

# HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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TWO ANNAS

## CLOTH SHORTAGE

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Shri Mana Subedar who takes interest in Khadi and other village industries, sent me the following note some time ago. But I delayed publication in order that I might make some more effective use of it than giving it in 'Harijan'. I could not think of any. Hence this publication for the use, not only of all provincial governments but also of private individuals or organizations, in however limited the field may be.

Here is Shri Subedar's scheme :

"One bale of cotton should be given to every village collectively. The people of the village could spin this yarn. The yarn will be used either for doubling or as weft and cloth could be made.

"One bale would yield approximately 2,400 yards of cloth (or 1,800 according to count).

"If *charkhas* and *taklis* are wanted, they should be supplied by the State. (Manufacture should be organized in jails).

"The cloth, when ready, should be made available to the people of the village on a per head ration basis.

"If and when it is important to collect grain in those villages, where there is supposed to be a grain surplus in the hands of the farmers, the cloth should be substituted only for grain. In other cases, the people of the village should collect enough to pay for the value of the bale of cotton. In other words, for the price of cotton (which is in the first instance, advanced by Government), they would get cloth.

"While cloth shortage would be eased, cotton surplus would also be taken away and it will help the grower of cotton.

"As the village *Pancha* would have to take over the cotton bale and deal with the whole thing, the beginning would be made of :

- i) village industry,
- ii) joint and collective effort,
- iii) participation and labour contribution by the small and the big ones, and
- iv) elimination of the middleman.

"If the experiment were made in the first instance with twenty thousand villages of the Bombay Presidency, or even two thousand of them, the results would be seen in the course of the next six weeks.

"Government will have to lock up funds for the cotton at the rate of Rs. 225 per bale. Much of this money will return either in the form of grain or in the form of cash. But it will have incidentally marked the beginning of something which the villages can do for themselves.

"Assistance may have to be given where looms are not available, or where the yarn produced is not capable of being used both as warp and as weft. But these are details in organization, which could

be attended to by someone at the headquarters of every district.

"On return of price of bale by a village, a fresh bale should be sent to them by Government as an advance."

I may add that this is a variation upon the one suggested by me. In my opinion, the original is probably better. But I attach greater value to Shri Subedar's note because he has worked out the figures, suggested a beginning with a bale of cotton and more specially because he as an economist has thought out his scheme independently of me. It will be easy enough to find flaws in every human scheme. Our business is to remove flaws if we know how or to make a beginning in spite of the flaws which we know but cannot mend. No reform is possible if we wait for perfection.

Panchgani, 27-7-'46

## AFTER FOUR YEARS

THE WANDERING JEW

Louis Fischer, whose quest for lost causes has turned him into a veritable Wandering Jew, sought out Gandhiji at Panchgani during the week. Espousing worthy causes is with him a biological necessity. He regards the Indian problem as being central to world peace. In 1942, in the course of a famous interview, he helped Gandhiji to discover and remedy a vital gap in the Quit India proposal. Now that India is once more at the cross-roads, he has again found his occupation here.

He had seen Gandhiji at Poona before the A. I. C. C. meeting. But it did not give him full satisfaction. "Somehow I could not come to grips with the main problem as I could in 1942," he remarked afterwards. He had his revenge this time during a series of three interviews that he had with Gandhiji on two successive days. The talks covered a variety of subjects from the proposed Constituent Assembly, the Hindu-Muslim problem and untouchability to socialism, non-violence and the ethics of retaliatory measures against South Africa, interspersed with lighter intervals in which quick thrust and parry served to relieve the strain of more serious discussions.

A SOVEREIGN BODY?

Fischer opened with a broadside on the question of the Constituent Assembly. "I would go into the Constituent Assembly and use it for a different purpose — as a battle-field — and declare it to be a sovereign body. What do you say to this?"

"It is no use declaring somebody else's creation a sovereign body," said Gandhiji. "After all, it is a British creation. A body does not become a sovereign body by merely asserting it. To become sovereign, you have to behave in a sovereign way. Three tailors of Tooley Street in Johannesburg declared that they were a sovereign body. It ended in nothing. It was just a farce.

"I do not consider the proposed Constituent Assembly to be non-revolutionary. I have said, and I

mean it cent percent, that the proposed Constituent Assembly is an effective substitute for civil disobedience of the constructive type. Whilst I have the greatest admiration for the self-denial and spirit of sacrifice of our Socialist friends, I have never concealed the sharp difference between their method and mine. They frankly believe in violence and all that is in its bosom. I believe in non-violence through and through."

#### SOCIALIST WITH A DIFFERENCE

That turned the discussion on to socialism. "You are a socialist and so are they," interpolated Fischer.

Gandhiji: "I am, they are not. I was a socialist before many of them were born. I carried conviction to a rabid socialist in Johannesburg, but that is neither here nor there. My claim will live when their socialism is dead."

"What do you mean by *your* socialism?"

"My socialism means "even unto this last". I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body."

"Yes, but there are variations. My socialism in its modified form means that the State does not own everything. It does in Russia. There you certainly do not own your body even. You may be arrested at any time, though you may have committed no crime. They may send you wherever they like."

"Does not under your socialism, the State own your children and educate them in any way it likes?"

"All States do that. America does it."

"Then America is not very different from Russia."

"You really object to dictatorship."

"But socialism is dictatorship or else arm-chair philosophy. I call myself a communist also."

"O, don't. It is terrible for you to call yourself a communist. I want what you want, what Jaiprakash and the Socialists want: a free world. But the Communists don't. They want a system which enslaves the body and the mind."

"Would you say that of Marx?"

"The Communists have corrupted the Marxist teaching to suit their purpose."

"What about Lenin?"

"Lenin started it. Stalin has since completed it. When the Communists come to you, they want to get into the Congress and control the Congress and use it for their own ends."

"So do the Socialists. My communism is not very different from socialism. It is a harmonious blending of the two. Communism, as I have understood it, is a natural corollary of socialism."

"Yes, you are right. There was a time when the two could not be distinguished. But today Socialists are very different from Communists."

"You mean to say, you do not want communism of Stalin's type."

"But the Indian Communists want communism of the Stalin type in India and want to use your name for that purpose."

"They won't succeed."

#### PLAYING THE GAME

Fischer reverted to the Constituent Assembly. "So you will not yourself go into the Constituent Assembly, but will support it."

"Yes. But it is wrong to say we are going to the Constituent Assembly to seize power. Though it is not a sovereign body, it is as near it as possible."

"Pandit Jawaharlal said that if the British tried to impose a treaty in terms of the State Paper of May 16, he will tear it up."

"Yes, an imposed treaty from outside."

"And he said, Congress will not go into groupings."

"Yes. I have said the same thing — unless the Federal Court or some other court gives a different decision. As I see it, much can come out of the Constituent Assembly, if the British will play the game."

#### CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

"You say and I believe they will," remarked Fischer. "But supposing they do not, won't you then offer your form of protest?"

"Not until the conditions are favourable. But it is wrong to speculate about the future, still more so to anticipate failure. If we take care of the present, the future will take care of itself."

#### UNTOUCHABILITY AND THE COMMUNAL QUESTION

They then passed on to the question of Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhiji startled his visitor by proffering the remark that the Hindu-Muslim question, in the final analysis, was an offshoot of the untouchability question. "When Hinduism is perfectly reformed and purged of the last trace of untouchability, there will be no communal problem left."

"I have heard," remarked Fischer, "that though the Congress Harijans have won at the elections against non-Congress Harijans, they were able to do so only with the Hindu votes!"

"What was the joint election for, if not to enable the caste Hindus to make a selection from successful candidates at the primary elections?" replied Gandhiji. "No failed candidate at the primary elections can offer himself as a candidate at the joint elections. Moreover, it is not correct to say, as has been claimed, that in the majority of cases, the Congress Harijans won against the non-Congress candidates with the caste Hindu votes. In Madras the non-Congress Harijans were defeated almost to a man in the primary elections, wherever they contested them. In the majority of cases the Congress Harijans were returned unopposed."

"Some of them want separate electorates," remarked Fischer.

"Yes. But we have resisted it. By separate electorates they put themselves outside the pale of Hinduism and perpetuate the bar sinister."

"That is true. But, anyhow, they might say that Hindus have put them outside the pale."

"But today the Hindus are penitent."

"Are they adequately penitent?"

"I am sorry to say 'not yet'. If they were, there would be no untouchability and no communal problem as I have already said."

"Is there less social contact between the Hindus and Muslims," next asked Fischer.

"No, rather the contrary. But politically there is a bar, thanks to Lord Minto."

## ETHICS OF RECIPROCITY

After a little sword play Fischer changed over to another topic.

"Your young men are too Indo-centric," he said.

"That is only partly true. I won't say we have become international," replied Gandhiji, "but we have taken up forlorn causes, e. g. the cause of the exploited nations, because we are ourselves the chief exploited nation."

"The growing anti-White feeling here is bad," proceeded Gandhiji's interviewer. "In Taj Mahal Hotel they have put up a notice 'South Africans not admitted'. I do not like it. Your non-violence should make you more generous."

"That won't be non-violence. Today the White man rules in India. So, if Taj Mahal has the gumption to put up that notice, it is a feather in its cap."

Fischer's liberalism felt hurt. "That is what any nationalist will say. You must say something better," he remarked.

"Then I will be a nationalist for once," replied Gandhiji with firmness. "They have no right to be here if they do not deal with Indians on terms of equality."

"No right — yes," rejoined Fischer. "But you must give them more than their right. You must invite them."

"Yes, when I am the Viceroy."

"You mean the President of the Indian Republic."

"No. I will be quite content to be the Viceroy, a constitutional Viceroy, for the time being," said Gandhiji. "The first thing I will do, will be to vacate the Viceregal Lodge and give it to the Harijans. I will then invite the South African White visitors to my hut and say to them: 'You have ground my people to powder. But we won't copy you. We will give you more than you deserve. We won't lynch you as you do in South Africa,' and thus shame them into doing the right."

"There is so much anti-White feeling today," put in Fischer somewhat troubled in mind.

"Of course, I am opposed to that. It can do no good to anybody."

"The world is so divided. And there might be another war and that may be between the Coloured and the White races."

"Europe seems to be heading for another war. It is not sufficiently exhausted."

"Europe is terribly exhausted. But with the atom bomb human beings don't matter so much. A few scientists are enough. The next war will be carried on by pressing a few buttons. That is why colour war is so dangerous."

"Anything is better than cowardice. It is violence double distilled." And to illustrate his remark Gandhiji narrated the story of a Negro clergyman with a Herculean frame in South Africa saying 'pardon me brother,' when insulted by a White man, and sneaking into a coloured man's compartment. "That is not non-violence. It is a travesty of Jesus' teaching. It would have been more manly to retaliate."

"You are not afraid of what happens to you but what it may mean to others," replied Fischer, analysing the illustration adduced by Gandhiji. "It takes a great deal of irresponsibility to give vent to your feelings and slap the White man under the circumstances described by you. In India the situation is different. The White men are not so numerous here."

"You are mistaken," replied Gandhiji. "Why, one Englishman is killed and a whole village is razed to the ground as a reprisal. What vindictiveness!"

## A CONUNDRUM ANSWERED

That finished the first day's discussion. But some conundrums about Gandhiji's attitude in regard to the Constituent Assembly continued to trouble Fischer's mind and he reverted to them in the course of his discussion the next day.

"If the Working Committee had reacted to your 'groping in the dark' or as you have called it your instinct about the long-term proposals, they would have rejected them."

"Yes, but I did not let them," replied Gandhiji.

"You mean you did not insist."

"More than that. I prevented them from following my instinct unless they also felt likewise. It is no use conjecturing what would have happened. The fact however remains that Dr. Rajendra Prasad asked me: 'Does your instinct go so far that you would prevent us from accepting the long-term proposals, whether we understand you or not?' I said, 'No. Follow your reason since my own reason does not support my instinct. My instinct rebels against my reason. I have placed my misgivings before you as I want to be faithful to you. I myself have not followed my instinct unless my reason backed it.'"

"But you have said that you follow your instinct when it speaks to you on occasions as, for instance, you did before certain fasts that you undertook."

"Yes, but even in these cases, before the fast began, my reason was able to back my instinct. My reason failed my instinct on the long-term proposals."

"Then, why did you inject your 'instinct' into the political situation?"

"Because I was loyal to my friends. I wanted to retain my faith in the *bona fides* of the Cabinet Mission. So I told the Cabinet Mission also about my misgivings. I said to myself, 'Supposing they meant ill, they would feel ashamed.'"

## A TESTAMENT OF FAITH

"You are strongly constitutionalist now. Is it for fear of the alternative — violence?" finally asked Fischer.

"No. If India is destined to go through a blood bath, it will do so. The thing I would fear is my own cowardice or dishonesty. I have neither. So I say, we must go in and work it out. If they are dishonest, they will be found out. The loss will not be ours but theirs."

"I think you are afraid of the spirit of violence. It is widespread. I wonder whether it has not captured the mood of the youth and you are aware of it, and you fear that mood."

"It has not captured the imagination of the country. I admit that it has captured the imagination of a section of the youth."

"It is a mood that has got to be combated."

"Yes. I am doing it in my own way. It is my implicit faith that it is a survival which will kill itself in time. It cannot live. It is so contrary to the spirit of India. But what is the use of talking? I believe in an inscrutable Providence which presides over our destinies — call it God or by any other name you like. All I contend is that it is not the fear of violence that makes me advise the country to go to the Constituent Assembly. It is repugnant in a non-violent attitude not to accept an honourable substitute for civil revolt."

Panchgani, 27-7-'46

PYARELAL

# HARIJAN

August 4

1946

## 9TH AUGUST

(By M. K. Gandhi)

9th August like 6th April, 13th April and 26th January is a red letter day in the battle of India's freedom. They are days for universal hartal in terms of Satyagraha, i. e. truth and non-violence. But today, considered in terms of Satyagraha, hartals are generally taboo and more specially so, on the coming 9th of August. They would be fitting if hartals are designed to signalize violence.

Two powerful voices have spoken: one of the President of the Congress, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the other of the President of the Socialist Group, Shri Jaiprakash Narain. It is delicate for me to give my opinion when these two ardent lovers of their country speak in opposition. But as a Satyagrahi I must overcome the delicacy.

Jaiprakash Narain is a Congressman. It is an open secret that he was offered a seat on the Working Committee by Panditji, naturally under the belief that whatever views he entertained, he was too honest to be disloyal to the Congress in action. If, now, in spite of knowing the Congress President's views to the contrary, he adheres to his own opinion given to the contrary, it would appear to be an act of disloyalty to the Congress. If, therefore, he has not withdrawn from the false position, I hope, recognizing the aptness of my remarks, he will see the wisdom of retracing his steps.

The Working Committee, rightly or wrongly, has taken a step. It has been endorsed by the A. I. C. C. It is up to every Congressman to support the Congress going to the Constituent Assembly, by creating the atmosphere suitable for work in that Assembly. This I say even to those who distrust good faith in everything the British do. They may warn the Congress of the dangers they sense. This they were allowed, by the President to have the fullest latitude to do at the recent A. I. C. C. meeting. Anything in excess of that opposition is surely harmful for the country. I would consider as such the hartal on the 9th August.

The Congress cannot have the cake and eat it too. It must be left free, it must be helped, to develop freedom through the 'Constituent Assembly'. It will not be a waste of effort to honestly work the 'Assembly' for the purpose. The Congress must not kill the hen before it has laid.

Then mark the atmosphere in the country. There is senseless disorder as in Ahmedabad and elsewhere. There is a parody of Satyagraha in the show staged by Dr. Ambedkar. In Satyagraha the cause has to be just and clear as well as the means. The cause is certainly vague, even if the means are non-violent. I doubt the wisdom of the sympathetic paralysis of all business in Bombay and elsewhere, assuming the postal strike to be good on merits. Many would seem to have left off all thinking.

They seem to take up any nostrum without caring to examine its merits. To call for hartal in this atmosphere is to invite disorder. No disorder is conducive to the growth of independence. Considered from every point of view, I hope that 9th August next will see no hartal in India, but a peaceful and dignified, orderly celebration of the day as advised by the President of the Congress.

Panchgani, 27-7-'46

[ P. S. : Before the despatch of this to 'Harijan' I saw to my joy the withdrawal by Shri Jaiprakash of his proposal for hartal on 9th August. I am glad that the spirit of discipline has dictated this withdrawal. I might have cancelled the foregoing but for the important incidental observations in it.

M. K. G.]

## HEAL THYSELF

(By M. K. Gandhi)

A correspondent has written to me about the butchery that is going on in Ahmedabad. I give below the relevant portions from his letter.

"I wish to write to you about the means to be employed for putting down riots. About two months ago you wrote an article on Ahimsak Seva Dal — non-violent volunteer corps. But looking to the situation in the country, the suggestion will not do. Just as you have taught us how to fight against the British Government non-violently, you should go to some place of riot and show us the way of quelling riots in a non-violent manner by personal example. Supposing you were in Ahmedabad today and went out to quell the riots, any number of volunteers will join you. Two of our Congress workers Shri Vasantrao and Shri Rajabali went out in such a quest and fell a prey to the *goonda's* knife. They laid down their lives in the pursuit of an ideal and they deserve all praise. But no one else had the courage to follow in their footsteps. They have not the same self-confidence. If they had it, there would be no riots and, even if riots broke out, they would never assume the proportion and the form that the present day riots do. But the fact remains that such a state is merely an imaginary thing today.

"Your guidance and example can inspire many like me with courage and self-confidence. Once you have shown the way, the local workers will be able to follow it whenever occasion demands it. I feel that unless you set an example in action, your writings and utterances will not be of any use to the ordinary people, and even Congressmen, in organizing non-violent protection of society."

I like the suggestion mentioned above. People followed my advice and took to non-violent resistance against the British Government, because they wanted to offer some sort of resistance. But their non-violence, I must confess, was born of their helplessness. Therefore, it was the weapon of the weak. That is why, today we worship Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his Azad Hind Fauj. We forget that Netaji himself had told his soldiers that on going to India, they must follow the way of non-violence. This I have from the leaders of the I. N. A. But we have lost all sense of discrimination. To restore it, the I. N. A. men will have to live up to the ideal placed before them by Netaji. The work of those who believe in non-violence is very difficult in this atmosphere which is full of violence. But the

path of true non-violence requires much more courage than violence. We have not been able to give proof of such non-violence. We might look upon the action of Shri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Shri Vasant Rao and Shri Rajabali as examples of the non-violence of the brave. But when communal feelings run high, we are unable to demonstrate any effect of the sacrifices mentioned above. For that, many like Shri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi will have to lay down their lives. The fact that no one else in Ahmedabad has followed the example, set by Shri Vasant Rao and Shri Rajabali shows that we have not yet developed the spirit of sacrifice to the extent of laying down our lives in non-violent action. The correspondent has rightly said that under these circumstances, I should act myself whether others join me or not. It will be disgraceful on my part to sit at home and tell others to go and lay down their lives. Such a thing cannot be an indication of non-violence. I have never had the chance to test my non-violence in the face of communal riots. It might be argued that it was my cowardice which prevented me from seeking such a chance. Be that as it may, God willing, the chance will still come to me, and by throwing me in the fire, He will purify me and make the path of non-violence clear. No one should take it to mean that sacrifice of my life will arrest all violence. Several lives like mine, will have to be given if the terrible violence that has spread all over, is to stop and non-violence reign supreme in its place. The poet has sung :

“ हरिने मारग छे शूराने, नही कायरनु काम जोने । ”

“The path of Truth is for the brave, never for the coward.” The path of Truth is the path of non-violence. Panchgani, 26-6-'46

(From *Harijansevak*)

### QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

Q. I have been repeating *Ramanama* according to your advice and I am getting better. I must add that the medical treatment for tuberculosis is also being followed. You have said that eating little and eating the right food enables a man to be healthy and promotes longevity. I have observed the rule about eating sparingly for the last twentyfive years. Why should I have fallen a prey to tuberculosis? Would you say, I should attribute this ill luck to some evil deed in this life or in the previous one?

You say a man can live up to 125 years. Then why should God have carried away Mahadev bhai, who was so useful to you? He observed the rule of eating moderately and having a balanced diet and he served you as his God. Why did he fall a prey to high blood-pressure? Why did Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who is looked upon as an incarnation of God, fall a prey to cancer, as deadly a disease as tuberculosis? Why was he not able to fight it successfully?

A. I have been expounding the rules of maintaining health as I know them. Spare and balanced diet may not be the same for everybody. It can be best worked out by the individual for himself through proper reading and careful thought. But that does not mean that the individual cannot make mistakes or that his or her knowledge is

complete. That is why life has been called a laboratory. One should learn from the experience of others and go forward and if he is not successful, he should not blame others or even himself. One should not be too ready to find fault with the rule, but if after careful thought, one comes to the conclusion that a certain rule is wrong, he should be able to tell the right one and declare it.

So far as your own case is concerned, there may be several causes leading to your illness. Who can say whether you have made the right use of the five 'powers' in your own case? So long as I believe in the laws of nature as I know them, I have to say that you must have erred somewhere. As for Mahadev and Ramakrishna Paramahansa, to feel that even they must have erred somehow is fitter than to say that the laws are wrong. These rules are not my creation. They are the laws of nature according to experienced men. I believe them and try to live up to my belief. Man is after all an imperfect creature. How can he know the whole truth? That the allopathic doctors do not believe in them or, if they do, they do so in a different sense, does not impress me. What I have said, does not and should not in any way, detract from the greatness of the individuals mentioned.

Q. In 'Harijanbandhu' of 14-4-'46, you have said, "God is the Law and the Law-giver." I do not understand it. Laws are made by man and they keep on changing with time. For instance, Draupadi had five husbands and yet she was considered a *sati*. A woman who does that today will be considered immoral.

A. Law here means the law of God. Man interprets that law according to his understanding. For instance, the rotation of the earth is a law of nature. We are convinced of its correctness today. Yet before Galileo, astronomers believed differently. As for Draupadi, the Mahabharata in my opinion is an allegory and not history. Draupadi means the soul wedded to the five senses.

Q. God cannot be realized through reason. He has to be understood through faith. Do you believe in rebirth or is it that the Hindu seers propounded it, in order to enable people to appreciate the significance of good and evil deeds and derive some satisfaction from the belief?

A. God cannot be realized through the intellect. Intellect can lead one to a certain extent and no further. It is a matter of faith and experience derived from that faith. One might rely on the experience of one's betters or else be satisfied with nothing less than personal experience. Full faith does not feel the want of experience. The distinction between good and evil is not meant to act as a consolation. Nor is faith in God meant for that purpose. The seers have held that there is good and evil and there is rebirth. I think this theory of reincarnation is capable of being understood by the intellect.

Q. The Congress has been fighting the British Government non-violently. When Congressmen come into power, they shoot their own brothers

who have gone astray and are causing trouble. Is it right? If the Congressmen in power have not the courage to lay down their lives, while attempting to put down the riots non-violently, does it not show that with the exception of a few individuals like Ravishankar Maharaj and Sane Guruji, the non-violence of Congressmen in general is the non-violence of the weak?

A. The question of violence and non-violence raised by you is an old question. I have said a lot in this connection. If like many others, non-violence does not appeal to your heart, you should discard it. I shall not find fault with you for that, and, if others do, you should not care. The principle is this: "That which has been propounded by the *rishis*, practised by the sages and appeals to one's heart should be followed and put into practice." The question might arise as to what one is to do, when the thing that appeals to one's heart is contrary to what has been propounded by the *rishis* and practised by the sages. The answer is, that in such a case the individual can follow his bent at his own risk. Many reforms and new discoveries have been made in this way. Our Shankaracharyas have supported the institution of untouchability but both our head and heart consider it a blot on Hinduism. We do not care, if others consider our belief to be wrong.

Q. From 1920 you have described the British Government's officials as the arms of Ravana. Congress Governments use these arms. Again, the laws made by the British Government say that it is an offence to beat a prisoner arrested on suspicion or for an alleged offence, in order to extort a confession or to frighten him. During the 1942 revolution, many like me were severely beaten after arrest. Should not the Congress Governments hold an inquiry into the police excesses thus committed?

A. I have severely criticized the British Government and do so still. But that does not mean that all police officials under the British Government must necessarily be devil's disciples even when they come under Congress Governments. No one has questioned Congress Governments' right to inquire into the police excesses in 1942 or even before. But such rights are not always exercised. We all know that there are times when wisdom lies in not exercising certain rights. The Congress has in general followed the policy of not inquiring into the kind of excesses mentioned by you. You should know that often such offences are difficult to prove. I believe the right of inquiry has been exercised in cases, where the offence was beyond doubt. But my advice is, let us not sit in judgment on the Congress ministries. The belief that the Congress has acted wisely in accepting power should suffice.

Panchgani, 25-7-'46

(From *Harijandhandu*)

Q. Whilst the food policy was in the hands of the Advisors to the Provincial Governors, there was no effective method of checking them. Things under the responsible Provincial Governments are different. Should it not be a matter of conscience

with Congress ministers to get their rations from common rationing depots and take not a grain more from any other source? This will immediately have a far-reaching effect. Today all controlling centres for food grains or cloth have become public dens for thieving and corruption. Equipped with the moral force that the ministers will gain by acting as suggested, they will be able to fight out the evil with success.

A. This question is a consolidation of many letters of complaints. I wholly agree with the suggestion made in the question. I fancy that the suggested practice is already being observed, not only by the ministers but all other Government servants. I do not know of any other source, save the black market for getting supplies of foodstuffs. Of course, no exhortation can take the place of persons in authority, setting a good example. If they took their rations from the same stock as is given to the public, the keepers of stores will soon find that it would not pay to dole out rotten stuff to the public. The practice of the ministers and other high-placed men in England, taking their things in common with the public is, I am told, the usual thing, as it should be.

Panchgani, 28-7-'46

### DECCAN CHIEFS IN CONFERENCE

The plan for the formation of a Deccan States' Union has been occupying the attention of the Chiefs of the Deccan States for sometime past. The Rajasaheb of Aundh with Appasaheb Pant, his Prime Minister, Shri Shankerrao Deo and some others saw Gandhiji in this connection recently during his stay at Panchgani. They invited Gandhiji to meet the Chiefs of the Deccan States later in an informal conference. Gandhiji consented. The meeting took place on Sunday, July 28, in the Servants of India Society's Library Hall. Among those present were the Rajas of Aundh, Phaltan, Bhore, Miraj (Senior), Jamkhandi and Kurundwad (Senior), Appasaheb Pant and Shri Satwalekar from Aundh, Shris Kore, Sathe and Thomre from Sangli, the Dewan of Bhore and representatives from Budhgaon and Ramdrug. Tatyasaheb N. C. Kelkar and Shankerrao Deo were also present on the occasion by special invitation.

### CORRECT ATTITUDE

Gandhiji being invited to address the distinguished gathering said that it was a great pleasure to him to be able to meet the Deccan Princes. He had read the papers and the note prepared for his edification by the Raja Saheb of Phaltan. He did not wish to speak on the papers. It was a good thing that the Princes were seriously thinking in terms of the whole of India, rather than of themselves and of the protection they had all these years thought they were getting from the Paramountcy of the British Power. Only a few years ago the Princes felt that they could not be safe except under the Paramountcy of the British Crown. It seemed to have dawned on most of them that that was not the correct attitude. This was but natural, for they were after all sons of the soil. He, the speaker, had

said openly on another occasion that the people of the States were slaves of slaves which the Princes were. They exercised their authority within their own principalities, so long as they were in the good books of the British Government. They were made or unmade at the pleasure of the British Crown. The Princes who had eyes opened to that vital fact were desirous of Indian Independence equally with the people of India. If then they felt that need, they did not want a union of the States but each State had first to form a union with its own people. Their people were the real power on whom they were to depend for their status. It became trusteeship if they became servants of their own people. If they took that attitude, they needed no terms with the Congress or with any other organization. The immediate need was an understanding with their own people.

He made bold to take up that attitude, though his might be a lonely voice. In his opinion, the Princes, as servants and trustees of their people, were worthy of their hire. It would then (but not before) be time to consider whether they and their people wanted a union among themselves. Such a union would be of a wholly different type from what they had conceived.

#### CREATION OF BRITISH RULERS

The speaker had a serious suspicion that the present proposal was a creation of the British Rulers, meaning the Political Agents. No blame need be imputed to them, if they advised such a union. They were brought up in no better tradition. They thought that when the British power was not in India, the Princes would fight amongst themselves. That fear was wholly unjustifiable. They honestly believed that before they retired, as they must within perhaps a few months, owing to force of circumstances, they should enable the Princes to consolidate their power by organizing them into a union.

It was his belief that if India was not merely to be independent of British control, but was to enjoy real freedom, which their country, by virtue of its ancient culture and tradition, was entitled to, it should grow from the bottom upwards, not be imposed from above. Otherwise, it would be a question of change of masters only. Instead of the English, there might be the Allied Powers or whosoever could impose himself on them. He did not look forward to that time. He looked forward to a time when India would come into her own because of her intrinsic merit. To that consummation the Princes could make a most handsome contribution.

If the Deccan Princes played their part and set a solid example, they would follow. For that purpose, the speaker repeated, they did not need the suggested union. If, on the other hand, at the back of their minds they had the idea that they would give the so-called responsible Government to the people to the ear and break it to the heart, then the proposed union would be a kind of military combination, after the manner of the European Powers. It would be used against the people despite their protestations. That Power

would be useless against a first-class military Power. They would be the first to lay down their arms before a venturesome aggressor. The British had taken good care not to give them training that might enable them to resist a Power like themselves by force of arms.

What applied to the States applied to the whole of India. She would have to serve a long period of tutelage at the feet of the Western nations before she could become a first-class military Power. A quarter of a century's effort that the Congress had spent in teaching the country non-violence would in that event have been utterly wasted. That was not a prospect to which he could look forward with equanimity.

He had suggested to the Raja Saheb of Aundh that the Princes should, with necessary changes, copy the constitution of Aundh, if they wanted to take their due share in building up of a free India. That constitution was designed for the people. He, the speaker, would have liked it to go much further in such matters as the amount and control of the privy purse, etc. But all that had to come naturally. It could not be imposed. The working of that constitution, he added, had made considerable progress — though not all the progress — which the Raja Saheb of Aundh, his Prime Minister or he, would have liked.

After Gandhiji had finished, a discussion followed and questions were asked. "Unless we unite, not a single State would have a survival value," remarked one of them and asked for Gandhiji's opinion on that point.

Gandhiji replied, "I am prepared to join issue on it though mine is perhaps a solitary voice. Every village has a survival value. Why should not your villages and hence you, the Princes, if you will be part of the people? Aundh, one of the smallest among you, has a greater survival value than many of you. It depends upon you. So far as the people are concerned, they are one with the rest of India already.

"In an article that I have written for the *Harijan*, you will see my picture of Independence. In that picture, the unit is the village community. The superstructure of Independence is not to be built on the village unit so that the top weighs down on and crushes the forty crores of people who constitute the base."

"But we shall ask our people to draw up their own constitution. The plan of union that we have drawn up, is only intended as a blue-print for their consideration," explained another.

"With the best intention in the world," replied Gandhiji, "you will not be able to do that. You are brought up in a different tradition. Therefore, I suggest you should see Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru about it, if you will really let the people judge. He is the proper person to deal with this question as the President of the States' People's Conference. You should not be afraid to go to the States' People's Conference with your suggestions. Let the Conference decide finally. Their present policy is

sound and not hostile to you, considered as servants and trustees of your people."

Q. "We are anxious to serve our mother country. But, we are so small that we cannot serve unless we merge into a union."

A. "Not in my picture of Independent India," replied Gandhiji. "A village unit as conceived by me is as strong as the strongest. My imaginary village consists of 1,000 souls. Such a unit can give a good account of itself, if it is well organized on a basis of self-sufficiency. Do not, therefore, think that, unless you have a big union, you will not be able to give a good account of yourself. If Princes are all of one mind and the interest of the people is first and themselves last, theirs will be a more solid union than the one now proposed."

#### VILLAGE REPUBLICS

Q. "What would you say if the States organized themselves on the basis of village republics first and then formed them into a union?"

A. "That would be excellent, but then you will speak a different language and proceed to work in an altogether different way."

Q. "But that may take a long time and, unless it is done by people outside first, our people will not take to it."

A. "I have said that the States can make the finest contribution to the building of India's future Independence, if they set the right example in their own territories. They as individual States being compact, homogenous units can well afford to make experiments in government. As it is, the Princes have taken the lead only in copying the bad points of the British system. They allow themselves to be led by the nose by their Ministers, whose administrative talent consists only in extorting money from their dumb, helpless subjects. By their tradition and training they are unfitted to do the job you have let them do. Therefore, my advice to you is: 'Make Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru your Chief Minister, if you are in earnest. Let him present you with an outline. He will naturally consult the people.'"

Q. "We want to organize ourselves into a union so that our people may have *swaraj* first without waiting for the labours of the Constituent Assembly to be finished, which may take time."

A. "That is the wrong way of going about the thing. If you are solicitous of the welfare of the people and want them to come into their own, give them the fullest liberty straightaway. By the time you have done that, the Constituent Assembly will have finished its work. The constitution which it will frame will not be for British India merely, but for the whole of India. That constitution will necessarily provide for a State union or unions, if it is desirable. You should assist them instead of anticipating them by forming your own union. Begin with the individual and you will not then go wrong."

"Are you," asked Tatyasaheb N. C. Kelkar, "opposed to the union, because it is suspect in your eyes?"

Gandhiji: "I began with that. But I do not oppose it on the ground of my suspicion. I suspect not you — A, B or C, but the circumstances. You do not know the danger and mischief you are running into. Hence my advice to you to hasten slowly."

Q. "If you stretch your argument, would it not apply equally to the district and taluq organization in the provinces? Why do not you ask for their dissolution?"

Gandhiji: "I am not asking you to dissolve anything that already exists — not that I am enamoured of the machinery of administration set up in British India. History tells us, it was devised mainly to facilitate revenue collection. You will follow it only at your cost. My point just now is: Do not do anything in the shape of unions. Leave that work to be done by the Constituent Assembly. As a Sanskrit poet says, अनारम्भो हि कार्याणां प्रथमं बुद्धिर्लक्षणम् । (not to rush into new enterprises is the first mark of wisdom)."

Poona, 30-7-'46

PYARELAL

### KHADI WORKERS

(By M. K. Gandhi)

I have two questions about Khadi workers before me. One of these is in connection with village workers. It is their duty to spend their time, mainly in spinning and making others spin. The new conception of Khadi work includes all the processes from the cultivation of cotton to the preparation of cloth. A worker who does all these intelligently and can mend the spinning wheel or the spindle, will never have any difficulty in earning his livelihood and teaching others to do so. Along with it, and without letting Khadi work suffer, the worker might treat simple ailments and attend to the sanitation of the village. Education has to be imparted through a craft. Therefore I do not consider it apart from Khadi work. Those who come for education must wear Khadi and get education through Khadi.

The second question is how long should a Khadi worker work as a paid worker. In my view he should be self-supporting from the beginning. If that is not possible, he should fix a time limit for himself. Five years is the utmost limit in my opinion. A worker who is to become self-supporting at the end of five years, should reduce his allowance progressively from year to year. He cannot expect to become self-supporting all of a sudden at the end of five years. It is an art which requires careful thought and management. He who really teaches others should certainly become self-supporting himself.

Panchgani, 28-7-'46

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

| CONTENTS                    |                  | PAGE |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------|
| CLOTH SHORTAGE              | ... M. K. GANDHI | 245  |
| AFTER FOUR YEARS            | ... PYARELAL     | 245  |
| 9TH AUGUST                  | ... M. K. GANDHI | 248  |
| HEAL THYSELF                | ... M. K. GANDHI | 248  |
| QUESTION BOX                | ... M. K. GANDHI | 249  |
| DECCAN CHIEFS IN CONFERENCE | ... PYARELAL     | 250  |
| KHADI WORKERS               | ... M. K. GANDHI | 252  |