

HARIJAN

12 Pages

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TWO ANNAS

SHRIRAMPUR DIARY

[This is prepared from press messages appearing in various newspapers. The idea is to make handy for the reader Gandhiji's utterances during this most important mission in his life. — Ed.]

EXCHANGE OF POPULATION

"The question of the exchange of population is unthinkable and impracticable," said Gandhiji replying to questions put to him by Press correspondents staying with him at Shrirampur.

"This question never crossed my mind," Gandhiji said, and added: "In every Province, everyone is an Indian, be he a Hindu, a Muslim or of any other faith. It would not be otherwise even if Pakistan came in full."

Gandhiji continued: "For me any such thing will spell bankruptcy of Indian wisdom or statesmanship or both. The logical consequence of any such step is too dreadful to contemplate. Is it not that India should be artificially divided into so many religious zones?" he asked.

When asked if, in view of the unsettled situation, it was not better to adopt a migration policy, Gandhiji said, "I see nothing to warrant such a policy. It is one of despair and, therefore, to be adopted in rare cases as a last resort."

MESSAGE OF NOAKHALI

The next question was: "You said the other day that there is no limit to your stay in East Bengal. Do you think that by confining yourself at Shrirampur you will be able to send your message of peace to other villages of Noakhali?"

Gandhiji replied: "Of course, I am not burying myself long in Shrirampur. I am not idle here. I am seeing people of the surrounding villages and others. I am studying things and regaining lost physical strength meanwhile. The idea ultimately is to go on foot, when possible and necessary, from village to village and induce the evacuees to return. This I can only do with effect when I have seen things myself. It is quite clear to me that my mere word carries very little weight. Distrust has gone too deep for exhortation."

"DARKNESS LIES WITHIN ME"

Gandhiji was next asked regarding the report that he finds himself in darkness, and why and when the darkness came over him and whether he saw any release from it.

Gandhiji said: "I am afraid the report is substantial. Outside circumstances have never over-

whelmed me. The reason for the present darkness lies within me. I find that my *ahimsa* does not seem to answer in the matter of Hindu-Muslim relations. This struck me forcibly when I came to learn of the events in Noakhali.

"The reported forcible conversions and the distress of the Bengali sisters touched me deeply. I could do nothing through pen or speech. I argued to myself that I must be on the scene of action and test the soundness of the doctrine which has sustained me and made life worth living.

"Was it the weapon of the weak as it was often held by my critics or was it truly the weapon of the strong? The question arose in me when I had no ready-made solution for the distemper of which Noakhali was such a glaring symptom.

"And so setting aside all my activities, I hastened to Noakhali to find out where I stood. I know positively that *ahimsa* is a perfect instrument. If it did not answer in my hands, the imperfection was in me. My technique was at fault. I could not discover the error from a distance. Hence I came here trying to make the discovery. I must, therefore, own myself in darkness till I see light. God only knows when it will come. More I cannot say."

MY AHIMSA PUT TO ACID TEST

"I have come here to put my *ahimsa* to the acid test in this atmosphere of rank distrust and suspicion," said Gandhiji replying to a question put by the correspondent of a Madras paper.

The question was: "Don't you think that Bengal Ministers may regard your very presence here as an oppression and that whatever they do out of their own sense of justice towards the rehabilitation of the refugees may be regarded by the outside world as being done under the pressure of your presence?"

Gandhiji replied: "In the first place your assumption is gratuitous. But if it is not, and the assumption were to accord with facts, your deduction would be correct and my stay here would not be consistent with *ahimsa*.

"I claim that I have come as much as a friend of the Muslims as of the Hindus in this part of the world. You may recall my visit to Champaran in the very early period of my return to the motherland. I was even served with a notice to quit. The conviction against me was cancelled on the orders of the then Viceroy and the Magistrate was instructed to permit and even help in my unofficial enquiry with the result that I was invited

to become a member of the official Sly Commission and a century old wrong was removed."

ADVICE TO WOMEN

Tears trickled down their faces when a number of women met Gandhiji last evening in a corner of the paddy field where he was taking his evening walk to tell Gandhiji their sad tales and the present condition in which they were living.

One old lady while wiping her tears from the eyes said: "Mahatmaji, please tell us what we are to do. How can we live in our villages when we think our life and property are unsafe and insecure?"

Gandhiji told them that since his arrival in Noakhali he had been telling them all to be fearless. If they acted accordingly and were fearless in all their work, they could live in peace. Pointing his hand towards the sky, Gandhiji said to those women, "Believe in Him. Pray and fear Him alone, and none in this world."

ADVICE TO EUROPE

"The people of Europe are sure to perish if they continue to be violent," said Gandhiji in reply to questions put to him by Monsieur Raymond Cartier, a French journalist who paid a visit to the Shrirampur cottage this afternoon.

Raymond asked, "We who are children of violence in Europe, how do you expect us to become non-violent?"

In reply, Gandhiji said, if they continued like this they were sure to perish. What had happened in Europe was that Hitlerism had only been destroyed by super-Hitlerism and this chain was endless. It would go on like that.

M. Raymond asked if the remedy lay in a new form of education. Gandhiji said education must be of a new type for the sake of the creation of a new world. He referred to Aldous Huxley, who, he observed, represented a new type of thought which was working in the mind of Europe today. It might be in a minority today but if Europe was to save itself from suicide something along the lines of non-violence had to be adopted.

SURVIVAL OF SMALL NATIONS

Asked as to how it would be possible to destroy Hitlerism by non-violence, Gandhiji said that was what we had to find out. Otherwise, if one depended upon superior violence in order to destroy violence of the Hitlerian type, then small nations would have hardly any chance of survival. It was only when a nation individually refused to be beaten by Hitlerism or any combination of forces of violence, and stuck to its post at the cost of its life, but not at the cost of its honour, that it had a chance of survival. So that non-violence alone was the only guarantee of protection against the heaviest odds. Unless we could develop this courage and this type of resistance, democracy could never survive.

ADVICE TO REFUGEES

The following is the authorized version according to the A. P. I. of Gandhiji's prayer speech on December 21.

He began by saying that he held very strong views on the question of charity. It was wrong both to accept as well as to offer anyone a free gift. In our land irreligion often masqueraded in the name of religion. India was said to have a contingent of 56 lakhs of religious mendicants, not many of whom could be considered worthy in any sense. Even the hateful custom of untouchability had been given the sanction of religion in this land of sorrow.

The problem of relief and rehabilitation, Gandhiji went on to say, had become a serious one. People from all over India were eager to help the afflicted inhabitants of Noakhali with money or free gifts of all kinds, and there was a chance that the latter might slip into a mentality of willing dependence on public charity. This had to be combated as much as the self-complacency of those who might feel they were acquiring religious merit through charitable gifts.

Referring to the attitude which the Government should exercise with regard to the refugees in comparison with that held by public charitable bodies, Gandhiji proceeded to explain that it was true that people had gathered in the refugees' camps for no fault of theirs. Their homes had been burnt and they were without shelter; others had been robbed of all their belongings although their cottages might still be standing, while a third group had deserted their homes mainly from a feeling of insecurity. It should be the object of the Government to deal with each case on its merits and help the people to return home with a feeling of security.

Before necessary conditions were created, it would not be right for the authorities to stop rations unless the evacuees went back home with their whole families. If the evacuees were expected to brave hardships and perhaps even death in order to reinstate themselves in their homes, then there would be no need of a State; it would be a condition of enlightened anarchy where every man would be able to protect himself by his own strength in the face of the greatest danger. But as things stood today, much of the necessary work of social services had to be conducted by Governmental organizations.

ADEQUATE PROTECTION MUST BE GIVEN

Adequate protection had to be given and an atmosphere created where the people might once more pursue their life's work in peace. So long as the conditions were not forthcoming arrangements for relief had to continue.

But the case of public charitable societies stood on an entirely different footing. Gandhiji held it was wrong for any man to live on public doles. While the South African *Satyagraha* was going on, large sums of money were donated to cover the

expenses of the *Satyagrahis*. The Tolstoy Farm near Lawley in the Transvaal was established to accommodate the families and dependents of *Satyagrahis* who worked to the best of their ability against their upkeep. Consequently, the *Satyagraha* organization was able to refund large sums of money at the end of the campaign.

In accordance with the same principles the charitable institutions now working here should plainly tell the people that everyone should deem it a dishonour to eat a single meal without honest labour. If we could shed the aversion to labour and adapt ourselves to unexpected changes of fortune, we would go a long way towards the acquisition of fearlessness and thus towards an upliftment of our national character.

He would venture to tell the refugees that whether they were poor or rich, they should say to the authorities that they would consider it below human dignity to accept doles from the Government. Poor or rich had nothing left to them. Therefore, they were in need of food, clothing, shelter and medical assistance. Therefore, they had a claim upon the State for providing these vital necessities of life. But they would be robbing society if they accepted this aid without each healthy man, woman, boy or girl, labouring to the extent of his or her ability and therefore he would like the Government to provide such useful work for society which they were capable of doing.

FROM GANDHIJI'S PRAYER SPEECH ON 24TH DEC.

Gandhiji began his speech by saying that complaints had been pouring in that people were unable to shed their fear because persons known to be guilty were freely moving about. He said that although this might be true, his advice to them would still be to take courage in their hands and return to their homes. When several persons had complained that the amounts offered by the Government for rebuilding was inadequate for the erection of any kind of shelter, he felt sure that the Government, which was determined on repatriation would extend their aid to the necessary extent.

What Gandhiji would personally prefer was that the refugees should be resourceful enough to tide over the present difficulty. He would honour a man who begged nothing for himself nor depended on outsider's aid for protection. If any one depended on him for that purpose, he was depending on a broken reed.

The only effective protection came from reliance upon internal strength, i. e. on God. Everyone should realize the secret that oppression thrived only when the oppressed submitted to it. If they shed fear from their hearts, nobody would or could oppress them.

AIM OF STAY IN NOAKHALI

The following is the authorized version according to the A. P. I. of Gandhiji's speech after prayer, on Monday, the 23rd December.

Gandhiji first referred to certain personal letters addressed to him as well as a number of articles

or comments published in newspapers in which the opinion had been expressed that his continued presence in Noakhali was acting as a deterrent to the restoration of cordial relations between the Hindus and Muslims, for his intention was to bring discredit upon the League Ministry in Bengal.

Two days ago, Gandhiji said, he had tried to refute a rumour that a *Satyagraha* movement of an extensive character was secretly planned by him in Noakhali. He had already said that nothing could be done by him in secret. If recourse were taken to secrecy and falsehood, *Satyagraha* would degenerate into *Duragraha*.

Today, he found it necessary to answer the second charge levelled against him to which reference had already been made. He would like to proclaim that he had come to Bengal solely with the object of establishing heart unity between the two communities, who had become estranged from one another. When that object was satisfactorily achieved, there would no longer be any necessity for him to prolong his stay.

His intention could never be to embarrass the League Government in Bengal, Gandhiji added. On the other hand, his relations with the Ministry, as well as with the officials, had been very cordial and he had been able to gather the impression that all of them looked with favour upon his peace mission. He had discovered no indication yet of his presence causing embarrassment to anyone. It was open to the Government to ask the Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police to convince him of his error if they were themselves convinced. As yet they had said not a word to such effect. If he felt convinced of any error on his part, he would leave.

Gandhiji said that he had enough work to do elsewhere which demanded his attention. There was Uruli-Kanchan, the seat of his nature cure experiments, and Sevagram, and there was Delhi again, where he might be of some service. He would love to spare troubles to the leaders who had to come to this out-of-the-way place in order to consult him. But personally he felt convinced that the work undertaken by him here was of the greatest importance for all India. If he succeeded in his present mission, it was bound to have a profound influence on the future of India, and, if he might be permitted to say so, even on the future peace of the world, for it was to be a test of faith in non-violence.

A copy of the Bihar Provincial Muslim League report on the Bihar atrocities had been sent to him. He had gone through it with care and had felt that it bristled with over-statements. Nevertheless, he was making inquiries on the basis of the report. It was certainly true that much that had happened in Bihar was brutal enough and deserved the severest condemnation. The over-statement blurred the gruesomeness of the reality. He was assured that calm had been restored. It was on that assurance that normal diet was resumed by him.

The reason why he had not proceeded to Bihar, Gandhiji explained, was that he could exercise his personal influence effectively even from a distance. But if there were any reason to suspect that things still continued in Bihar in the manner described in the League report and that he had been misled by false assurance of his friends, then his place would surely be in that province and he might even confess that this might imply that the life in the present body was now over and that there was no longer any room for him in the land of the living.

But he could not help uttering a word of warning that leaders of public opinion had a serious responsibility. Their word would be believed by the credulous public, and they all knew the tragic consequences. This he said irrespective of whether the leaders belonged to the Congress or the Muslim League.

HARIJAN

January 19

1947

INDIAN MILLS

The reader will find elsewhere in these columns a statement (slightly condensed) of Shri Khandubhai Desai, Secretary of the Textile Labour Association, Ahmedabad, upon the working of the Indian Textile Industry during the war period 1940 to 1946. If his figures are unchallengeable, as he avers they are, they lead to the following conclusions:

(i) that the whole Indian Textile Industry is for all practical purposes a concern of only about 150 firms;

(ii) that the industry has not been worked in the interest of the nation;

(iii) that in collusion with the Government of the period, the mill agents worked in a way which has created cloth-famine, black-marketing, high prices out of all proportion with the cost of manufacture, paid inadequately to the producer of raw cotton as well as their own employees, and have exploited the people to the extent of some hundred crores of rupees;

(iv) that they have been also inefficient;

(v) that they have thus rendered themselves unfit to continue to manage the industry as trustees of the nation;

(vi) that apart from their moral lapse as trustees, the industry has returned to the investors by way of profits several times again the value of the total capital sunk in it, so that the nation, if it so decides, has the right to acquire the industry without any obligation to compensate either for the capital sunk or for services rendered.

Though Shri Desai has come to the last conclusion in so many words, his purpose in preparing this statement is not to press for that remedy. Possibly he does not consider that the nation is ready enough for that step. I quite understand that

Nationalization'—i.e. management of big industries and transport services directly by the State—is simple enough for being put forth as an abstract ideal, but when a case comes before the government, in a concrete form, it may not find itself sufficiently prepared to shoulder the responsibility. It must be realized that this unpreparedness is not unknown to the various vested interests, and this is a factor which promotes their greed, selfishness and unscrupulousness.

Shri Khandubhai Desai is a legislator and therefore, naturally suggests only legislative remedies. Thus, he suggests a statutory "Textile Control and Supply Commission, to control the production and distribution of cloth, keeping in view only the interests of the consumers", and "very heavy penalties including imprisonment for breach" of the law.

There need be no objection to legislators and administrators doing what they can. But it would be wrong for the people to rely too much on the operation of laws and rules, and to think that all they need to get sufficient cloth from the open market is to have a neatly worded strong law. As I perceive our present condition, even complete State management of mills through a new department of civil service will not give much relief to that section of the people, which really needs it. The one proper remedy is self-reliance. If people are really keen to get more cloth or to nationalize its manufacture they can do it only by themselves giving up mill-cloth and introducing the single-spindle-mill into their own homes, and organizing local weaving. The handloom weaver will also do well to do a little hard thinking. If he wants his occupation to continue from day to day, and carry on his trade without resorting to bribery or flattery, let him not rely on mill-yarn; rather, let him forsake it. For, the same arguments which are advanced in favour of mill-spinning apply to mill-weaving also. If home spinning is to be abandoned as a relic of the old age, he may take it that very soon home-weaving will also meet the same fate. Whether it is private-ownership or state-ownership, if cloth is to be manufactured as a large-scale centralized industry, both the spinners and the weavers will be reduced to the state of factory labourers. They cannot remain independent artisans. The wise weaver, who foregoes the black-market profits which he is able to obtain today by weaving mill yarn and takes to weaving home-spun yarn, may be ridiculed in the present by his companions as an impractical man. But in the not very distant future, they will find that it was he who had calculated better.

Sabarmati, 5-1-'47

K. G. MASHRUWALA

Regret

I very much regret that owing to inadvertence the name of Shri Jagajivan Ram has appeared in the note on Tiruvarur in the *Harijan* of 12-1-'47 without any honorific title. I hope none will misunderstand.

Sabarmati, 12-1-'47

K. G. M.

INDIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY

(1940 to 1946)

The facts and figures which I propose to discuss here will be considered by future generations as a black chapter in the history of the relations between the vested interests on one side and the people on the other.

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE INDUSTRY

The entire Textile Industry of the country has today an investment of about 50 crores of rupees in the form of Paid-up Capital, and this is the only risk, the share-holders have taken. It is to be noted that the bulk of this Paid-up Capital belongs to about 150 Managing Agents' Firms in the country, and thus, it is only these 150 Textile magnates who control, possess and exploit this vast industry in the country in their own personal interests without any regard for the well-being of the millions of this country who are the consumers of the products of the industry.

The industry has approximately the Block or Fixed Capital of about 100 crores of rupees in the form of buildings, lands, and machinery. It should be noted here that some portion of this value, particularly in Bombay, is an artificially inflated amount revalued as such in the first world war. It has got about 2,00,000 looms and 1,00,00,000 (one crore) spindles. It used to produce about 420 crores yards of cloth before the war, and was employing roughly about 5,00,000 employees. Since the war started, the number of employees has risen owing to the starting of the night shifts, and though at present, the number employed is nearly 7,00,000, the production has not proportionately expanded. This phenomenon appears strange in view of the expansion of the night shift work. However, those in close touch with the industry are able to see that as a result of very wide margin of profits which the manufacturers have, in collusion with Government, decided for themselves, has made them negligent, inefficient and indolent.

WAR GAINS

I had an occasion to study the published balance-sheets results of about 75% of the textile industry for the war period in the course of my labour work.

The gross profits of the whole industry in the country in the pre-war year was about 5 to 6 crores of rupees. The value of products—cloth and yarn sold—was about 60 crores of rupees, and adding 20% on this value, as the margin of intermediary distributors, the consumers in the country got their supply of cloth and yarn at a value of about 72 crores. There was some export of cloth but it was very insignificant and therefore it can be neglected for the purpose of our general conclusions.

The prices of cloth began to rise after 1941 January. It took a precipitous height suddenly in October, November and December 1942 and reached its zenith somewhere in May 1943, when the prices were $5\frac{1}{2}$ times the pre-war prices, as far as

the ex-mill prices were concerned. It is to be noted that the consumer did not even then get his supply of cloth at these prices, as the black market had already become by then a recognized institution, and the consumer had to pay anything between 50% to 100% higher value over the price quoted above. The Government then tried to step in sometime in the middle of the year 1943, apparently in the interests of the consumers, but the action taken was so inefficient that the people did not get any relief; on the contrary, the black market flourished and the exploitation of masses by industrial magnates was not only legalized and authorized officially, but was encouraged and given the stamp of honest trade. Nobody can expect anything better from a so-called Cloth Control Board which was dominated by the very manufacturers against whom the people wanted protection. The result of this mass hypnotism is seen in the following figures:

INDIAN TEXTILE INDUSTRY (War period profits and gains)

Years	Gross Profits	Agents' Commission	Value of Products (Ex-Mill)	Value Paid by the Consumers
(Rupees in Crores)				
Pre-war Period				
1938	5	1	60	72
1939	5	1	60	72
War Period				
1940	7	1	70	84
1941	23	3	100	120
1942	46	5	150	250
1943	109	10	270	480
1944	85	9	210	370
1945	61	7	180	324
1946 (estimated)	41	5	170	306
	372	40	1150	1934

It is well-known that the Government has taken away through taxation several crores of rupees, and the manufacturers have acted as the agents of the Government for the purpose of this tax collection. This tax worked out in the course of the war period as a sort of poll tax on every man, woman and child who used the cloth. It is seen from the figures that the consumer had paid for his cloth supply per capita Rs. 6-12-0 on an average annually in place of Rs. 1-12-0 for the pre-war year. It is significant here to observe that whereas the cloth prices have been deliberately permitted to soar so high in this country only in the interest of the vested interests and the Government Exchequer, it has not gone above 30% in Britain, America, Canada or Australia which were also directly affected by the war. The normal ex-mill value of product in the pre-war year was only 60 crores, whereas the same for the seven years' period worked out at Rs. 164 crores on the average. It is to be noted here that the consumer did not get his cloth at this price as he used to do before the

war, but he had to pay at least 50% more for his supply owing to the institution of the black market in the country. It was impossible for an average consumer either in the town or in the village to get his cloth requirements at controlled rate. Therefore, I have increased the value which the consumers had to pay since 1942, the year when black-marketing had started on a large scale. The figures of profits shown above are really staggering, seen in their entirety on a comprehensive scale. An industry in which only 50 crores of capital has been primarily invested and whose fixed capital does not exceed 100 crore of rupees and whose pre-war yearly value of product was only 60 crores, has been permitted to make even in one single year, a profit of 109 crores and the average for the entire period of seven years works out at 53 crores a year. Thus the average profits for one year alone were more than three-fourths of the total value of the products in the pre-war period. From 1943 to 1945 the industry has made annually, on an average, profits which are nearly equal to their total fixed investments i. e., in these three years they have taken out from the consumers two and a half times the value of their plant in profits alone. Therefore the nation has really paid back through the 40 crores consumers several times the value of the plant that has been set up for its cloth supply in the form of profits alone, during these war years. The industry now, in equity, morality and even on economic grounds belongs to the nation which was made compulsorily to pay much more than the total value of these 420 mills which, in fairness, should now be transferred to the State without any compensation. A cursory glance at the commission drawn by the managing agents would show that they have taken from the industry for themselves amounts which are even more than the normal profits of the industry. The amount thus drawn as commission is ten times the amount that was being paid to the Managing Agents in normal period for the services they are supposed to render to the industry. Looked at from any point of view, those 150 firms, which have formed themselves into a sort of syndicalist clique, got themselves benefitted at the cost of the consumers who is the country. No civilized State would permit such open exploitation of the masses, and when applied to a poor country like India it is nothing less than sin and cruelty.

SECRET GAINS

The profits discussed and analysed in the course of the statement are the balance-sheet profits. It should not be forgotten that nearly all the mills during the last seven years, have built up crores of secret reserves in stocks of cloth, cotton and stores which are kept out of the public eye. The illegitimate and secret gains made by the Managing Agents, their friends and associates, in the purchase of materials, stores etc., and on the sale of products are in addition to what has been mentioned above and these ill-gotten gains, if calculated, would

easily run into several crores, which remain unaccounted, and will ever remain so.

CONSUMERS & COTTON GROWERS' INTERESTS SACRIFICED

This clique of industrial magnates in the country has also not hesitated to sacrifice the interests of cotton growers at the altar of their private profits. Their influence and close contact with those in authority was so great that they managed to keep down the prices of cotton, the main raw material, as low as possible, with a view to widen their margin. This factor naturally widened the margin of already high profits at the cost of cotton growers. The poor cultivator, who also forms the bulk of the consumers, was thus hit both ways. He had to pay fabulous prices for his cloth requirements while he was given comparatively low prices for his main product, cotton. The cotton price index for the war period is 217 as compared to 100 in the pre-war year, while the cloth price index for the same period is 273, as compared to 100 in pre-war year. I would observe here that owing to the persistent agitation by the cotton growers, cotton prices show an upward trend since only last year. Had this not happened, the contrast would have been still more striking. The wide disparity in the prices of cloth compared to other commodities is also borne out vividly by the Bombay cost of living index which includes all commodities of consumption. This index taken as 100 for the pre-war year, is on the average 181 for the war period. This figure would have been lower, had cloth not been included in it.

MERCHANTS SHARING WAR GAINS

A side-light on profits made by the wholesale cloth dealers in the country is also interesting. This class of persons in the country does not exceed about 400 and they were taken into confidence by the manufacturers and the Government, and were given their due share in this wholesale loot. The present Cloth Control Board is composed of mill-owners, wholesale cloth merchants, with only a sprinkling of other so-called uninterested persons who are insignificant and even if these insignificant numbers make some noise, these plutocrats have their own peculiar ways of silencing them. The wholesale dealer for the services he used to render to the society in the matter of cloth distribution was getting about 1% commission on an average on the sale value of cloth and yarn. This commission or brokerage was $\frac{1}{2}\%$ in Ahmedabad, $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ in Bombay, and $\frac{1}{2}\%$ to $1\frac{1}{2}\%$ in other centres. I have therefore taken 1% as a fair average for our purpose. The wholesale cloth dealers' services were thus compensated by paying to this class about 60 lakhs of rupees per year, on a total sale of about Rs. 60 crores. The Cloth Control Board, in their wisdom raised this basis to 3% for all on the sale value. This commission was raised three times, but if the rise in the prices of cloth were considered, it will be seen that the wholesale dealer has been paid in the year 1944, 6 crores instead of 60 lakhs.

This works out at 10 times the normal payment. It must also be noted that the wholesale dealer has now no risk to take, no money to invest and no service to render to anybody. This huge amount of 6 crores almost equal to the profits of the whole industry in the pre-war year, is simply given to him as a sort of royalty to shut his mouth, as he is expected to know much more than anybody in the country about the misdeeds of the mill-owners and the agents of the Government who are practically managing among themselves the whole question of production and distribution of cloth. The Cloth Control Organization consists of thousands of employees—all Government servants on fabulous salaries—in addition to what they might be getting as illegal gratification which is today an open secret. If one were to look very closely into this cloth control business, one will be convinced that it is a very well-planned and well-thought out racket to defraud the consumers under the camouflage of Government authority and dignity. This racket, in my opinion, should not now be allowed to exist even for a day longer, and the whole organization should be immediately disbanded.

PRESENT PRIVATIONS OWE THEIR EXISTENCE TO TEXTILE INTERESTS

As I have stated in my statement issued in January 1944, the cloth trade is mainly responsible for the present economic hardships that the people are experiencing today. This trade set the ball of high prices rolling and other commodities naturally followed suit. If the trend of prices since 1942 August, are studied, it will be seen that the cloth prices began to rise first and after a time lag of few months, the prices of other commodities rose. Thus the vicious circle set in the cloth trade being obviously the chief factor which has upset the economic equilibrium in the country. If the figures of currency inflation are also studied, it will be found that the inflation also was in close parity and rose with the trend in cloth prices since 1941 March, and with steep rise of cloth prices in the second half of the year 1942, and first half of 1943, the expansion of paper currency went on unabated. The prices of other commodities particularly cotton and foodgrains did not register such a rise in spite of inflation. Therefore, one is permitted to conclude that there was some deliberateness on the part of those interested in the cloth trade in their selfish interests to manage the whole economic structure in such a way that the gains will only go to the textile industry at the cost of other sections of the country.

I feel that the black-marketing, general corruption in the country and the existing economic hardships we are witnessing can reasonably be ascribed to a larger extent to the extraordinary amount of money that has come into the hands of those who are connected with the textile industry, either as manufacturers, traders or suppliers of raw materials and stores needed in the cloth manufacture. The next primary need of the consumers after food was exploited by the Government of the day assisted

by the selfish textile interests without regard to the well-being of the people as a whole. It is therefore obvious that unless this industry is adequately and effectively controlled entirely in the interests of the people, any other attempt in other directions to bring about normal conditions would not achieve the results we all desire.

WORKERS' INTERESTS ALSO SACRIFICED

It has been shown above that the textile manufacturing interests have deliberately and selfishly betrayed the interests of the consumers. Let us see whether they dealt with their employees either fairly or justly. The employees working in this industry have not been given a fair deal, and their interests have also been sacrificed at the altar of private profits. They have not been generally compensated fully to enable them to offset the rise in the cost of living. The dearness allowance paid to them ranges from 50% to 75% only as compensation for rise, except perhaps in Ahmedabad where, through organized struggle, the employees have been able to get nearly 100% compensation for the rise in the cost of living. But even this solitary case of justice has been upset by the Millowners last year through an Award of the Industrial Court which reduced it to 76% on the plea that other centres are not getting full compensation. Thus it is seen that the bulk of the textile workers had to work in the industry at a reduced standard of living. They have not been able to maintain their pre-war standard of living. In terms of commodities and services, their wages have gone down i.e. their real wages have been reduced to the extent of about 15% to 25%.

FIXING OF PRICES

In the course of my study with regard to labour questions which have cropped up, I had numerous occasions to look into the schedule of ceiling prices prepared technically by the Cloth Control Board but really by the millowners. If this schedule of prices is thoroughly scrutinized, it will show that the allowances permitted to be added to the basic prices for fancy and coloured sorts of cloth are nothing short of open loot. The allowances granted are out of all proportion to the additional cost involved in this manufacture due to increased wages, increased cost of materials or loss in production. In short, the millowners took every step in the Control Board to increase their private profits, even though an appearance was put up as if the consumers' interests were being safeguarded by them.

REMEDIAL MEASURES SUGGESTED

The popular Governments at the centre and the Provinces should not now tolerate this state of affairs any longer. They must immediately take up this question without any delay and without heeding the fictitious groans of these textile interests who are quite capable of even side-tracking the authorities. The Central Government should immediately dissolve the Control Board as it is at present constituted, and thus do away with this organizational racket. This Board has created an exclusive

interest for the millowners. The existing personnel of this organization when dissolved, should not be eligible for appointment in any capacity in the new arrangement I am suggesting. The following are a few of the remedial and permanent suggestions in the matter of cloth production and distribution:

1. The Government of India should enact a Law creating a statutory 'Textile Control and Supply Commission,' the duty of which is to control the production and distribution of cloth, keeping in view only the interests of the consumers.

2. The present cloth and yarn distribution agency of private dealers should be abolished.

3. New licensed dealers should be created by provincial Governments which should take appropriate financial securities from these dealers.

4. Very heavy penalties including imprisonment should be provided for breach of any regulation or order passed by the commission and the offence should be made cognizable.

Ahmedabad, 4-11-'46 KHANDUBHAI K. DESAI
ADIVASI PROBLEM IN BOMBAY

The riots of the Adivasis in the Dahanu Taluka should be an eye-opener for us. No doubt, the police and the military will suppress the riots and peace will be restored. But that does not mean that the problem is solved. Such riots are outward symptoms of a serious disease in the body politic. So long as the root causes of this disease are not removed, a superficial treatment of outward symptoms would not be of any avail. These rioters are known to be an extremely timid people. Their poverty and ignorance baffles description. For ages they have been exploited by the rulers of the day, by the landlords, the money-lenders and a host of other parasites. They were the original owners of the land, but today they are forced to labour on that same land as serfs. The new landlords and money-lenders profit to an unconscionable extent by their labour. At the back of this exploitation, there lurk frightful injustice and suppression. So long as this exploitation, injustice and suppression are not removed, it is futile to hope for a lasting peace.

Similar condition prevails in other districts also. In the neighbouring Surat District and Indian States, people known as *Raniparaj* groan under the same piteous condition. In Surat *Dublas*, now called *Halapatis*, are reduced to the condition of serfdom under the system known as the *Hali* System. In the Kaira District, the *Baraiya* and *Patanwadia* communities have similar grievances. If these people have not rebelled, it is simply because they are ignorant and unorganized.

While it is true that rioting and violence are not going to help these people or the society, at the same time, it should be remembered that it is no use merely making that statement. We must show this people a better remedy by working amongst them and by organizing them through constructive activities. Is it any wonder if they are exasperated and resort to violence out of a feeling

of frustration and despair? The spirit of the exploited and the suppressed people has awakened. The point both in time and circumstances has arrived which demands their full deliverance. None will be able to stop that process.

Congress Governments are trying to help these people by legislation. But it will not be impertinent to remark that local Congress workers and landlords and big agriculturists who call themselves Congressmen, do not yet fully realize the inherent injustice in the existing order. They do not work whole-heartedly for the implementation of even such mild legislation as the Tenancy Act and the Debt Redemption Act. They are not prepared to do justice where their own interests are affected. They are indignant when they have to forgo heavy rents or large crop-shares hitherto enjoyed by them. But they must realize that the days of extorting a lion's share from the social income without fulfilling any social liability or function are now gone. They must now give up their greed, understand their responsibility and raise the condition of the people on whose exploitation they have until now fattened. Vast areas of land in their possession are not properly cultivated and manured. There are no irrigation facilities and no good seeds are used. They must attend to all these things and must be prepared to work shoulder to shoulder with their erstwhile serfs. They should use their intellect, experience and capital for improving agriculture and also for ameliorating the social and economic condition of their collaborators in it. Only on this condition can they have any title to a share in the income.

Congress workers should give up their complacency and should bring home to the vested interests, the injustice, suppression and exploitation committed by them consciously or unconsciously. They should also organize the labouring class—the landless peasants by doing constructive work amongst them, so that their capacity to offer resistance, if need be, through peaceful means is developed.

Sabarmati, 12-1-'47

NARHARI PARIKH

(Translated from the original in Gujarati)

Correction—"Unequal Marriages"

In the above article, published on 5-1-'47, p. 474 in col. 2, lines 1 and 2, for "more than, say, two times and a half years senior to her in age," please read, "older than, say, two times and a half her age."

10-1-'47

K. G. M.

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