is not a loan or a gift of the required sum, but it should consist in persuading and strengthening the parent to refuse to purchase a match for his daughter but

choose or let the daughter choose one who would marry her for love, not for money. This means a voluntary extension of the field of choice. There must be a breach in the double wall of caste and province. If India is one and indivisible, surely there should be no artificial divisions creating innumerable little groups which would neither interline nor intermarry. There is no religion in this cruel custom. It would not do to plead that individuals cannot make the commencement, and that they must wait till the whole society is ripe for the change. No reform has ever been brought about except through intrepid individuals breaking down inhuman customs or usages. And after all what hardships can the school-master suffer, if he and his daughters refuse to treat marriage as a marketable transaction instead of a status or a sacrament which it undoubtedly is? I would, therefore, advise my correspondent courageously to give up the idea of borrowing, and to save the four hundred rupees he can get on his life policy by choosing in consultation with his daughter a suitable husband, no matter to what caste or province he belongs.

Harijan, 25-7-36

I must insist on the necessity of breaking down the highly injurious caste barriers. Breaking down the barriers will widen the range of choice and thus in a great measure prevent exactions.

Harijan, 5-9-36

### OUR GREAT HERITAGE

[This is the fifth instalment which concludes the Gandhi Memorial Lecture delivered by Dr. Sushila Nayyar on 2-12-52 before the students of the Agra University.]

#### V

Gandhiji believed that non-violence was capable of solving all problems whether of the individual, or the group or a nation irrespective of whether they were of the nature of political, social or economic injustice. I have already told you of his success in dealing with problems in the political and social spheres. Now a word about his technique in dealing with economic problems. Like a true businessman, he attached more importance to small contributions by the millions, than to big contributions by a few. This was the basis of his doctrine of economic revival through the spinning-wheel and cottage industries. Calculated in terms of production per man-hour the output under this system may be insignificant, but when it is multiplied a million-fold, the result is staggering. In a country where a tremendous manpower exists side by side with acute unemployment among the masses, there is no other solution but that suggested by Gandhiji. Even expert economists have agreed that cottage industries are necessary as an interim measure. Gandhiji's vision extended further. Would a highly industrialized India try to capture the

\* The Interrogation is by the correspondent.

markets for her surplus goods and exploit other nations as she had herself been exploited? The prospect did not please him. He expected India to give the lead in ending exploitation in every shape and form throughout the world and that too through non-violence. By popularizing the spinning-wheel and the cottage industries he was laying the foundation of a bloodless economic revolution. He wanted the artisan to live in simple comfort which contact with nature so cheaply provides and at the same time enjoy individual freedom, instead of having to purchase urban amenities at the price of soul-killing regimentation that is the lot of a factory-hand under the system of mass-production—no matter under what order. Again, he wanted regional self-sufficiency in regard to the basic requirements so that the common people should be able to assert their independence against the power of the private capitalist as well as the State.

The existing capitalists he proposed to tackle by putting into practice his theory of Trusteeship. By making the capitalists trustees of their wealth he wanted to secure for the people not only the wealth of the capitalists, but also their talent, ability and know-how. Thus, he contemplated a bigger revolution than any the world has so far known. The owning class has acquired business talent through generations of experience and specialization. If they could be persuaded to use their ability for producing wealth for the nation instead of exclusively for themselves or their families, they could make a very big contribution towards national reconstruction. The pressure of awakened public opinion aided if necessary by the power of non-violent non-co-operation would help the process of conversion. The few dissidents in the end would be brought into line with the help of legislation. Let no one dismiss the idea as visionary. The transformation of the Princely order that has taken place under our very eyes by what was essentially a voluntary process is an instance in point. Let no one belittle the revolution that has taken place in the States covering nearly one-third of the entire area of our country. Those who cavil at the allowances of the Princes, should look at what they have surrendered rather than what they have been allowed to keep. It is no small thing that several of them took part in the last elections and went to the people asking for their vote. The silent revolution which has converted hundreds of autocratic rulers into democratic citizens is unique in the history of the world. It was the wisdom and strength of Sardar Patel that worked this miracle. I can never forget the scene when he sat with a whole group of them applying the guillotine, but with such persuasive skill that each one of them considered him his best friend, as indeed he was!

The Sardar had of course the sanction of the State behind him. But he had no need to apply that sanction. Vinoba Bhave has carried the process a step further. That frail little man trekking from State to State is generating a tremendous moral fervour wherever he goes. Gandhiji had conclusively proved by his experiments in South Africa and India that non-violence can be completely effective as a weapon for the rectification of social and political wrongs. Vinoba today is completing the picture which Gandhiji and Sardar Patel had started limning by working an economic revolution by moral persuasion alone. People in their thousands are making gifts of land for the land-hungry toiling poor. You know how difficult it is to make a man of property part with his possessions. It is a small beginning but it has tremendous implications. Vinoba is ushering in the era of social awakening which must precede any social legislation if it is to be effective. Some of you young students should go and walk with him during your holidays. You will feel uplifted. This land of ours is not morally bankrupt yet. The people of India are sensitive to appeals to their idealism, provided they are made by men who practise what they preach.

To deal with Gandhiji's personality is like taking a plunge in the ocean. Its depths are unfathomable. All that I can do in the short space of time at our disposal is to provide you a few stray glimpses of the treasures that it holds. Blind unbelief can be as dangerous as blind idolatry. I do not want our youth to miss through blind scepticism the lesson of one of the mightiest phenomena of history, which holds the promise of peace to a war-weary world, and has demonstrated its possibilities sufficiently to give a solid basis for that hope.

The detached atmosphere of a University is the best place for a scientific and objective study of this phenomenon. This rich heritage belongs to you, the builders of future India, and it is in your own interest and the interest of India and the world, that you should make the best use of it. Instead of feeling frustrated at what still remains undone in India, you should take a lesson from what has been done and gird up your loins to finish the uncompleted task. Solid foundations have been laid and a mighty structure raised by a Master Architect. Let us not lower our standards now that the building is nearing completion. We must continue to fill in the gaps in the master plan and complete it so that it might one day herald the era of the reign of peace and goodwill upon earth, called Ram Raj by the Father of the Nation.

#### A NATION BUILDER AT WORK

By Pyarelal

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## HARIJAN

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## PLANNING AND UNEMPLOYMENT

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

Slowly but surely unemployment is stalking our land, and it is surprising that it should be so in spite of a big Five-Year Plan involving crores of rupees for financing it agoing at present. To speak a little from our history, unemployment is not a new thing in our country. As a matter of fact, if we look to the history of British rule in India from the 18th century onward we shall find that unemployment has been the basis of foreign rule and the warp of our socio-economic fabric. Exploiting it to one's own best advantage has been the main trick of all including the rulers who prospered or grew rich under that order. It was almost taken to be a settled fact of nobody's doing — almost God-given. The state of things continued until now. The new fact challenging this state of things is the advent of Swaraj. People who dominate it are the middle classes. They are our intelligentsia. They are vocal and can be vociferous enough if they are hit in any way. The cry of unemployment that is going round today is due to the fact that these classes are not having enough jobs in government or trade and industries, or in the professions. And surely the Government cannot but be mindful to this situation. The point which I wish to drive at is that unemployment is our chronic malady; we are complaining about it today because the classes are affected by it; it is not a cry of or on behalf of the masses, who have been under the dead weight of unemployment and under-employment all along the past few centuries. It is good to remind ourselves of this, even as a salutary corrective to our self-complacency about this most vital problem for the Swaraj Government to solve.

It must also be noted that the demand of the classes for jobs is of a peculiar nature. They want 'white-collar' jobs, as they are called. Theirs is called 'educated' unemployment. They have been taught to work in a particular way and a special manner. This is born of the peculiar system of English education that has been imparted to our classes. The masses did not have a share in it. They are simple and unsophisticated enough to labour and earn their honest bread. Not so the classes, who should have clerical and other jobs. This is the most sinister effect of English education, and it is having its toll today from us. This is another piece of our recent history which is also noteworthy today.

But today's main question is, why should there be increasing unemployment even though

crores are being spent for works under the Planning Ministry? Even the Finance Minister when referring to growing unemployment the other day begged the question, but could not enlighten us in any way about it. Surely there is something very vitally wrong in our approach to economic planning in our country at present. The Prime Minister referred to unemployment in a speech during his recent Maharashtra tour and said that our main problem today is lack of finances. He said that Government could not undertake schemes and plans of gigantic nature, such as removal of unemployment, without sufficient funds. Is this analysis right? What about the effect of what funds we have and are spending today? Is removal of unemployment a function of funds and finance only? Funds and finance are at best mere aids to labour that should be pooled and mobilized in creating more wealth. Does the Planning Commission's way do this in a right manner? We have unemployed labour as much as we want and to spare. Poor though we are, we have necessary finance too, coming forth from the national exchequer. Out of the crores which are being budgeted for the Five-Year Plan, a good slice is eked out of our national resources of borrowing and taxation. The most lamentable part of our planning policy is that it is based on capital and not on labour or direct removal of unemployment. Capital is a secondary instrument, which assumes undue importance in our present capitalist world economy. It cannot remove unemployment; it will only feed and fatten itself still more and create an order which in its fundamental nature cannot be other than capitalist and centralized either in a class or the State. It will need war and armaments to make itself a working proposition. But all that is another story. Restricting ourselves to the economic side of it, I feel that the following criticism of the *Economic Weekly* that was reproduced in the issue of the *Harijan*, April 4, 1953, may be fittingly quoted again in this context:

"...an underpopulated country, rich in material resources, should try to economize Labour, while an overpopulated and poor community must economize Capital but use Labour with a lavish hand. While, therefore, the (Five-Year) Plan can be regarded as an interesting Intellectual exercise or even as a gaudy and unseemly toy, it should be clearly understood it will solve no problems for us. The solution lies along less attractive plans of Gandhian economics, viz., cottage industries. The economy of cottage industries is hard to understand. Such products are presumed to be very expensive and to require special protection to combat against mill-made products; but once it is realized they are merely by-products of the peasant's spare time when he would otherwise be earning nothing, so that labour can be valued very little, that difficulty would, it is imagined, disappear. Naturally this will not be an attractive philosophy to the peasant who has got used to a schedule of four months' work and eight months' holiday (he values leisure much more highly than food) and only a very sustained propaganda effort, firmer and more intensive than has ever yet been attempted, towards a reorientation of this outlook, can induce any change in the situation."

This in a nutshell should be the principle of our national planning. Will Government adopt it and implement it?

4-5-'53

### SARVODAYA AND POLITICS \*

I

I propose to discuss and place before you my views on the following three questions: (i) our attitude towards Government schemes and the various political parties in the country; (ii) the way we should plan and regulate our effort in order to step up the *bhoo*dan campaign, and (iii) the defects and deficiencies which we should guard against. I will leave the third for the evening and limit myself just now only to the first two.

#### Bhoo

dan and Sarvodaya

Speaking about the *bhoo*dan movement in the course of my *yatra*, I do not just content myself with saying only what is necessary to give an impetus to our present work. *Bhoo*dan is after all a particular manifestation of the Sarvodaya ideal for which we stand and towards which all our efforts are directed. And Sarvodaya being an all-inclusive ideal embracing the whole of life, I naturally dwell on many other subjects besides *bhoo*dan. At times it so happens that I speak very little about *bhoo*dan and much more about other questions which have a bearing on our work and which therefore demand our attention. Sometimes these questions crop up because people want to know what we think about them. And I welcome this because it accords with my nature which does not like setting any limits to the range of inquiry, and because this raises our activity from the level of a campaign for a particular objective to that of a full and free propagation of knowledge.

#### The Five-Year Plan

A question which has figured quite often during such discussions is: What is our attitude towards the Five-Year Plan and the Community Projects, as also towards the various political parties and their different ideologies? I have my own way of dealing with such questions—I just refer to the points of agreement between their programme and ours. A friend once remarked that this was not the correct way of dealing with such questions; what was required was to bring out the points of disagreement. Since some of you may also share the doubt, I will also explain, as I proceed, the importance of this particular approach in dealing with the ideologies and programmes of different parties in the country.

#### Our Non-violent Attitude

Let us first consider our attitude in regard to the Five-Year Plan. Our main objection against this Plan is that it is based on a different outlook,—on an outlook which is far removed from ours. This is the basic defect; all others are

\* The first part of Shri Vinoba's speech on the morning of March 9, at the Chandil Sarvodaya Sammelan.

included in it. I placed this objection before the Planning Commission as clearly as I could and they tried to understand my view-point. They even tried to make some adjustments and you will find that in the new report they have introduced a number of modifications in the original plan. However, the difference remains and is bound to remain because, as I said, their outlook is different from ours. However my avoiding to dwell on points of difference beyond what is necessary for clarity of thinking, creates the impression that on the whole I am for the Plan, that it has my approval. And this impression is not wrong. This attitude of approval to a thing based, on our own admission, on an outlook which is different from ours springs from our desire to prevent *buddhi-bheda*—confusion in the mind of the people. Today we may, if we decide to oppose the Plan, retard its progress. But this is not the same thing as the capacity for construction. We have not yet enough hold over the people to place our own programme before them and to get it implemented by them. I therefore think it improper, from the point of view of non-violence, to use our influence in creating *buddhi-bheda*—confusion, and preventing even the good points from being given effect to. The fact is a government depends on *danda-shakti*—the coercive power of law and must from its very nature remain incapable of going much beyond what is warranted by the circumstances existing at a particular time. As such, no matter how good the plan made by the Government, it will always fall short of our ideal and expectation. Therefore, as followers of non-violence, it is our duty to express our approval for the good points in any such plan and desist from creating confusion.

There is another vital consideration in adopting this approach to such questions. Quite often when we criticize anybody for anything, we not only criticize the thing in question but go further and attack his *bona fides* also. It is evident that this is unjust. Besides, we thereby confer on him the right to suspect our *bona fides* also, and thus injure our own interests.

#### Government and Capitalism

I know and at times I also say so that the Government is very much under the influence of Capitalism. However this is not because they want Capitalism, but because they think there is no alternative under the existing circumstances and it would therefore be useful to utilize the intelligence and ability of the Capitalists, and partly because they share some of the views of Capitalism. I say this not only of the present Government but also of the Communists. Our plan aims at the decentralization both of production and distribution. But the Communists do not countenance decentralization in respect of production. There is hardly any difference on this point between the

Capitalists and those who call themselves leftists, for they both accept centralized production by means of big machines. And because this is a central feature of Capitalism, Communists themselves might be called Capitalist at least in this regard. It is only we who do not countenance Capitalism in any form. So if you consider the differences between our views and those of the Government in this way, you get a clearer understanding of the questions involved, without falling into the error of doubting anybody's *bona fides*. Given the ideology which they accept and the limitations of the circumstances under which they work, even you and I would act very much as they do, were we to occupy their place. We cannot therefore doubt their *bona fides*. Hence our good wishes for what good the Government are doing.

#### Our Attitude of Helpful Co-operation

But as I explained to you in my speech the day before yesterday, we have our own goal and the way leading to that goal, and we should not let ourselves be drawn or deflected away from our chosen path. We must continue to go ahead in our own direction. People ask me how far they should co-operate with the Government plans. I say to them, we should certainly co-operate in those plans which we approve of, but we must keep ourselves free. We cannot accept any of these plans and projects as our own and get entangled in them. We may give to Government our advice if and when sought and may also occasionally help it when there is need, but it will be a mistake to make its plans any of our responsibilities. This is my view. But our Sarvodaya Samaj is based on freedom and *sevakas* are free to think for themselves. Some *sevakas* consider the projects to be good enough and they have even lent their services to the Government in order to work for them. There are others who reject them as being totally ruinous to the country. There is a third section of workers who regard them as good in part and are prepared to help the Government if the latter would agree to certain conditions. My own attitude is, as I told you, to go our own way like the 'elephant' in Kabir's well-known *bhajan*, devoting all our energy and time chiefly to our chosen mission. When we take to criticizing others we waste a good deal of energy. I therefore think that both criticizing others and getting involved in what is not our own work are undesirable and eventually detrimental to our cause.

#### Political Parties

As regards the related question of our policy towards the different political parties, I am inclined to take the view that they should cease as different parties and combine to form a united front made up of all good and honest people in the country carrying out commonly agreed programmes. And to that end I try to put before

the people a programme of work which may be acceptable to all and in which all can join forgetting their differences. This will tend to draw the parties nearer one another with the result that their differences will gradually shrink and the points of agreement increase. Now we have such a programme in *bhoodan* which is acceptable to all, which helps the country go forward and withal makes for the growth of *jana-shakti*—the inherent strength of the people. If all these parties take it up in the right spirit, we may hope that the next elections in 1957 will not be, as at present, between good and honest people opposing one another but between all of them ranged on the one side and those who oppose progress on the other.

#### Western Democracy

But Western Democracy which we are practising in our country at present believes that there must be two parties for its successful working. It holds that the co-operative opposition between them will keep the nation going on the right path, and act as a deterrent and a corrective to the defects which the Government may develop at any time. I think that while this view of democracy has its advantages, it also gives rise to certain evils which we should try to eradicate.

#### India's Political Experience

India's political experience finds its culmination in our unique institution of Gram-Panchayat, which was based on the unanimity of the five, that is, all the members in the council. Whereas the present democracy is based on the principle of reaching a decision by a majority vote and so gives rise to what is called the problem of minorities. And this problem cannot be solved unless we adopt the principle of the unanimity among all persons of honesty and good will.

#### Our Way of Common Agreement

We should therefore direct our efforts towards enlightening the people and finding out a programme acceptable to all men of good will and honesty. And this should not prove difficult because the differences which divide the good are only superficial, and one can always find a core of common agreement which can serve as a basis for a common programme acceptable to all. The differences should be left out of the programme of work. They should be discussed and debated but not included in the programme of work. I hold the view that a thing on which the good differ among themselves is not worthy of implementation. Only such programmes should be placed before the people on which the good are in agreement.

Here the question can well be raised as to who is a good man. I will not go into that question now. I will only urge on you to deem it our duty to bridge the gulf between different parties. The Gita has said about it that all the differences we see are only on the surface, at bottom there

is unity and we should try to seize that. Then only can we create the atmosphere of unity. Differences in views there will always be, but in the field of action we must aim at unity.

In this respect the Hindu thought offers a most instructive lesson. Hinduism includes many diverse philosophies, a few of which are even atheistic and they attack and refute one another in very strong terms. Thus there is full freedom of thought. But there is unanimity in regard to the sphere of conduct. All prescribe the same code of virtuous conduct. So in the field of action we must proceed on the basis of general agreement leaving out the differences for further enquiry and discussion. But the programme of work which we take up for implementation must be one which has the approval of all men of good intent.

(Abridged from Hindi)

### PLIGHT OF CHAMARS IN GORAKHPUR

(By Suresh Ramabhai)

Incredible as it may seem, yet the great, and disturbingly so, economic truth of our existence as an independent political unit is the steady vanquishment of our village or cottage industries. The sad plight of the handloom-weaver has rightly invoked a country-wide sympathy. But far more awful and battered is that of the tanner or Chamar who suffers from the additional disadvantage of being regarded as socially untouchable. Here follows the gruesome tale of the Chamar's languishing industry as found in the city of Gorakhpur.

Our city Chamar generally does two types of work : (i) tanning raw skin into leather, (ii) making footwear out of leather. Doing this as he has been for generations past he can be regarded as an 'expert' in this craft. But today he can hardly keep house and home together in spite of all his endeavours.

Meeting a Chamar in the Illahibhai Muhalla of Gorakhpur town I took the estimates of tanning process :

No.	Item	Price
1.	Buffalo skin	Rs. 21-0-0
2.	Mango Knot	" 4-0-0
3.	Lime	" 0-4-0
4.	Salt, Moonj etc.	" 0-12-0
Total		Rs. 26-0-0

Market price of two hides made from one skin is Rs. 30/-.

Thus after two weeks' labour the Chamar earns only four rupees, i.e. about four annas each day. Besides he does not always get customers for his hides. Again, thanks to brokers who collect skin from the interior for supply to Kanpur and Calcutta mills, he fails to obtain the skin of his choice at his hour of need.

As regards shoe-making I was told that one bullock hide sufficed to prepare 15 pairs of shoes. The cost details are :

No.	Item	Price
1.	Bullock hide	Rs. 25-0-0
2.	Nails, Dyes etc.	" 0-1-0
3.	Thread etc.	" 1-0-0
Total		Rs. 26-1-0

Market price of 15 pairs at Rs. 2-4-0 per pair Rs. 33-12-0

The Chamar takes ten to twelve days to prepare 15 pairs. Obviously his average daily earnings amount to less than twelve annas. What was really torturing, I was informed, was that on account of Bata and Flex there was almost no market for the Chamar's footwear.

There are about 500 homes dependent on this work in Gorakhpur city. But their dwindling trade has ruined them terribly. Some of these Chamars used to earn something as labourers in agriculture. But the introduction of tube-wells, tractors, and improved tools and better machinery in the 'development' or 'project' area is depriving them of this work as well. Thus the poor Chamar is a loser on all counts.

The above is not peculiar to Gorakhpur alone.\* The Chamars all over the country are facing untold hardships. The situation deteriorates still as one goes into the interior. May it be suggested that the Backward Classes Commission should go into this economic aspect of the life of the backward people. Also it is for our Governments, both Central and State, as also the Planning Commission to see how these millions of socially backward people can be saved from economic collapse. Besides, is it not the duty of the general footwear-user, specially the educated class, not to be bewitched by Bata and Flex but to embrace the village tanner? It is cent per cent Swadeshi Dharma without which there is no alternative.

Allahabad, 23-4-53

### A Good Suggestion

To The Editor, *Harijan*,

London *Daily Mirror* newspaper writes :

"A strictly enforced law in Holland is that no person under the age of 21 shall retain a seat in bus or train when old, crippled or weaker passengers enter."

"Notices to this effect are pasted in the windows."

"Our little 'Tommy' trained to show no respect for his elders and told to keep his seat because he has paid for it, would not enjoy a trip to Holland, where he would get frequent bouncings out of his seat."

The suggestion contained in the above letter of an Englishman published in a London newspaper should be adopted by bus and tram authorities here in all the cities of India for the benefit of old persons and for improving good moral character of Indian youths.

SORABJI R. MISTRY

\*Nor is it peculiar to the shoe-making industry only. So many other village industries are similarly hard hit and their players live a precarious life economically and socially. — Ed.

## THE EVIL OF PATENT MEDICINES

[The following is culled from the inaugural address of Shrimati Rajkumari Amrit Kaur which she gave on March 12, 1953, while inaugurating the Committee on Pharmacopoeial Industry, Delhi.]

—M. P. J.

There are a sufficient number of standard drugs included in the various Pharmacopoeias which should certainly satisfy the needs of the medical profession and the elimination of the patent and proprietary medicines will not in any way cause any hardship either to the doctor or to the consumer. I am sorry to have to say this but the medical profession are beginning to lose the art, as it were, of writing prescriptions and one wonders whether there may not often be even a link-up between them and trade to enhance the sale of patent medicines.

A great responsibility rests on doctors in this regard. The belief in patent medicines in the public mind has been caused by large amounts of money spent in advertisements whereby patients are led to believe that health can be purchased by procuring a bottle or a tin of a patent medicine without even obtaining medical opinion. I do not wish to say that patent and proprietary medicines should be done away with altogether, particularly because, due to lack of medical personnel, such articles are sometimes useful in rural areas. But what I would like to stress is the necessity of doing away with costly patent and proprietary medicines which are sold to the unwary public by the trade by spending huge amounts of money on advertisements as to their efficacy. Owing to the extensive, attractive and oftentimes very misleading advertisements many people resort to self-medication. There is more danger in this than people can believe. If a person resorts to medication merely on the claims made in the advertisement in regard to the efficacy of a particular remedy, it may at times even lead to disastrous consequences.

If you open the pages of any newspaper or magazine or even read posters in the streets you will often find the most disgusting type of advertisements. The unwary and the gullible both fall a prey to them and it is difficult to assess the damage thus caused. I have always felt that such advertisements are a real menace to society and I am glad to say that at long last I hope shortly to introduce legislation for regulating them. Apart from laws, however, manufacturers and other interested parties must also see to it that a healthy tone is maintained in public life and that they co-operate with the Government in putting a stop to all unethical practices in the realm of medicines for the sick and ailing members of the public.

### WHY THE VILLAGE MOVEMENT?

By J. C. Kumarappa

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## ALL-INDIA KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES BOARD

The second meeting of the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board which was held in New Delhi in the last week of March 1953, approved of the budget for Khadi work and development of other village industries for the year 1953-54. Expenditure amounting to Rs. 1,08,12,600/- was approved for Khadi work and of Rs. 86,20,250/- for work in respect of other village industries. The Board budgeted for a provision of Rs. 1,75,00,000 for Khadi work and Rs. 25,00,000 for other village industries by way of loans and advances. The detailed programme of work in both the sections was also sanctioned.

The village industries selected for development during the current year are the following:

1. Village Oil Industry
2. Hand-pounding of Rice
3. Soap-making with Neem oil
4. Hand-made paper
5. Bee keeping
6. Palm gur
7. Gur and Khandasari
8. Leather
9. Cottage matches
10. Miscellaneous industries.

The Board has placed itself in contact with Governments of various States with a view to examining how its activities can be carried on in different parts of the country and co-ordinated with similar activities being carried on at present, either through departmental agency or non-official bodies.

The question of setting up a research institute specializing in village industries was discussed and it is expected that a scheme will be drawn up for the purpose during the next quarter.

Arrangements were made for establishing liaison with the All-India Handloom Board and the All-India Handicraft Board.

Members of the Board had a discussion with the Prime Minister and some of his colleagues on the subject of the place of Khadi in India's national economy and the scope for planned development in the next five years. Detailed proposals in this respect are being forwarded to the Central Government.

PRANLAL S. KAPADIA

Secretary,  
All-India Khadi and Village  
Industries Board

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