

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: MAGANBHAI P. DESAI

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TWO ANNAS

## LEARNING AND SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

A subscriber of the *Harijan* from Baroda in the course of his letter in English to the Manager, Navajivan Trust, writes that he does not desire to continue further as a subscriber. Giving his reasons, he says that the *Harijan* has lost its former vigour and lacks originality and critical insight that marked late Shri Mashruwala's articles.

I can have nothing to say in reply to the correspondent's complaint. I may only repeat what I said at the time of taking up the charge of these great papers. I am fully conscious of my limitations and I cannot pretend to fill the place of my great predecessors, Babu, Mahadevbhai, and K. G. M. However, with trust in God I strive my best with the energy, capacity and understanding I have, to fulfil the duty that has devolved on me. I may add here for the information of readers that I have received few complaints of this nature. Rather I have received several appreciative letters from readers in India as well as abroad. They have expressed their satisfaction saying that the papers are rendering the same useful service as before. I cite these not in any way of self-defence or self-praise, but only to illustrate that different minds hold different views.

The reader knows that these weeklies are not run nor were they ever run for the sake of mere writing. They have always had as their aim the cause of serving the country by helping to rebuild India and establish true Swaraj through constructive work.

The reader may well ask, what are these works and activities that the papers aim at serving? Establishment of world peace and free development of the human personality are the objects of these activities. The means for realizing them should be based on Truth and Non-violence. The works are not new in a sense. They have already been placed by Gandhiji before the country. The attainment of independence by the country has heralded a new age in our land. New situations and new problems have arisen. These works are therefore required to be reoriented and redefined in this new set-up. In fact, we are required to assimilate the truths taught by Gandhiji and act on our own.

The *Harijan* papers aim at serving this cause and they do so at present even at a loss because of this cause, though I should add, there is a limit to the extent of the loss which it can bear. In this connection I would incidentally inform the readers and lovers of this cause that the three papers together do not pay their cost at present. The subscription list is dwindling. I may not go into its details here. I hope the Manager will do so in due course.

Now to the other points raised by the friend in his letter. The first thing that strikes me is: Why should he have written in English? He could have well chosen to write in Gujarati. He could have then expressed his ideas more clearly and fully. About Bhoodan he says that its philosophy is all right. But donors do not seem to donate land with full understanding and genuine feeling. He has not as much faith in the lower cadre of Bhoodan workers as he has in Shri Vinoba. And since Vinoba is not to go to every village for distributing donated land, he asks, what will be of this all important work of distributing land? His main objection is that none has the proper study of village life, without which nothing will solve our village problem, — not even Bhoodan.

The above objections of the correspondent against the Bhoodan movement partake of the nature of misgivings raised by Shri Mirabehn and some others some time ago. They have been discussed in these columns. I therefore need not answer them again. It is obvious that all workers cannot be like Vinoba. But it should be borne in mind that these are social problems and there is a technique of solving them by group action. And so it has been done before. All were not like Gandhiji. Still he had demonstrated the technique of mass action which worked. Similar objections were raised against his Satyagraha movements too. Even in ancient times the ordinary man had not attained the height of Rama, Krishna or Buddha. Still by following them society marched from progress to progress.

The letter reveals also a harmful habit that is found at present among the educated. They suffer from false self-importance. The main criticism of the correspondent is that none has the

requisite study of our village life. I may better quote him here. He writes :

"It is my considered view as a student of sociology and anthropology that politicians including Nehruji, and social workers including Vinobaji, do not have the objective and comprehensive idea of our village life. It is all based on one's own rationalistic assumptions and one's own pre-conceived ideologies . . . All this is not all right. None of the lower cadre of Bhoodan workers and even top leaders know much beyond a few facts given by economics."

To say that Shri Vinoba and Shri Nehru have no knowledge of village life is an instance of false self-importance born of mere book-learning. These two life-long workers of our people have got their ideas not from college text-books but from the living text-books of the lives of our people and by serving them. The knowledge our friend thinks he has gained, he should better test on the touchstone of its practical use by serving society. If he actively helps Bhoodan movement or works in any other field of service of the people, and utilizes his knowledge for the welfare of men, he will soon realize what is real village life and what is the right remedy for its ills. The educated youth today seems to be under a snare of deriving self-satisfaction by acquiring superficial knowledge from books. He requires to be saved from this. The remedy is for him to take to some actual work and harness his knowledge for actual social service. Let us remember that learning requires to be followed by practical work and is perfected by it by the living experience in the university of life.

(Adapted from the original in Gujarati)

## GANDHI, KEYNES AND THE CHARKHA

By S. Moos

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### I

Gandhi appears in Western eyes as an enemy of technical progress, an old-fashioned romantic who has strayed into the twentieth century, carrying his spinning wheel with him.

How far is this impression accurate? Gandhi never claimed to be an economist. His approach to economic issues can only be understood within the framework of his philosophy.

Foreign trade, industrial relations, the size and location of firms, or any economic measure were to be judged according to one principle: Whether or not they heightened the likelihood of violence. This was to be the supreme test of civilization.

To give an example of this attitude, in 1950 the All-India Congress Committee published a document entitled "Our Immediate Programme".

One of its principal objectives which it entrusted to the Planning Commission, was "the growth of the human personality in all its aspects".

This—to Western ears rather startling—task is to be found side by side with plans for the use of dead animals for manuring purposes and with the problem of capital formation.

So Gandhi was both a practical politician and an idealist. In fact he himself said: "I am not a visionary; I claim to be a practical idealist."

### II

It seems to me that Western opinion is largely based on Gandhi's early period, when he condemned all aspects of modern civilization.

Gandhi later modified his resistance to the benefits of civilization, but the question remains whether his enthusiasm for the spinning wheel, his preoccupation with the Indian village and the Indian peasant, and his hostility to large-scale enterprise, lacked realism.

To answer this question one has to accept two assumptions arising from Gandhi's philosophy and from India's economic conditions.

The first is that the ultimate purpose of economic activity is to create conditions most favourable to man's spiritual development, to his independence, to his self-realization, and to his acceptance of personal responsibility.

The second is that these aims cannot be realized in a state of idleness or of complete lack of economic independence.

From these assumptions it follows that unemployment is the most serious of all economic problems, and it seems that the determination to cure this evil formed one of the pillars of Gandhi's thought. How far could he accept Western solutions?

### III

In advanced industrial countries better machines and better organization lead to higher incomes, lower prices, or a shorter working week.

Any temporary unemployment created by technical improvement can be overcome by such measures as re-training or the encouragement of mobility.

For this reason the late Lord Keynes and his followers of the Full Employment School concentrated their attention on the type of unemployment resulting from a maladjusted national economy.

It was believed to arise from lack of balance in the distribution of a nation's income and expenditure, leading to a deficiency of demand and to a glut of savings.

It was to be cured by attempts to increase expenditure, to absorb idle savings, and to utilize idle machines.

The main phenomena with which Keynes' "New Economics" concerned itself were the excess capacity to produce and the insufficient demand by Government and industry to use all current savings for new productive purposes.

But in India this Western type of maladjustment contributes only a small share to her total unemployment, for her unemployment is of a different character.

### IV

Four out of five of India's 360 million people depend on agriculture for their living. Only a small fraction of industrial workers are employed in large-scale industry.

Agricultural employment is dominated by seasons; between the harvest and the coming of the rains, that is, for four to five months each year, 120 million workers in field and forest are idle.

These are, in Keynes' terminology, the 'Involuntary Unemployed'.

India's involuntary seasonal unemployment is beyond Western imagination. If, in terms of numbers, one could imagine Great Britain without a single man or woman employed in field, office or factory for two whole years, one could arrive at a rough equivalent of India's staggering economic problem.

One might then appreciate the spiritual misery caused by this type of unemployment.

Although Keynes did not deal with the Indian type of unemployment, his first activities as an economist had a strong Indian flavour.

His first Civil Service position was in the India Office. His first published writings dealt with India problems.

They were a book on "Indian Currency and Finance" which came out in 1913, an article on "Recent Economic Events in India" in the *Economic Journal* of March 1909, and the review of a book *The Economic Transition in India*, in 1911.

In the latter he wrote, "Sir Theodore Morrison"—that is, the author of the book—"argues too lightly from

the West to the East without a full enough consideration of the deep underlying factors upon which depends the most advantageous direction of the resources of the nation... The mills of Bombay and Calcutta figure too much in the public eye."

He goes on to say that these mills hardly influenced the general well-being of India which could be improved only by applying the brains and the capital of new India to her fields and villages.

This is as valid today as it was in 1911.

V

Two vicious circles operate against savings. As the low incomes from rural seasonal work have to cover the year's expenditure there is very little left for savings, and without savings there is no capital available for improvements, and without improvements productivity and therefore incomes cannot rise.

The second vicious circle arises out of the first. To cover the period between sowing and harvest, farmers need credit.

As there are not sufficient savings available to satisfy this need high interest rates have to be paid to get credit.

Thus the lack of savings leads to high interest rates, the high interest rates reduce the farmer's income, the reduced income does not allow a margin for savings, the lack of savings leads again to the high rates of interest and so on.

The India of these vast legions of unemployed lacks an industry which could absorb the idle millions. The villages are entirely dependent on the towns.

The credit which is so scarce and for which they have to pay so excessive a price comes from the towns.

The village products for which they obtain so low a price, go to the towns. Unemployment in India has to be considerably reduced before defences of the Keynesian type against new disaster can be built.

After all, the essential feature of the Keynesian technique of boosting expenditure is that it can successfully counteract unemployment only when used on a sufficiently large scale and before unemployment spreads.

Keynes assumes idle capital and a high mobility of labour, but India is short of capital and her unemployed are immovable, glued to their misery.

What was needed in India were methods which would help to employ idle labour, reduce the claim for scarce capital, increase the standard of living by greater self-sufficiency of the villages and finally—and for Gandhi an essential—lessen the dangers of violence.

As nothing is more likely to lead to violence than the demand for scarce goods, preference should be given to goods with expandable supply.

In Gandhian economics scarcity is the decisive consideration, not cost or efficiency.

This attitude gains importance in the light of recent reports which suggest that shortages of essential commodities will remain a threat to world production, trade and full employment.

Gandhi's drive for the use of indigenous resources does do something to meet the situation outlined in these reports.

According to Gandhi it is better to rely on the bullock than on oil for moving the plough because once she has decided to give up her bullocks and her 40 million buffaloes the cutting off of oil supplies would spell ruin to India.

What buffaloes, bullocks and man meant as sources of energy for the production of food, the spinning wheel was to mean in the provision of cloth.

The textile mills depend on markets to sell and materials which might become scarce such as iron and steel and foreign cotton and yarn.

But the supply of the material for the spinning wheel is adjustable.

The spinning wheel represents local production and relies on local resources and local markets. Therefore the

extent of fraud and speculation, of conflict and of violence arising from conflict are reduced.

As less money has to be spent on textiles from the mills the villages will need less credit and will free themselves from the interest burden.

Finally the spinning wheel will occupy the idle hours of the unemployed and will prevent his spiritual decay.

So the spinning wheel emerges as the supreme cure for India's rural millions. It is meant to save the multitudes of India's villages from decay.

Gandhi emphasized that hand-spinning was not intended to withdraw a single able-bodied person who could otherwise find a more remunerative occupation from his work, but rather:

"The whole claim advanced on behalf of the spinning wheel is that it alone offers an immediate, practicable and permanent solution of the problem of problems that confronts India, namely, the enforced idleness for nearly six months in the year of an overwhelming majority of India's population owing to lack of suitable occupation supplementary to agriculture, and the chronic starvation of the masses that results therefrom."

He went on: "There would be no place for the spinning wheel in the national life of India if these two factors were not there."

The spinning wheel had still one more function to fulfil. It was to symbolize the value of manual work as such in an environment where this value was threatened either by apathy and demoralization, which grew in the soil of unemployment and starvation or by the stigma of inferiority attached to manual work when compared with non-manual work or with the machine.

For the West the spinning wheel represents industrial backwardness, productive inefficiency, the ultimate sin against technical progress.

In Gandhi's eyes it symbolizes the victory of work over idleness, of life over lifelessness, of the family unit and the village community over dispersal and disintegration.

It is the victory of non-violence. Once when he was asked: "Show God to me face to face", Gandhi answered: "You will see Him in the Spinning Wheel."

Western ideas, if they are to suit Indian conditions, will have to be revised.

Is it really good economics to spend scarce resources for the import or output of labour-saving machines for use in industries which can command gigantic armies of unemployed?

Gandhi's answer was the cottage industry, villagers would engage in home-craft, or they would produce soap, flour and paper from local raw materials.

But as these types of village industry still leave great pools of unemployed further employment can come only from small-scale industry carried out in villages.

Would this still be in accordance with Gandhi's teaching? Some of the confusion about the purpose and character of cottage industry might have arisen because Gandhi's attitude to the machine had not been sufficiently analysed.

Gandhi was once against all machinery, calling it the chief product of modern civilization, the symbol of a great sin. Later he greatly qualified this attitude.

"Mechanization," he said, "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."

It was bad when it enriched a few at the expense of the many. It was good when it was used for the benefit of the people.

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# HARIJAN

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1953

## BHOODAN AND SATYAGRAHA

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

One thing in the Bhoodan movement that specially appeals to a Socialist is that land can be had this way *without any compensation*, because he believes that to get land with compensation would be an impossible proposition. But along with this, people of this persuasion have a fear and misgiving lurking in their minds whether we could have enough land through the Bhoodan movement. If not, what should be done to secure land without having to give compensation for it?

Such a question has been agitating the minds of many people for a long time. And the answer to it that they have allowed themselves to cherish in their minds is that then they will resort to Satyagraha. And words to that effect are quoted by them from some utterances of Shri Vinoba as well. But how such a Satyagraha will take place, what step shall be undertaken, has hardly been clearly stated by anybody till now. The agitation started by the Praja Socialist Party appears to be a step in this direction. There is reason to believe that the Pardi movement tries to seek a way for getting land, if it does not come forth on our asking for it as Bhoodan.

Shri J. P. Narayan has issued a statement from Patna, wherein he is reported to have said:

"Is it consistent with Bhoodan, it has been asked.

For my part, I cannot see any inconsistency in it. Vinobaji has always made it clear that no tenant should allow himself to be evicted from land that is justly his. The difficulty is that, under the present social set-up, no solitary tenant can resist a landlord, no matter how just his case might be. Furthermore, what is conceded as right for an individual cannot be wrong for a combination of individuals."

That means that in the Pardi agitation those people who hold that land justly belongs to them are out to seize it. How such a thing is consistent with the Bhoodan principles is beyond comprehension.

Certain people have from the beginning harboured a complaint against the Bhoodan movement that it depends for its success on zamindars' giving land; what the landless can do to get land is not shown by it. Such a complaint truly begs the question whether there is such a programme for the landless as would compel land-gift without compensation. There has been a persistent demand for such a programme from a certain section of the workers. Should the Pardi Khed-Satyagraha be understood as such a programme? If so, it raises the following few questions:

1. The land is not of the Khatedars but justly belongs to the tenant — how is it so? The legal position is not that.

2. Is the Khed-Satyagraha against this legal position? If yes, then how is the law sought to be modified? Such a reform is not mentioned, which shows that the movement is not against that law.

3. Is the movement against the Khatedars? Is it a step to impress upon them that if they did not give away the land, the landless will meet together to snatch it from them? Supposing it is so, who among the landless will get it? Who will distribute its title to them?

4. But hardly might any sponsor of the movement be believing that land would be had that way. The best that might be imagined by him to take place would be that if people in sufficiently large numbers could be collected together, a new situation might be created which would compel both the Government and the Khatedar\* to think out some way in the matter. Is this so?

5. If yes, then it would be like taking the law into one's own hands, which is not Satyagraha but would be like passive resistance or an agitation having a nuisance value. Today we have Swaraj; we can cultivate public opinion freely; we can change our Government if it does not heed to it. The principle of Satyagraha requires us to take to these methods. But today even the Government favours Bhoodan and the abolition of the zamindari system.

6. If however Satyagraha action is needed here, it should be non-co-operation. For its successful performance it is necessary that people have the strength to stand on their own legs. For that there should go on amongst them systematic constructive activities. To march on the landholders' lands, to spoil useful grass can in no way be a substitute for them. And how can it be called Satyagraha?

7. Or, is it the idea to organize demonstrations to show how bad off the landless people of Pardi are? Then, Satyagraha cannot be mere demonstration. This would be like the weapon of the fast which is often found being misused at present.

8. Therefore, whether one wishes or not, such an agitation would take the form of a class-war. In the philosophy of Socialism class-war is a fundamental doctrine and a useful technique. Is Pardi agitation on that line?

And there are many other questions that arise of a similar kind. The substance of them all is that the agitation is misleading; it is a deviation from the Bhoodan way.

The question that arises before us under these circumstances is, what then should the people do to meet such a situation? Those who believe in the peaceful way of Bhoodan should, at this moment, do their work with added zeal and fervour. If the P. S. Party has deviated to another way, well may it do that on its own responsibility. However, other Bhoodan workers should continue their work. The landholders also should donate

land; they may not mind the P. S. P.'s mistaken way, but should do their part in the Bhoodan movement. The landless also should understand that the way of class-war is not happy; nor is it called for; nor is it Satyagraha. The surest way to explain this to them is to continue the Bhoodan work with faith and confidence. The Bhoodan workers of Gujarat also, at this juncture, should redeclare their policy and faith in their movement and that way restore back this unhappy deviation to the true path.

18-9-'53

(From the original in Gujarati)

### AN EYE-OPENER FOR THE HINDUS

(By Maganbhai P. Desai)

We learn from papers that Shri Vinoba and his party were assaulted at the gate of the Baijnath Temple in Deoghar (Bihar) by some Pandas—the traditional priestly class, when he was going to the temple with some Harijans. Two or three female members of the party were also assaulted. Shri Vinoba was also man-handled. Shri Damodardas Mundada, his secretary, wires to say from Patna:

"Thank God, great tragedy averted.

Kusumtai assaulted, but much better now. Pt. Nandkishore Sharma, Chandreshwarji Harijan received serious injuries. No cause (for) anxiety."

On reading the above news every Indian, and specially the Hindu, will feel utterly ashamed of the episode. Whatever one might feel about the temple-entry by the Harijans, there is a limit even to religious fanaticism; otherwise there will remain no distinction between a barbarian and a civilized citizen. The Baijnath Temple is one of the most sacred Hindu temples. Is it such a big crime, in the eyes of the Pandas today in the year 1953, on the part of a saintly good man like Shri Vinoba going with a few Harijans for Darshana, that the Pandas should utterly be out of temper? This is sheer goondaism. There is no trace of religion about it, nor civility.

And such an act is a crime against the nation. Even though we have Swaraj the Pandas have not still felt it—which shows how deep-rooted the deadly creeper of untouchability is. This should be an eye-opener for the Hindus, chiefly of Bihar. People should take a vow that they would not enter temples without the Harijans' company. This may perhaps stop the Pandas' occupation; we may not mind increasing such unemployment. But we cannot tolerate such exhibition of irreligious fanaticism. The Pandas and others who think similarly should know that the blows that they dealt were really on the deity, because it was really a denial of both God and true religion.

How will people in foreign lands think of it on reading these news? What will they say about us? If the White do not allow us in their lands, how are they more wrong than our Sanatanis? Let the custodians of our temples note that such

acts only spread atheism. They may also note that a new order and a new kind of the State has come to stay in our land now.

It is not in anger that I pen these words; they are the outpourings of an anguished Hindu heart. One does not know whether this is a matter for shame or for anger. To be ashamed of it is natural; to be angry is out of place. We may only pray to God that He may grace these erring men with true wisdom and bless us all from His abundance of mercy.

This is a warning to the Hindu society which they may well heed to and know therefrom where they really are.

21-9-'53

(From the original in Gujarati)

### THE PRESIDENT'S DIRECTIVE TO GOVERNMENT SERVANTS

[An informal meeting of Ministers and senior officers of the Central Government was held on August 29, 1953, in Rashtrapati Bhavan to consider ways and means of popularizing Khadi. The meeting, which was attended by the Prime Minister, the Vice-President, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, and members of the All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board, had been convened at the instance of the President Dr. Rajendra Prasad. Addressing the meeting, the President said as follows:]

The work of Khadi has been engaging the attention of many of us for the last thirty or thirty-five years and there are many people here who have given a great deal of time and thought to this question. There is the difficulty of competition with mill-made cloth and there is also further difficulty that we cannot get Khadi in as large a quantity as one requires.

The economics of Khadi are based on certain fundamental facts of life in this country. We know that India is an agricultural country and something like 70 to 80 per cent of our population lives on agriculture in some form or other. If you consider the life of an agriculturist, you will find that however large or however small the holding of an agriculturist may be, he and his family members cannot get full employment throughout the year and he cannot also leave his place and go elsewhere in search of employment and think of anything else because the work of agriculture requires intermittent attention. If the hours and the days which are thus wasted by the agriculturist and other members of his family could be utilized, we will have more than enough of Khadi to clothe the whole country.

I do not think anybody would object to the low wages in that case because they are earned at a time when the land does not pay at all. He can earn something and that something is not so very insignificant after all, because he need not purchase a single yard of cloth if he gives time to it. I can tell you from my personal experience that one hour of spinning a day yields enough of yarn sufficient to give us as much cloth as we in India are using today on an average, that is to say, 15 to 20 yards per head. I think if you take that aspect of Khadi into considera-

tion, the question of cheapness or dearness would not arise at all, because it is the result of labour of the people in their idle hours. That is the fundamental aspect of Khadi, but we know all people are not always inclined to work. We are often inclined not to work. But with all these difficulties, I think, it is possible to propagate Khadi as it was done in the past when Gandhiji started the movement and when we were not in the Government and did not expect any help from Government. In spite of all that there was a class in the country who stuck to it and used it. That class is still in existence. What we want now is that the other classes who were not in favour of Khadi should also take it up and give encouragement to it. I am glad the Finance Minister has agreed to give subsidy to it.

A question has been raised about the expensiveness of *saris* for ladies. I think the question should not arise at all. I do not know whether our women are so fully engaged the whole day that they cannot spare one hour a day. If they can use their spare time in spinning they will be able to get a *sari* without any expense at all practically, except only for the cotton; and I think that will be cheaper than any other *sari* they can get elsewhere. If they start wearing Khadi woven from yarn spun by their own hands they will not fail to appreciate it. By practice their skill will improve and their nimble fingers will produce Khadi of a superior quality as it will be for their own *saris*.

Those of us who have actually known the production of Khadi know what tremendous amount of relief it gives to the class of people who have no other source of income. I remember the days when I myself used to go to Khadi centres where yarn was purchased and where poor women clothed in rags would come from miles with small bundles of yarn to sell. If their yarn was not purchased for one reason or the other, one could see clearly the despair and despondency on their faces. One could not help feeling that this Khadi work was really of very great service to the poorest class of people. I think things have not changed even today to such an extent as to obviate the necessity of this kind of relief altogether.

I, therefore, suggest that when we think of Khadi we should not think of the mill-owner or the mill worker but of the poor woman in the village.

#### Problem of Unemployment

We have been very much concerned with the problem of unemployment and very rightly, too. When we take into consideration this problem, you can see very easily what amount of employment Khadi had created. If I am not wrong a single man in a mill looking after spindles throws out of employment 200 men. One man looks after as many looms as would produce cloth equal to the output of ten to twelve weavers on handloom in a day. From that you

can judge what tremendous amount of unemployment a mill creates in a single day.

I am not here to plead that there should be no industrialization in the country. That is a big question and that has to be dealt with on its own merits; but I am placing before you a fact which cannot be denied and the effect of which is being felt in the everyday life of the poor in this country. It is, therefore, necessary that when we think of Khadi we should think of unemployment or underemployment of a large number of people who cannot get any other employment. If we look at it from that point of view, you will agree that any subsidy that can be given to it will not be wasted. If you do not give any subsidy to it, you will have to find some means of subsistence for these men and women. It is much better to support them with this subsidy.

It is our experience that when calamities like earthquakes, big floods occur, opening of Khadi centres in affected areas brings a lot of relief to the people. In fact, in connection with the recent floods in Bihar, I have received telegrams from Khadi workers there asking for utilization of funds placed at their disposal for opening Khadi centres.

The purchase of Khadi is not altogether an act of charity. It will give employment to millions. By buying Khadi we shall not be wasting money but investing it in artistic things. We have been spending crores by way of subsidy for sugar and steel industries for years. We never objected to it. Of course, they needed it. I wish some kind of subsidy should be given to Khadi also, because it deserves it more than any other organized industry.

#### Some Suggestions

I wish to make one or two suggestions. Many of you here are Heads of Departments. I do not suggest to the Army to use Khadi for uniforms. I will not even suggest even to the Police to use Khadi uniforms. For one thing, we may not have enough Khadi today for the purpose. But I do not see any reason why in Rashtrapati Bhavan and all other Government Departments Khadi should not be used, why spats, napkins, towels, curtains, dusters and so many other things which we use every day in offices, hospitals, etc., should not be of Khadi. I, therefore, suggest the Government issue instructions that all the Departments, excepting Police and Army should make all these purchases from Khadi Bhandars. If that is done, I think there will be a great fillip to the Khadi movement, not only because a great deal of Khadi will have been purchased by the Government, but also because it will have a great effect on the people. If a thing like that is attempted, I think the promotion, sale and disposal of Khadi, which sometimes become a problem, will have been solved. And I can say if you can ensure the sale

of Khadi there will be no shortage in production and its supply. What is, therefore, needed is to stimulate the use of Khadi, not by force or coercion but by willing co-operation, by appreciating the fundamental facts about the economics of Khadi.

I wish you gave thought to it not only from the economic point of view but also as a matter of national necessity which will help the poorest people and employ a large number of people in the country.

#### USE OF KHADI—A NATIONAL DUTY

[From a statement by Shri V. L. Mehta, Chairman, All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board, at a meeting of Ministers and senior officers of the Central Government, convened at the instance of the President, at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, on August 29, 1953.]

The principal function of Khadi as we envisage it, today, is to afford fuller employment to the rural population. Among the problems which now confront those in charge of the destinies of the country none causes such concern as the growth of unemployment. Dwelling as the majority of us do in towns and cities, it is the signs of unemployment among the educated that worry us. But far more stupendous is the problem of chronic unemployment and under-employment in most of our rural areas.

The main purpose of the Five-Year Plan is to reduce the volume of this unemployment in rural areas and to raise, gradually though it may be, the average level of income in the country. This goal the Plan seeks to achieve by the adoption of two lines of action : One is to provide larger opportunities for employment on and for increased earnings from the land. It would take us beyond the object of today's meeting if I deal with that aspect of the programme. It is the second aspect that concerns us, namely, that of reducing the pressure of population on the land by organizing and extending opportunities for productive employment in the countryside, by the provision of suitable secondary occupations and by the revival and reorganization of village industries. By arranging for the processing of locally available raw materials with the help of local labour and by organizing the manufacture of consumers' goods with the aid of simple tools and appliances as well as techniques, it is possible to utilize more fully the productive capacity of the nation as a whole, and, at the same time, to check the process of unregulated urbanization that gives rise to manifold problems, not the least among which is that of urban unemployment.

Among village industries, the leading place is occupied by the production of cloth. This is very natural, since after food and shelter the greatest need of a human being is clothing. The manufacture of cloth was the most ancient of our industries, the products of which, before the advent of the age of the power-driven machine, won fame for us in distant lands. How and why

this industry decayed, is an aspect of our economic history which need not detain us today. But even in present times this industry finds employment for larger numbers than the highly efficient organized textile mill industry. The handloom weaving industry which still employs large numbers is in a perilous condition, mainly because of its dependence on its competitors, the textile mills, for the supply of its basic material, namely, yarn. The hand-spinning industry was as good as dead until its revival and organization was first taken in hand, three decades and a half back, by the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

In the past it was hand-spinning that provided the basic raw material for the fine fabrics for which our artisans earned renown all over the world. It was Gandhiji's aspiration to see that the industry achieved the same heights of glory in the atmosphere of free India. Confining our gaze for the present to the economic value of the programme, we find that it has immense potentialities. As a Committee appointed by the Government of Bombay observed 15 years ago, "Under existing conditions of technical knowledge and taking into account the enormous number of persons for whom a subsidiary occupation is required, hand-spinning is almost the ideally suited subsidiary occupation for the Indian agriculturists; it involves very little capital, it is not difficult to learn, it can be taken on and left off at the cultivator's convenience and it fits in with the century-old traditions of the countryside". It is these considerations which have, presumably, induced the Planning Commission to accord to Khadi and other village industries a central place in our rural development programmes.

One problem—and that probably the most difficult—remains, namely, that of marketing the largely increased output that will result. With all the improvements that the Board seeks to bring about and with the organizational aid it will provide, the reduction in the price of Khadi that will be effected will not be of such magnitude as will enable this cloth to compete with mill-made cloth. The rebate to the consumers that, with the Central Government's approval, the Board has sanctioned, transfers the burden to the State of the overhead charges, which, I may emphasize, the Board attempts to keep extremely low. But a difference between the two prices will continue and this difference should be treated as a contribution by the State or by the consumer to the maintenance of the oldest among our handicrafts and as a premium paid for the alleviation of distress, both visible and invisible, in rural communities or among sections of the population like our displaced fellow-citizens from Pakistan.

Among economically powerful countries, the State assumes the burden of relieving distress caused by unemployment and underemployment

by devising a system of doles and other forms of social security payments. Much preferable to a system of doles, however, is payment by way of a wage for some form of simple productive employment such as is contemplated through the extension of Khadi production. This extension will result in an increased output. The lines on which the movement is being organized provide for production being carried on as largely as possible on a basis of self-sufficiency, thus reducing the volume of production seeking outside markets. However, our National Government have accepted their responsibilities for putting through this programme of relief and rehabilitation by placing funds at the disposal of the Board for organizing and financing the work of production as also by purchasing as much Khadi cloth as they suitably can for their own requirements. They have also agreed to assist in the establishment of depots and emporiums for the sale of Khadi. The rest of the task is the responsibility of the consumer.

For the general public, the Khadi Board, with the blessings of the President of India, proposes to address an appeal at the time of the forthcoming Gandhi Jayanti. Today, the Board's appeal is to select a group of persons who, in our view, can give the lead to the rest of the community by taking to the use of Khadi, as consumers possessed of knowledge and understanding. The Administrators who are present at this meeting can appreciate much better than members of the general public can do, the social and economic significance of the Plan and of the duty that is cast on each one of us to contribute to its success. As I understand it, the development of Khadi production for the purpose of providing large-scale employment is an integral part of the Plan. One of the best ways of furthering this part of the Plan is to ensure that the products that are turned out are taken up by those sections of the community who are discriminating consumers and who, besides, possess the requisite purchasing power. In the days of the War, the Government then in authority called upon all, including those associated with the task of governance, to lend to the Government to provide the sinews of War. Our Government have embarked today on a war against poverty and unemployment. Khadi represents a part of this campaign, for the success of which the Government may well appeal to all associated with them to help in providing the necessary sinews of war by taking to the use of Khadi and by purchasing it henceforth as a matter of national duty.

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#### QUALITY OF FILMS

The Editor, *Harijan*.

Sir,

Of late there has been a great hue and cry amongst the conscious public regarding the deteriorating quality of the films which are produced with the mercenary mentality. It appears they are now out to aggravate the inborn sexual appetite of the human psychology. It seems, they are inclined to adopt the worst part of Hollywood and to place it to the forefront of their productions. It is a pity when one watches the children following blindly the so-called heroes and heroines! This bizarre quality of films has brought blasphemy on India's culture and civilization in the international fields. They have also poisoned and diverted the attention of the younger generation to the sexual side endangering our long cherished dream of building of the strong nation in the world. It is timely if the public raise their voice in protest against this. Will the Directors and Producers be cautious and improve the quality of the films without compulsion? The sooner the authorities intervene the better it is for the good and wellbeing of the promising children of Free India.

25-8-'53

SURENDRA PARIKH

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