

HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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TWO ANNAS

CREATIVE FREEDOM

[The following is a summary of Acharya Kripalani's address at the Conference of the Presidents and Secretaries of the Provincial Congress Committees held at Allahabad. — J. C. K.]

Among us are those who in the past gave up our studies or our careers, courted imprisonment and suffered *lathi* blows. I hope the ideals of simplicity and sacrifice which inspired us then will continue to sustain us.

REWARDS

At that time we did not even dream of material rewards for our sacrifices. But today as the prospect of such rewards has gained actuality, we are exposed to dangerous temptations. Not all of us have been able to resist them. We are becoming soft and ease-loving. We hunt for offices and ministerial appointments and are jealous of those who secure them.

When in office, we often ape the ways of our British predecessors whom we are so fond of condemning. Our organization has been built on voluntary sacrifice and self-restraint, and if we give up these ideals so easily we shall fail to bring real Swaraj to our people.

SELF-RESTRAINT

In fact there can be no real freedom without self-restraint. If freedom meant the right of everyone to do as he pleased then we have more of such freedom in India than is found anywhere else in the world.

We can spit anywhere and commit nuisance wherever we like. Our house-wives regularly throw the daily rubbish on the street. We are free to keep our children illiterate and to infect our neighbours with whatever diseases we breed in our homes.

We have more freedom to pollute the Ganges which we worship than the Englishman has to pollute the Thames which he does not pretend to worship. To take another example, our young students, with little experience of life, presume to dictate to us, as no English student would have dared to dictate to Churchill how to prosecute the war against Germany.

During my recent tour in Bihar, young students freely boarded my train without ticket and several times pulled the chain with impunity and detained the train ostensibly to honour the Congress President. Such manifestations of freedom are unheard of in England and other free countries.

TRUE FREEDOM

True freedom is creative and not self-destructive. It grows with self-restraint. Gandhiji is not free to smoke, to drink or to frequent the cinema, though

he is the freest individual we have. His freedom is the freedom of the dancer who has to step on the edge of a sword.

He is at once the most free and the most restrained of men. He taught us revolt as well as self-restraint. The former being easy was learnt well by us. The latter we have not cared to learn. A great task and a small mind go ill together.

We cannot win Swaraj until we have learnt to subordinate the smaller to the larger interest.

Let me cite an example from my recent experience in Bihar. We were late in arriving at a railway junction. I was worried, but the local Congress Secretary assured me that it did not matter as he had kept the train waiting for me. Was it a compliment or an insult to me?

If Congressmen begin to behave as if they were the rulers of the people and not their servants, then it is legitimate to say that what we have today are Congress Governments and not the people's Governments. Such a rule would be no better than the patterns of Pathan, Moghul, Rajput, Maratha or Sikh rule which India had formerly in her history.

Delhi has been the seat as well as the grave of empires. If anyone thinks that by capturing power at Delhi we can attain Swaraj, he is much mistaken. Our Swaraj can only be attained in the villages by the service of the people. To kick the ladder by which one ascends is suicidal.

DANGER FROM VIOLENCE

I have talked of the twin danger of succumbing to material temptations and of subordinating the larger national interest to the narrow interest of the party, caste or clique. Our third great danger and perhaps the greatest of all dangers is violence.

I have no desire to enter into a controversy on the merits or demerits of violence *versus* non-violence. All I wish to stress at the moment is that circumstanced as we are today, violence will be disastrous for us. If we resort to violence against the British, we shall sooner or later, and sooner rather than later, direct it against one another.

We lack the necessary self-discipline and the necessary conventions to limit its use as, for example, the British have learnt.

There are no less rivalries and animosities between the different political parties in Great Britain than there are amongst us. Nevertheless, no party thinks of resorting to violence to terrorize the other. Not only that. It would not have occurred to Churchill, however ruthless and unscrupulous he might be in his dealings with Germans or with Indians, to use his Governmental machinery to tamper

with the ballot boxes in England even when he knew that the result of the poll would be his downfall.

POLITICAL MORALITY

We have so many divisions and unreasoning animosities in our political and religious life and so little of self-discipline and restraint that if we once take to violence to assert our will, we shall never know when or where to stop.

In fact, so bitter and vile tend to become our mutual jealousies and rivalries that we often forget who our real enemies are. Not only the communists but even some Congressmen sometimes talk and behave as if their real enemies were those whom they regarded as their political rivals.

So low is our political morality that the episode of Prithviraj and Jaichand has never become obsolete. We find it easier to co-operate with the foreigner than with our own countrymen. If in our present state we take recourse to violence, we are in danger of annihilating ourselves.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

We shall only succeed in discrediting democracy and pave the way for a dictatorship. In political life, as in the spiritual, self-discipline is the foundation of all other virtues.

Do not think that I am free from the failings against which I have warned you.

I am one of you and no better and, let me hope, no worse than most of you. We are all equally prone to failings; and equally capable of rising above them, if we hold fast to the standards which Gandhiji has kept before us. Having been a Professor for many years I have never outgrown the habit of lecturing when I can. Moreover, having elected me as your President, you have left me no other choice.

SAVING CEREALS

In view of the present cereal shortage in the country, certain experiments on diet were tried in Maganvadi. The following results which have been tested at Maganvadi will be helpful to save cereal consumption to some extent.

Rationing authorities in certain places are distributing *atta* instead of cereals and as the cereals employed are of lower quality there is a suggestion of adding calcium salt to the *atta* to make it more nutritious. We would suggest an addition to the *atta* of 15% of cleaned groundnut cake. This will have many advantages:

1. There will be an outright saving of 15% in cereals.
2. The protein content of the *atta* will be practically doubled.
3. There will be no increase in the cost; if anything it may scale down the cost.
4. The groundnut cake is very rich in vitamin B complex particularly in vitamin B₁.

There is no danger of the cake powder getting rancid as in the proportion in which it will be present in the *atta*, the anti-oxident property of the *atta* will be effective to check any hydrolysis.

Only good fresh seeds should be taken, cleaned by hand-picking and pressed in bullock-driven *ghani*

presses. The extraction of oil being by cold process no nutritious ingredients of the groundnut are lost. The oil is pressed out leaving only about 10 to 11% in the cake. The cakes are broken into small pieces and dried in the sun. The cake so treated will remain quite fresh for at least one week and retain its flavour. They get bone hard and can be cracked to a fine meal in a pestle and mortar. This meal can be fed in the hand *chakki* to pulverize and bring it to *atta* consistency.

The 15% of its addition will mean in the normal diet a daily consumption of less than 1½ *chhataks*. There is no difficulty in making the preparations of the *atta*. It retains all the good points of the whole-cereal *atta* plus a special nutty flavour which makes food all the more tasty. This flavour may be very negligible when only 15% of groundnut-oilcake *atta* is added and only on a larger addition can the taste be fully appreciated.

The cake contains over 50 % of high grade protein.

Scientific experiments elsewhere have also established high grade digestibility coefficient of groundnut protein. It ranks with the microbial protein of yeast and closely approximates animal protein as found in milk, eggs and mutton.

After many experiments we have come to the conclusion that 1 to 2 *chhataks* of groundnut oilcake can be easily digested and taken along with cereals making the preparation more palatable. The cake bits are soaked in water and in two hours or so they disintegrate forming a uniform paste. This paste can be mixed with *atta* and made into *chapatis*. The proportion of 1:5 is quite good. The paste adds to the flavour of the *dal* or *vegetable*, if cooked along with these. It is very tasty when used in the preparation of *dalia* or porridge with cereals half and half or even without that.

Such use of groundnut cake will release some of the cereal needed and will be a very good health-giving food.

Sweet Potatoes: Sweet potatoes are rich in starch and can form a good substitute for cereals. These should be cooked over steam. If cooked with water almost all the water should be allowed to evaporate, for, otherwise much of the mineral salts will get dissolved in the water and would have to be discarded with the water.

Sweet potatoes can be taken mixed with vegetables, milk, curds or in any other convenient form. If at any of the meals, cereals are to be totally substituted by this, a little more of sweet potatoes should be taken on the weight of the usual consumption quantity of cereal.

DEVENDRA KUMAR GUPTA (A. I. V. I. A.)

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BIBI AMTUL SALAAM

Bibi Amtul Salaam has for years lived for Hindu-Muslim unity. She comes from a well-known family of Mussalmans in the Patiala State in the Punjab. But she put aside the comforts that her birth offered her and joined Gandhiji's Ashram in 1930. She has ever since endeavoured to shape her life according to the ideals propounded by Gandhiji. Having come under the influence of Theosophy in her early childhood, she has cultivated equal respect for all religions though she remains a staunch Muslim herself. In her zeal for unity she even edited an Urdu weekly called the *Ittehad* for sometime in 1942. But for various reasons she had to stop it.

During the Bengal famine she came to East Bengal and worked in Tipperah district rendering yeoman service to the afflicted people. But though she has a strong will, her body is very frail and she had to go to Sevagram for recuperation. Riots broke out in Bengal. Reports of the happenings in Noakhali made her restless and she came to Bengal and had started working in the affected areas a few days before Gandhiji's arrival at Chaumuhani.

What she saw oppressed her. She worked in Dasgharia at first. Being a highly religious woman, she could not bear to see people deprived of religious solace. Then she shifted to the village Shirandi. For reasons into which I need not go, she went on a fast there while she was running a temperature of 104° F.

On the ninth day of the fast she dictated a statement to me, explaining the idea behind her fast into which I must not go at present. I shall permit myself to say this much only that she fasted to evoke genuine repentance among her co-religionists. The fast dragged on and I became anxious about her life.

We were all in a fix. Bibi Amtul Salaam alone was at peace. She had resigned herself to God's will and was prepared to die. It was a test of faith. Towards the last week she would not let her temperature be taken. We wanted to test her urine. She protested. What was the good? It would simply cause more anxiety. Friends came from far and near to see her and were struck by her brave suffering. She had the *Quran* and the *Gita* recited to her every day and the recitation soothed her. A doctor friend pleaded with her, "Sister, your life is not your own. Won't you let me give you an injection of glucose? At least give me permission to do so if you become unconscious." She opened her eyes and spoke with an effort. Her voice was feeble but clear and steady. "My life I have surrendered to God. His will be done. If He wishes me to live, I cannot die. I must not take injections. The fast must continue until its object is fulfilled."

The Police and the local leaders were also worried. They tried their utmost. They all went to Gandhiji and wanted him somehow to put an end to the fast. He could not do so. She had embarked upon the fast on her own initiative and had taken his word that he won't compel her to break it.

He was scheduled to go to Shirandi on the 20th January, the 25th day of her fast, in the course of his tour. We were sceptical whether she would hold out so long and wanted him to go there earlier. We all felt that his presence at Shirandi might be able to achieve what nothing else had and the fast might come to a successful end. Gandhiji was disinclined to change the tour programme and she herself was not keen. "Let him come when I am near the end, so that I can die in his lap", she said. And so Gandhiji arrived at Shirandi on the 20th. Even in her terribly weak state from her sick bed she supervised all arrangements for his stay. Such has been her devotion to Gandhiji. And she sent me and Abha Gandhi to receive him as she could not walk herself.

A Muslim Deputation waited on Gandhiji at 3 p. m. They were extremely sorry for what had happened. Replying to their plea that he should intervene to end the fast, Gandhiji said that he had come as the friend of the Hindus and the Mussalmans. If they could tear open his heart they would find there nothing but love. Bibi Amtul Salaam was more than a daughter to him. He did not wish to lose her. He had taught the Muslim boys under his care to be firm in their faith and had seen to it that they said their *namaz* and observed *Ramzan*. She had embarked on the fast because she could not stand the religious intolerance of her Muslim brethren. She loved Islam, but she did not hate the Hindus. She had not taken his permission to go on fast. He was the last person to trifle with her faith. The object of the fast has to be fulfilled. It was to make the Muslims see the wrong that they had done and repent for it. If they were genuinely repentant and assured non-recurrence of such things in the future, he would plead with her to break the fast. After all God was one and the same by whatever name men called Him.

He had read in the *Morning News* that Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah had said that Pakistan could not be established through force. He had also said that in Pakistan there would be perfect freedom and safety for the minorities. He had not come to East Bengal on a political mission. His was a purely humanitarian mission. If they wanted the Hindus to leave East Bengal, they should say so plainly. If not, they should redress the wrong done and give assurances for the future. Then he would certainly persuade Bibi Amtul Salaam to break her fast. If they said one thing and meant another, if they broke their word afterwards, they would have to reckon with his fast instead of Amtul Salaam's. He could not hold them responsible for the whole district. But they should take up the responsibility for the peace of their area. By doing so they would be laying the foundation of peace for the whole of Noakhali, nay for the whole of East Bengal. After mutual consultation they evolved a formula expressing sorrow for what had happened and guaranteeing the religious freedom of the Hindus in future in the village of Shirandi and four adjoining villages.

It was signed by the leading members of the Muslim community representing the five villages mentioned. It was past 9 P. M. when the agreement was finally completed and Gandhiji handed over a cup of orange juice to Bibi Amtul Salaam after recitation of the *Quran* by the Muslim friends.

S. N.

HARIJAN

April 6

1947

BLINDNESS AT A PRICE

We had already written about the evil effects of *vanaspati* ghee. Sir S. S. Sokhey, Director of the Haffkine Institute, Bombay, states that experiments conducted in the Haffkine Institute on the nutritive values of hydrogenated oil show that

- (1) the consumption of hydrogenated oils resulted in inferior growth;
- (2) their consumption interfered with the absorption of calcium in the body; and
- (3) their consumption resulted in a change in the fat composition of the body.

Recently, in the Council of State, Dr. Rajendra Prasad stated that the Research Institute at Izzatnagar had reported that the use of *vanaspati* was bad for health and affected the eyesight. Experiments conducted on rats show that the third generation of them become blind. In the light of these scientific experiments one would have thought that any Government with the welfare of the people in their mind would have banned *vanaspati* out of the country and locked up the *vanaspati* manufacturers as anti-social beings. But India is tolerant even to the extent of hugging its evil-doers.

We understand that the Government is contemplating provision for the detection of adulteration of *ghee* with *vanaspati* by adding 5% basic oil and colouring it. We fear that this will be absolutely of no use. *Vanaspati* is generally made of groundnut oil cotton-seed or oil. The addition of these oils in a small proportion will be of no avail for detection. Scientists are of opinion that at least 10% of sesame oil (*til* oil) is the least amount that can be effective, and no other oils would be useful. Besides, the colouring can be removed at a very small cost. One wonders why there should be the need for all this circumventing of the issue.

It is clear that the expenditures incurred by these manufacturers are of no avail to the nation as a whole. They add nothing to the existing fat of the country. If anything, they decrease their assimilability by hydrogenation and to the extent they are destructive of the fat stock of the land. The fresh oils that are produced at comparatively low rates are acquired by these factories and at a cost which is often double the original cost; they destroy the natural food values and make the nation subject to

various deficiency diseases, and for this disservice the nation has to pay in the utilization of its manpower, capital and human effort. We are amazed at our action when we sit down calmly and think over the *pros* and *cons* in regard to this question.

In so far as adulteration of dairy *ghee* is the main objective of this industry it is a direct hit on the dairy industry. In a country which is largely vegetarian, reduction of *ghee* consumption, however caused, will undermine the health of the people. The argument that Western nations use margarine will not hold in our country. Margarine is used like butter over slices of bread and in a temperate climate the hydrogenation needs to be carried out to a very little extent. In our country such a treatment will still leave the product in a liquid state. Besides Europeans obtain animal fats from various other sources as they are meat eaters and their cooking is done mainly with lard (animal fat). Hence, any comparison with other countries is fallacious.

India's is a cow-centered economy. We need cows for the plough, for transport, for carriage and for yielding milk. Hence, any measure that adversely affects the maintenance of the cow will also adversely affect our national economy. A correct view of the affairs in the proper perspective would make *vanaspati* production equivalent to cow slaughter, and we hope at least those who venerate the cow will look at this aspect of the question conscientiously and refrain from an industry which is based on pure avarice, ignoring all considerations of national welfare.

From the economic point of view the *vanaspati* mills in so far as they enter the market for vegetable oils tend to put up the prices of ordinary oils. So the poorer consumers of vegetable oil have to pay a higher price for the only source of fat that is available to them. The well-to-do classes who use this hydrogenated oil pay a still higher price for materials which may prove even harmful to them and perhaps obtaining nothing in return even by way of fat if the digestibility is impaired by hydrogenation. Apart from the raising of the price of oils even under controlled rates, because of the advent of capitalists in the market, the tendency is towards black-marketing, which again has an injurious effect on the budget of the poorer consumers.

We are amazed at the recommendation of the Advisory Planning Board which has suggested the raising of the target of production of this article from 82,000 tons in 1941 to 400,000 in 1950. Are we thinking of industries as a means of making wealth for a few, or should our industries be the means of supplying the needed articles to satisfy human needs? Are there no moral considerations to guide us in this matter? Is our industrial policy to be devoid of all humanity? If so, we are heading for the jungle. We trust that no time will be lost in calling a halt as far as this industry is concerned.

J. C. KUMARAPPA

GANDHIJI'S BIHAR TOUR DIARY

17-3-'47

The gathering at Masurhi was, according to official estimates, more than thirty thousand and, during the *Ramadhun*, a very large section of the men and women present participated in the recital. Gandhiji began by congratulating the audience on that account. Then he told them that his Bihar tour had not been undertaken for pleasure, but on account of serious and grave reasons. He would visit those places where Muslims had suffered. His appeal to the Hindus was to show repentance by means of worthy and suitable acts.

During the mad days of November, women and children were remorselessly murdered, while men had also been done to death in such numbers as to put Noakhali in the shade, although events there had been of a sufficiently serious character. He expected the Hindus of Bihar to show true repentance and not merely shout "*Jai*" or victory in his name. He not only expected them to contribute liberally towards the relief fund but what he expected them to do more was that they should come forward and confess at least to him the wrongs that they had done. This alone could bring him true peace of mind.

Gandhiji said that he had asked for reports of events from various sources. One of them stated that the initial aggression had been from the side of the Musalmans. He was not at all concerned how the trouble actually started: the problem was, as the Hindus were in such overwhelming majority, how could they stoop so low as to indulge in murdering the innocents? True repentance, with the consequent reparatory action, alone could restore abiding peace between the two sister communities.

The report also accused the Government of indifference to wrongs suffered by the Hindus at the hands of the Muslims. Similar reports had also been received from Muslim quarters complaining of indifference to Muslim complaints. Gandhiji continued that he was slow to believe either report. A popular Government that was so indifferent or partial one way or the other could not exist for any length of time. The Government had already declared that they would presently appoint an impartial Commission to hear all complaints, examine the causes of the terrible disturbances and discover ways and means for avoiding repetition of the tragedy. They would also advise as to the reparation to be made to the sufferers. Let those who had sent their letters to him, he continued, be ready with their evidence to be put before the Commission. His was not the way of a judge or of a prosecutor. His was the humble role of a reformer and humanitarian. He had, therefore, to deal with known facts and invite offenders to repent for their follies.

18-3-'47

Gandhiji referred to his visit to Masurhi and described with emotion the wreckage he had witnessed. He pointed out that he had read about the happenings in Masurhi in the Muslim League report which, he regretted, he had to say, he had believed to be grossly exaggerated. But he had to

confess now that much of the description about Masurhi seemed to him to be borne out. And what one read, however honest it might be, was wholly different in effect from the actual sight. He was told that the tragedy was largely due to the excitement caused by the observance of Noakhali Day. He was told, too, that the Muslims of Bihar were perturbed by the talk that was going about that the Punjab Day was to be observed on the 23rd. He hoped that it was a mere rumour which had no foundation in fact. Such an observance anywhere would mean a clear invitation for mutual slaughter between brother and brother. He had told the Muslim friends that if such a misfortune took place in Bihar he would want to perish in the flames. His incessant prayer to God was that he would not keep him alive to witness such an awful and disgraceful scene.

Gandhiji then read two letters which he had received on the way to Bir from the adjacent villages. One was from Sain and the other from Barni. He wished that the friendly spirit running through the letters which were described to be as from the Hindu and Muslim residents of the villages would become universal.

Collections were made after the speech. Gandhiji remained whilst the collections were made.

21-3-'47

Gandhiji commenced with a reference to his visit to Garahwan village where men, women and children had been brutally done to death and asked those assembled before him to sit in mournful silence in sympathy with the deceased. He asked them to consider for themselves why innocent women and children had been killed. Was it to save any religion? No religion, Gandhiji emphasized, taught anyone to kill his neighbours. What was done was nothing but wanton destruction—he did not stop to think whether it was done from motives of self interest or any other.

The houses which a few months ago were full of life, Gandhiji said, were now desolate and everyone knew about it. But then what was to be done next? People went to bathe in the Ganges, believing that their sins could thus be washed off. The ruins before them should remind them of the sin they had committed on helpless women and children and they should seek to expiate it by considering in what way they could redeem themselves. Gandhiji told them that they should clean the ruined houses and make them neat and habitable. They should also express to their Muslim brethren their repentance for the past occurrences and persuade them to return to their villages, telling them that then alone they would have peace of mind. It was possible that the Muslims might turn round and ask how they could go back and live in the houses where their kith and kin had been done to death. The Muslims, Gandhiji said, would be justified in saying so. But, if the guilty men or their relations could go to the Muslims with truly penitent hearts and assure them that what was past was past and would never be repeated, he was sure that even a stone heart would melt.

Amidst this mad upheaval, Gandhiji continued, there were men, like oasis in a desert, who risked the wrath of the violent mobs and saved many Muslim lives and Muslim property. Those people deserved congratulations, though they did not need any. If he did not go to them, Gandhiji said, it did not mean that he had not recognized their work. But he was in the nature of a doctor who went not to the well but to the suffering.

He had been told, Gandhiji proceeding said, that the Hindus had also suffered in the conflict. If there were any such, they too needed help and would be included in the relief.

Gandhiji mentioned that about fifty persons, who were wanted in connection with the riot cases, had surrendered the day after his arrival at Masurhi. He welcomed it and hoped that others who had taken part in the riots would surrender to the proper authorities, making a clean breast of the crimes they had committed and taking whatever punishment might be given to them. If people had not the courage to surrender to the authorities, Gandhiji said, they could come to him or Badshah Khan or Major General Shah Nawaz with their confessions.

Lastly, Gandhiji referred to the fear entertained by the Hindus of Noakhali about preparations that were being made by the Muslims to observe Pakistan Day on the 23rd inst. A friend from Khadi Pratishthan had also come to him and explained to him that the situation in Noakhali was deteriorating. Gandhiji said that he had told that friend that he would not be persuaded to leave his post in Bihar at the present moment, for he believed that his mission, if fully successful in Bihar, would cast its effect on Bengal and perhaps on the rest of India. The Muslims of Bihar and the Hindus of Bengal should accept him as security for the safety of their life and property from the hands of the communalists. He had come here, Gandhiji said, to do or die. Therefore, there was no question of abandoning his post of duty till the Hindus and the Muslims could assure him that they did not need his services.

22-3-'47

Gandhiji who returned to Patna this morning after a six days tour of the affected area in Masurhi Thana gave an account of his impressions to the gathering assembled at the evening prayer meeting at the Bankipore Maidan. Gandhiji expressed satisfaction with the attitude of the villagers who were not only genuinely penitent over the past happenings but were also willing to atone for the past in the manner he might suggest. Liberal contributions, as liberal as it could be in rural India, were made by them for the relief of the Muslims, and even when he drove in the car he was stopped and presented with purses. Besides purses, Gandhiji said, he had also received letters from them expressing their readiness and willingness to help in the rehabilitation of the Muslims.

In a number of places, Gandhiji proceeding said, due to the bravery of the local Hindus, no incidents had occurred. He was told by the Muslims them-

selves, that in Dinapore Sub-division no trouble occurred though the Muslims were greatly nervous.

Gandhiji said that he had addressed the Muslim women refugees in the morning at Piplawan. He did not wish at present to enter into a description of the feelings of these women and their present condition. His heart was too full and he did not wish to shed tears. He only wanted to tell them how to repent. He tried as best as he could to console them and persuaded them to pick up courage and return to their villages, placing reliance on God. At this meeting he was told that Muslim women and men dreaded the approach of March 23rd, as it had been reported that Punjab Day would be observed in Bihar on that date. He had told them that the Bihar Government had banned the observance of any kind of day, be it Pakistan Day or Punjab Day. The Minister who was present also gave the assurance that no celebration of any kind would be permitted and that the ban would be strictly enforced throughout the Province. The Bihar Government, Gandhiji said, had banned the Kisan Rally also. In his opinion, that was rightly done. The present atmosphere in the country was such that any kind of rally or procession led to one kind of trouble or other. In the language of the *Bhagwad Gita*, very often action lay in inaction and inaction in action. Gandhiji illustrated this truth by giving striking modern instances. Thus in modern warfare, very often inactivity was obligatory and could therefore be described as real activity, and at such a time any activity, so-called, would savour of criminality. He would, therefore, urge both the Hindus and the Muslims to refrain from celebrating these days. A true *satyagrahi* should implicitly obey the directions of those he had himself put in power. What he said did not refer only to March 23rd. It applied to the future also and at no time should these celebrations be indulged in, so long as the atmosphere remained as it was that day.

Continuing Gandhiji said that if the Hindus realized the error of their past conduct, then he would expect the Hindus in the affected areas to contribute physical labour for the renovation of damaged houses. That act performed voluntarily, freely and sincerely would inspire lost confidence as nothing else could.

Gandhiji mentioned that after his arrival at Masurhi about fifty persons who were wanted in connection with the riots had surrendered to the authorities. By this time the number had probably gone up and he hoped many more would come forward to acknowledge their guilt. Confession of their guilt, Gandhiji concluded, not only evoked respect for their courage but would ultimately enhance the prestige of the province as a whole.

23-3-'47

Gandhiji's weekly silence having commenced, his written message in Hindustani was read out to the congregation after the prayers. It was his earnest prayer that those who were present and those others whom his voice could reach should understand the aim of life. The aim of life was that they

should serve the Power that had created them, and on Whose mercy or consent depended their very breath, by heartily serving Its creation. That meant love, not hate which one saw everywhere. They had forgotten that aim and were either actually fighting each other or preparing for that fight. If they could not escape that calamity, they should regard India's independence as an impossible dream. If they thought that they would get independence by the simple fact of the British power quitting the land, they were sadly mistaken. The British were leaving India. But if they continued fighting one another, some other power or powers would step in. If they thought they could fight the whole world with its weapons, it was a folly.

A friend had written, continued Gandhiji, that a sort of peace seemed to have been established in the Punjab through military occupation. That peace was the peace of the grave. The people were silently preparing for an open and deadlier fight. Weapons were being collected. After that even the military would find it impossible to control the people. It was his firm conviction that the peace established with the aid of the military or the police would be no peace. True peace would only come when at least one side, if not both, adopted the true bravery that non-violence gave.

Bihar had realized, said Gandhiji, that there was no bravery in killing women and children. It was sheer cowardice. It would be a grand thing if Bihar could manifest the true bravery of silent strength, and show thereby the true path of life to the whole world.

At the end Gandhiji informed the audience that the prayer meeting on Monday would be held near Poonpoo.

24-3-'47

The prayer meeting at Rajghat was very noisy. There was a very large number of women not used to meetings. They set up an incessant chatter. The usual prayer was nevertheless conducted amid the din. When the time for Gandhiji's speech came, he said that he was not anxious to hear his own voice. He would not speak to them if the chatter continued. His remarks were, therefore, addressed to the volunteers who, he said, ought to prepare especially new audiences such as that day's by word of mouth or otherwise telling them the rules that govern public meetings. He advised preparation of short leaflets for distribution among such people.

He then said he had visited Behrawan where Hindu houses had been damaged. He said that for him the Hindus and the Muslims were like two eyes, as Sir Syed Ahmed had said. Such isolated instances ought not to diminish the heinousness of the Hindus' crime against the Muslims.

25-3-'47

At today's prayer meeting perfect silence was observed by the audience to the end. Gandhiji congratulated them for it. He told them that he had heard that the Hindus were boycotting the Muslims. If that was so, it was a bad omen. True repentance demanded true friendship in which

there could be no room for boycott. Hence, if they were truly repentant, they ought not to boycott the Muslims. He then referred to a visit of Muslim League friends who were prepared to co-operate in every way in rehabilitation and he added that without the co-operation of the League friends in Bihar there could be no friendship which depended not on the bayonet but on mutual goodwill.

Gandhiji had a visit from a friend from Noakhali who had come to report that things had worsened there after his departure. He had replied that the work he was doing in Bihar could not but affect the Noakhali work for the better. He advised the Noakhali friend to report every misdeed to the proper authorities. Whatever came to his notice he would gladly pass on to the authorities with confidence. In any case he would advise them to be calm, courageous and to have faith in God as the true and only Helper.

Lastly, he referred to a visit from *Dome* friends, whom it was the duty of every Hindu to befriend. They, he was told, were under a double disability. They were treated as outcasts by the caste Hindus and as the lowest in the hierarchy of untouchables. This was a shame which the Hindus were bound to wipe out at the earliest moment, if Hinduism was not to perish.

'LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS'

[The Chinese have a proverb: 'A wise man learns from his experience; a wiser man learns from the experience of others'. The following article by Louis Bromfield appears in the *Reader's Digest* of October last and teaches us the lesson that we in India at any rate cannot afford to trifle with the soil, but must deal with it gently and reverentially. — V. G. D.]

On a clear, beautiful day last spring, I flew from Austin, Texas, to Chicago. Unrolled like a map beneath our plane lay a good part of the vast Mississippi Basin, once the richest and most productive agricultural area of its size in the world.

It is still rich in spots, but most of it now is an area of steadily waning productivity. Most of its forests have been cut down, and much of its agricultural land has been ruined. All this has happened in less than 100 years and in some parts in little more than a generation.

Halfway through Iowa my companion looking down, said, 'My, that's a pretty sight! There's an awful lot of food being raised down there.'

From an aesthetic point of view it was a pretty sight. . . .

It was pretty all right, but my companion, a city fellow, saw only the surface. He did not see the ugly, frightening things which were taking money out of his pockets, and perhaps even the calcium out of his bones and the phosphorus out of his brain. Presently I began telling him what lay beneath the pretty picture, beginning with the moment we had taken off in the Black Lands in Texas.

The Black Lands, as virgin soil, were wonderfully deep and heavy with decayed organic material lying over a limestone or marl base. Such soil

exists in few parts of the earth, notably in Texas, Alabama, Mississippi and Russia's Ukraine. As the plane rose, however, it became evident that in the Texas Black Lands great streaks and circular areas had turned grey or white. The grey meant that the rich topsoil was almost gone; the white, where the limestone showed, meant that the topsoil was gone altogether. Many years and a vast expenditure of money will be needed to make that eroded marl grey base once more productive. When the white limestone shows through, there will be no more production for a million years.

How had this rich soil gone? It had been *washed or blown* away, because it had been ploughed year after year and left bare to the ravages of rain and wind.

Presently we passed into the red land of Northern Texas and Southern Oklahoma, once as fine grazing land as there was in the world. Here millions of buffaloes fed on the succulent bluestem and buffalo grasses, and the streams ran clear. But now the land, over-grazed by cattle and burnt over each year, grow only a thin weedy cover or coarse Johnson grass which most ranchmen regard as a pest. The dilapidated ranch houses were few and far between, and only a few skinny cattle grazed the once-rich land.

Worst of all, except where a few wise farmers had terraced their fields, the red soil was gashed by great gullies that were growing constantly into the land, devouring billions of tons of soil every year. The streams and rivers, swollen by spring rains ran red as blood. . . .

Government figures show an increase during the past few years in the average yield per acre of our major crops. . . . When analyzed, however, this statistical increase is not what it appears to be. No account was taken of the thousands of acres that have been abandoned because they can no longer produce, and of the fact that the yield on land still used is boosted by improved (hybrid) seed which 'artificially' increases production . . . and which has nothing to do with soil.

It is well-known that the yield of virgin corn-belt lands (prior to 1850) was often 120 bushels per acre and upward without fertilizers. The current yield in Mc Lean County, Illinois, one of the best producing corn areas in the country, is only about 55 bushels per acre. That is the measure of our soil's decline.

What we saw on the flight was the record of rich land worn out or destroyed. It hadn't occurred to my companion that this tragedy was costing him money in higher food prices, in the higher taxes that are required to pay subsidies, and perhaps to pay for future relief and made-work projects. He didn't realize that depleted land, which lacks minerals vital to the health of human beings, inevitably produces crops and livestock that are also deficient in these elements, and that people who eat the products of depleted soils gradually become physically and mentally deficient.

Many persons believe that all lettuce, for example, has the same vitamin and mineral content. This is

not true. One head of lettuce can be high in mineral and vitamin content and another may have little more nutritional value than a glass of water. This is because the mineral, and to a large extent the vitamin, content of any vegetable is determined by the mineral content of the soil on which it is grown. Healthy citizens cannot be produced from eroded and depleted soils.

My companion had never realized that as the natural fertility of the soil goes down the cost of production mounts; hence the price goes up for consumers and the farmer's profit declines.

What the 'pretty' landscape actually showed was an appalling record of the destruction of natural resources upon which the strength, wealth and power of this nation are founded. If the steady destruction of agricultural land continues, the price of food may increase until only the rich can afford steak, butter and cream. . . .

It would be wrong to ignore the progress being made in soil and water conservation and in soil restoration in various parts of the United States. Soil conservation laws have been an immense step forward. They are administered by farmers themselves, but the U. S. Soil Conservation Service stands ready to give engineering aid and advice.

The State as well as some of our great industrial corporations and societies such as the Friends of the Land and the Friends of the Soil are all doing important work. . . .

Over large parts of our country the great task of anchoring our soil and keeping our rain water where it falls still remains to be done. The ultimate responsibility for this job lies with the farmer. But in certain areas the soil has been so depleted that food raised on it wholly lacks essential minerals, and this has so weakened the rural population that they are unable to help themselves. Here some measure of Government aid is necessary. Money appropriated for the battle against erosion and floods will pay large dividends to the nation.

You can read the truth of the whole story in the passing landscape from the window of a train or an automobile. Try it some time. Bear in mind that every eroded field, silt-clogged river and burned-over forest, every ruined and abandoned farm, is costing you money—in higher prices, in more taxes, in more subsidies, in strikes for higher pay because the higher cost of food has eaten deeper into the purchasing power of the dollar. Remember that when our soil and forests and other natural resources are gone it will not matter if we have all the gold in the world buried at Fort Knox or if the Treasury Department turns out truckloads of banknotes, for we shall be finished as a nation.

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