

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

MANILAL GANDHI'S FAST AND OUR DUTY

Shri Manilal Gandhi is reported to have decided to go on a fourteen-day fast at his home in Phoenix (South Africa) to seek light to resist that State's anti-Indian policy. As is well known, the policy has become a political problem of first-class magnitude. It is a serious question of life and death to Indians living abroad, and the Indian Government has been doing its utmost in the matter, and is alive to it. The UNO is also tackling it in its own way. We, the people, must also consider how we can contribute to the cause.

The nationals of Pak-India are scattered in various continents. As long as our joint country was under foreign subjection, we all believed that our countrymen had to suffer indignities in foreign lands, because we did not command respect even in our own. That dependence has gone. The whole country has become free though subject to the serious drawback of a people divided in a rough and artificial manner. Nevertheless, in size and population each of the two parts can be classed among first-class States of the world. But politically they have yet to attain a status, which will enable them to enjoy the respect and treatment to which they should be rightfully entitled. Their position has not yet improved for the better. Why is it so?

Let us realize that this problem of South Africa is not and was not simply one of our political status and military strength. Ultimately in the spiritual government of the universe, *apartheid* is not to be distinguished from the caste and communal attitude of our own. What we see in South Africa, in fact in almost every country in which our nationals are spread, is a reflection of our own ideals, prides, prejudices and discriminatory conduct. At its root it is the outcome of our own deficiencies of culture and social structure. And, I regret to say, that though Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians are not without their own share of blame, it is principally the Hindu social structure and culture that are more responsible than the rest for these consequences.

We Hindus have never been tired of accusing the Muslims of having put forth the two-nation theory, or the Whites of South Africa

of a policy based on differences of colour and culture. But throughout several centuries, our own social structure and practice has been of segregation among ourselves on grounds of *varna* (colour?, occupation?), caste, culture etc. Our persecution, exploitation and general treatment of Harijans, *Adivasis*, artisan classes, converts to other religions or dissenters from an orthodox sect have been founded so deeply on the same ideology which is sponsored by the South African Government. The South African ideology is not different from the one which brought about the partition of our great country.

We can proudly say that, so far as India is concerned, we have through a formal Constitution, given up that policy. Indeed, in legal theory, we are now a nation in which Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians etc. have all the same status and recognition in the eye of law. Differences of caste, religion, language etc. are not to stand in the way of any person's career. But this outlook is yet confined to the Law-book. It has not yet entered our hearts and been translated into our daily life. A majority of our people—even leaders and intellectuals of the first order—by the social order, traditional training and prides and prejudices governing our lives are nearly as immiscible with one another as oil and water. The utmost that we are prepared for is 'unity in diversity'. Practically it comes to a self-hypnotizing creed that, though we cannot live, eat and work together and treat one another as equals, yet we shall not confess our want of unity. We are averse to bringing about a more factual unity. When it is a question of actual practice in life, a Harijan is a Harijan; an artisan, an artisan; a Muslim, a Muslim; a Bengali, a Bengali; and a Gujarati, a Gujarati; and every one is expected to know his station in life, society or province, and would be made to know it, if he does not and presumes to aspire to a higher place. Intellectually the moral advance of the framers of our Constitution is, perhaps, higher than that of other nations and also a great part of our own people. But our practice is far behind our proclamation; indeed, behind the unproclaimed but actual practice of other peoples.

Perhaps I shall be told that this is quite an irrelevant issue in the context of South Africa

and Shri Manilal Gandhi's fast. But as I have said above, in the spiritual government of the universe, there are no such compartments, and I wish our people both in India, Pakistan and elsewhere to realize that it is extremely important to realize this, if we want to succeed in our stand against South Africa, or to solve similar problems in Ceylon, Burma etc. Our traditional Indian culture has caused our countrymen to live in foreign countries also in distinct groups. We carry with us, and maintain wherever we migrate, every distinction which divides us here. Thus an Indian in South Africa is not just an Indian there. If he is a Muslim, he is not so in religious faith only, but also in his practical and caste faith. He is Pakistani, pro-Pakistani, or nationalist, a Gujarati or something else, according to his breed here. So also if a Hindu, he is a Congressite Hindu, a Mahasabhaite Hindu, a Gujarati Hindu, a Madrasi Hindu, etc. etc. Except that they have accepted some kind of inter-dining, in every other respect, our nationals abroad create mutually immiscible groups as jealous of one another's rise as the agents of the English and the French East India Companies used to be in India. They cannot function as one body; cannot work in a team. It is easy to create factions among them, to win over one group by bestowing a little favour, in order to suppress another, fully confident that its suppression will not provoke any resentment from the others. The reason is that the suppressed group is in the eyes of the other a hateful group.

It would be a miraculous accident in the moral and spiritual realm of the universal if a people with these drawbacks of character and conduct, and traditions of culture can succeed in obtaining a full recognition of their claims, however just they might be in pure reason and absolute ethics. If we wish to succeed in South Africa, or for that matter, in our several problems with Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, or any other country, we must first be just and pure at home. Hindus must break their castes and become thoroughly united. Religions, castes, linguistic differences must not stand in the way of our unity, and must be thoroughly renovated and reedited to bring it about in our everyday life.

We can help the cause for which Shri Manilal Gandhi has imposed upon himself a fast and strengthen the hands of our nationals engaged in resisting the *apartheid* policy, only if Indians and Pakistanis living here or abroad remove and renounce all those factors, which make us a house divided among ourselves. If Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and others of India become thoroughly united, India and Pakistan are bound to become friends, the problem of Kashmir will be settled without the intervention of any outsider, or without creating further artificial partitions. Our nationals living abroad will copy us in their respective places. They will

stand there as a united body. That will create a new strength, more powerful than the strength of mere combination of fronts. It will be a moral revolution which will infect even Dr Malan and his followers.

May Heaven grant us the wisdom to see the true cause of our degradation and weakness.

Wardha, 5-4-'51

K. G. MASHRUWALA

SHRI MANILAL GANDHI'S STATEMENT ON THE EVE OF HIS FOURTEEN-DAY FAST

The way the present Government is moving, the hopes of the non-Europeans in South Africa of their conditions ever improving are shattered to pieces. Upto now they have been sustained by hope and faith. They have patiently suffered all the indignities man has chosen to impose on man, in the hope of brighter days to come. Since the present Government has come into power, however, they are able to see nothing but darkness. The *apartheid* policy of the Government is creeping like a fiend in every walk of life. What with the Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act, the Suppression of Communism Act and now the Representation of Non-Europeans Bill which is before the Parliament — to quote just a few of the very worst features — it is like a hydra-headed dragon which, if not destroyed, would destroy all mankind including those responsible for having brought it into being.

Time was when one thought of one's own individual interests. Uptill yesterday we, as Indians, were thinking about and trying to safeguard our own rights and interests. It will not do to do so any longer. We have all now to think and act as human beings, irrespective of what colour or race we may be.

The present Government has made life intolerable for any self-respecting person. There is not a place where I can go with my head raised. The colour of my skin and the race to which I belong have become a curse. The only course I have to choose, if I want to live as a self-respecting person, is to fight against this state of affairs or to run away from it. The latter would mean cowardice. I must therefore fight. The question is how to do so. There are two ways in which one can fight. The common way is by physical force. The other is by soul-force. We have been privileged to witness in our lifetime that the latter is life-giving while the former is life-destroying. I must, therefore, choose the latter course and I have not the least bit of doubt in my mind that it is the only practical and efficacious course for all. It is folly to believe that an unarmed person is helpless. He has more strength than one who is armed to the teeth, provided he has an unshakable faith in the power of God and surrenders himself to Him. He must have faith in prayer and must be pure in body, mind and soul. That alone can sustain him. One who fears God and loves Him fears no man and hates no man. Man is full of

human weaknesses. He cannot conquer anybody unless he conquers those weaknesses. In order to do so he has to be constantly awake and alert.

What then is my duty in the circumstances in which I find myself placed? This thought has been haunting me for days, weeks and months. My conscience tells me: "The time has come when you must throw off your sluggishness; you must not run away out of fear from the danger, but face it; you must purify yourself of all the evils within you; you must not hate the evil-doer, for he is one like yourself; you must hate the evil and refuse to surrender to it even at the risk of your life. The strength to do so can come to you through prayer." It is that alone, I most humbly submit, that will bring salvation to all the oppressed people in this land.

I have, therefore, decided that the time has come for me to act; and as a first step I must undergo a fourteen days' fast to purify my body, mind and soul; and having survived that I shall, in the name of God, defy the Government's *apartheid* policy by committing a breach of it, and shall submit without the slightest protest to the penalty. The proposed fast will commence on the morning of Friday April 6, and end on the morning of Friday, April 20.

It is not my desire that the present rulers should surrender their rule. I do not desire to see chaos in the country. I desire to see that all individuals enjoy peace, happiness and security; that all equal opportunities in life are provided for their advancement by the State so that they are able to make their fullest contribution in all walks of life; that there are no legal barriers raised on the grounds of race or colour to impede their progress or to offend their human dignity; that each individual is judged not by his colour or race but by his merit.

I do not expect that this transformation would take place overnight. But the present tendency is to put the clock back by a century. The Government must be progressive, not retrogressive. Nothing more or less is desired by the non-Europeans. If that path is followed there is no need to fear Communism or any ism. May God guide us all in the right direction.

MANILAL M. GANDHI

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**PROHIBITION AND SECRET MARKETS
OF LIQUOR**

Shri Ramakrishna Jaju writes from Sholapur,

"I read your article 'Prohibition Ever Successful' carefully. I have just returned from a tour of Gujarat and Saurashtra. People have certainly benefitted morally and economically from prohibition. The poor will be gaining billions, so they say, if Government also bans cinema-going and stops the use of tea, tobacco, biddis, cigarettes etc."

Shri Jaju is right no doubt when he says that if the cinema, tea and tobacco are banned, it will lead to the good of the people who have been using these. But it would not be proper to put all these things by the side of liquor. Moreover, it would not be possible for the Government to stop the use of these things like liquor. The people should give them up of their own accord with understanding.

Another gentleman from Gujarat writes to me after reading the article:

"What you say is quite right. But I must tell you with great regret that liquor can be had in any quantity in the cities. How can we say that prohibition is a success under these circumstances? Social workers should be alert and exert themselves to their utmost and lay the greatest emphasis on this question."

This is quite right. I have already said in my article that secret markets of liquor do exist in the cities and they ought to be done away with. But when people cite this as a cause and say that prohibition should go, they are wrong. This was what I wanted to convey in that article. And when some people having these secret markets in mind say that prohibition has failed they also are wrong. For this I had cited the instances of theft, robbery etc. and said, "prohibition is ever successful." That the Government enacted a law in this behalf is a great thing. Many a drunkard will automatically cease drinking and his fraternity will cease to grow by this single measure and the new generation will be free from this vice. It is the duty not only of social workers but of all citizens to help the Government to reach this dry state. We do help and co-operate with the Government in getting thieves and burglars, etc. arrested. We should similarly help them in suppressing the secret markets of liquor and narcotic drugs. But the existence of these should, on no account, we should bear in mind, lead us to ask for the repeal of the prohibition law. It would be just like asking to stop catching the thieves if theft and burglary became rampant. Prohibition is a great experiment we have launched upon—singular in the whole world. The whole world is looking at it. If successful, it will be our valuable gift to the world.

Ahmedabad, 23-3-'51

M. P. DESAI

(Translated from Hindi)

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DOLE GETS A START

Giving of 'doles' to the unemployed under certain situations has become an established practice in Europe and America and a part of the State policy for many years past. This help, consistently with their living standards, is fairly high. All the same, to live on doles is regarded as derogatory to self-respect by all people, though the sensibility has diminished by habit. It has also been raised to the status of a function of a 'Welfare State'. The Indian National Congress at its Nasik session has also announced that its aim is to set up a 'Welfare State' in India. This suggests that here too, sooner or later, this institution is bound to make its appearance. The question may be raised if this institution is really good. But the present article has a different purpose and so I shall not discuss that point in this context.

Lately, the weavers of several States have been in a great difficulty for want of yarn. In our own State, Madhya Pradesh, about two thousand weavers of Nagpur have undergone arrests because of unruly demonstrations to get yarn. The trouble has not yet ceased. The Madras Government, confronted with a similar situation, has commenced to give a temporary dole to every afflicted family, at the rate of Rs 2-8 per week per family. A normal family of five members, with two workers and three dependents, would get an equivalent of less than a wage of 3 as. per day per worker, and the total dole would come to about 4½ pice per day per head. The present wages offered by the Charkha Sangh for eight hours' efficient hand-spinning are eight annas. Even a moderate spinner may earn six annas at least if he undertakes to work for eight hours. The question naturally arises, whether it is better to pay a wage of six annas for hand-spinning or a dole of three annas per worker. The answer is clear. If they are given wages as payment for the hand-spinning, they not only get monetary relief, but also yarn to carry on their trade and the joy of doing their job with self-respect, while they escape the feeling of looking small as recipients of a dole. But this is not to be.

The movement for *khadi* has been in existence for the last 30 years in the country. The country was under foreign domination then, and therefore there was not much hope for its expansion. It was hoped that once freedom was achieved, *khadi* would prosper rapidly with the help of the national Government. But this too is not to be. Government might assert that they do encourage *khadi* and give it a financial support also. But the aid proceeds from a sense of

charity towards *khadi*. How can *khadi* prosper or even live respectfully under the feeling of being a grace-seeker? The important question is whether there is an independent and permanent place for *khadi* in the economic order of the country. It cannot thrive on the philanthropy of patrons, or on grants such as are given to temples and mosques. Has the Government done anything to enable it to hold its own in the competition? Has it provided a market for its sale? If some such thing had been done, we may safely assert that no such misfortune would have befallen the weavers.

No less than about a crore of people depend for their living on hand-weaving. Every Government declares rather glibly that this useful industry has got to be continued and further expanded. Well, in that case, let us ascertain what is the chief obstacle to the growth of this industry. Undoubtedly, it is the weaving in the mills. Does the Government do anything to save hand-loom from the destructive competition of the weaving mills? They will surely give a long list of their efforts in this behalf. But what is the net result?

The policy of the Government would seem to be to do for the weavers whatever is possible, without in any way prejudicing the interests of the mills. But have they discovered the alchemy of making the wolf and the lamb eat at the same table, without the former destroying the latter? Gandhiji more than once declared that the hand-weaving industry was bound to die, if it depended on mill-yarn.

Let us however concede, for the sake of argument, to Government, weavers and the economists that hand-weaving can survive on mill-yarn. The question then is, how is it that the weavers do not get it in sufficient quantity? Certainly, the mills do produce enough yarn to fulfil the needs of the weavers and yet save a good deal for their own use! Why do they not then supply enough yarn to the weavers to meet their requirements fully? Why is not the first place given to hand-weaving, permitting the mills to weave only the balance of the yarn? There seem to be two reasons: First, if mills are not allowed to do a major part of the weaving, their profits will be reduced. If so, the question is: should the Government safeguard the interests of a crore of poor artisans or the profits of a handful of rich mill-owners? The second reason might be that the export of mill-cloth and yarn brings in valuable foreign exchange. But then the hand-woven cloth too can be exported. The conclusion is irresistible that unless the Government adopt the position that hand-weaving must go on despite the competition of the mills and make it a cardinal principle of their policy, there is no hope of a permanent solution of the weavers' problem. The present policy of the Government does not appear to have any such intention.

The weavers also owe a duty to themselves. Many weavers, as also the members of their family, use mill-cloth. Why do they do so when they know the art of weaving? If they regard the thing they have manufactured as fit for the use of others only and not for themselves, how can they expect others to appreciate their product? If these one crore people who depend on weaving for their livelihood take to using hand-woven cloth only, it will be a tremendous achievement! Besides, it will have a very powerful moral effect on others. The weavers will gain enormous moral strength by insisting on the use of hand-woven cloth in the country.

Moreover, why should they not use their time in spinning when they have no other work to do? This will at least give them a part of the yarn they need for their industry.

During famine periods, Governments provide relief work such as stone-breaking, road-making etc. Now that the weavers are in distress, it has taken recourse to the granting of doles. Would it not have been much better to give them light work and give help by way of return for the work? And, as to the type of work, what other work excepting hand-spinning is there which could be easily provided to many? No other work could be more suitable for the weavers. It is true that hand-spinning cannot be introduced at a moment's notice, unless there is sufficient preparation and planning beforehand. Many things should be pre-arranged before we can make full use of hand-spinning at a critical time: a favourable background has got to be created, people have to learn the art and the wherewithal should be made easily available. Once the proper atmosphere is created, there should be no difficulty about it provided Government are sincere in their intentions. Otherwise, the problem of the sale of *khadi*, that last snag in the programme, will remain unsolved. *Khadi* has behind it thirty years' long labour and sacrifice and it can very well take us to this consummation overcoming every difficulty. But Government have got to lay down a firm and definite policy and provide a suitable economic framework.

Wardha, 23-3-'51 SHRIKRISHNADAS JAJU

• (Translated from Hindi)

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PLIGHT OF WEAVERS IN MADRAS

Next to agriculture, the handloom industry is the largest economic aggregate in the State of Madras. The number of handlooms working there is above two millions. But for some time past, the handloom weavers are in a wretched condition. In February last, the condition reached a stage when starvation deaths among weavers were reported from several districts. The State Government was unable to provide any yarn to the worker for earning his wage and started payment of cash doles as a measure of relief. It was largely a futile attempt.

For example, take the Madhurai district. The normal monthly requirement of yarn for its handlooms is about 1,945 bales. As against this, the quantity of yarn received every month from April 1950 to December 1950 was on an average less than 392 bales per month, the maximum delivery being 678 bales in July, and the minimum 161 in November. The yarn was never sufficient enough to keep the looms occupied for more than 10 days in the month, and the average of all the nine months together came to six days only. In November and December it gave them work for only 3 days per month.

Such a shortage is bound to create a woeful situation. An idea of the magnitude of the misery of the people suffering from the ghastly famine caused by forced unemployment can be had from the figures tabled below. They were collected by Dr Shrimati Soundaram Ramachandran, Director, Gandhigram (Madhurai), when she surveyed a few wards of the Chinalapatty area, round about her Gandhigram, affected by the yarn famine:

Ward No.	No. of weaver families	Adults	Children
2.	105	395	150
3.	375	1,641	617
4.	169	702	300
6.	30	106	41
7.	484	1,810	740
	<u>1,163</u>	<u>4,654</u>	<u>1,848</u>

Total 6,502

As a measure of relief the Government came forward with a cash relief of Rs 2-8-0 per family per week for two weeks in the month of February. What a drop in the ocean! As this subject will be more fully dealt with by Shri Jajuji in a separate article I shall not dilate upon it.

Surely one begins to wonder what factor or factors have conspired together to culminate in this disaster. The Madras Government accuse the Central Government of depriving these weavers of their yarn. The mills in the State produce enough yarn to keep all looms busy all the year round. Rather, so far as textile yarn is concerned, Madras is a surplus province. But for the sake of all-India planning the entire-yarn-produce is taken to an all-India Pool, and allotted and earmarked for different purposes. A part is exported abroad, another is supplied

to the textile mills all over the country and the balance (about seven to fifteen per cent) is distributed to the various States for handlooms. This policy is being followed since April 1945 when an all-India yarn distribution scheme was introduced. What happened thereafter has been well and briefly put by the *Hindu* in its leading article dated Friday, February 16, 1951 :

"In March 1948, the Government lifted control over yarn with disastrous results, and after prices had soared, re-imposed the control in August. At the same time there was a ban on textile exports. This in turn was followed by a glut of textiles and yarn and once again the Government yielded to the protests of the millowners and lifted the controls and allowed them to export both yarn and cloth and distribute them through their own nominees. This encouraged the mills not only to export yarn in large quantities but to switch over their production to the qualities of goods that earned high prices abroad. Meanwhile, the failure of the rains with the resulting decrease in cotton supplies coupled with the great textile strike in Bombay last year further cut down the production of yarn, until the handloom weavers found it impossible to obtain enough yarn to keep their looms working for half the month."

The Minister of Industries for Madras accounted for the situation as follows in the course of a speech in the Madras Assembly on Feb. 13 :

"The past situation, therefore, was a conspiracy of unavoidable circumstances. The Government of India allowed export and relaxed controls to ease the position arising from the glut of 1949. The export was necessary to earn foreign exchange for food which is also in vital demand. Since then the supplies of cotton have fallen in spite of imports. The India Government argue that the available supplies should be equitably shared between all States and that weaving mills cannot be starved to the point they close down and throw up another serious labour problem." (The *Hindu*, Feb. 14, 1951).

It is manifest from this that the anxiety of the Central Government to feed the mills has been the major cause of the tragedy. The sufferings of the Madras weavers are the result of the partiality of the Government for the Heavy Industry and organized factory labourers at the cost of cottage industry and village-weavers who, though very large in numbers, are unorganized and unvocal.

The Madras Government too are not so innocent as they seem. Only last year they allowed a spinning mill (the Meenakshi Mills, Madhurai) to set up 150 power-looms requiring 180 bales of yarn and also a fresh knitting mill with 56 power-looms requiring 280 bales. These two mills work for 16 hours a day for 26 days in a month. The following figures will illustrate their effect :

1. Power looms introduced . . .	216
2. No. of bales consumed therein . . .	460
3. Weight of yarn consumed 460×400 . . .	184,000 lbs.
4. Weight of yarn required for a handloom . . .	20 lb.
5. No. of handlooms in Madhurai city . . .	15,000
6. No. of handlooms driven out by 2 mills : 460×400	
20	= 9,200

Thus in the Madhurai city alone, two fresh mills consume as much yarn as can support 9,200 weavers, i.e. 61.3 per cent of the weavers in that city.

Then there is the problem of the master weaver. The term is a misnomer. The master weaver is not a spokesman or leader of weavers, but a middleman trader between the Madras Government and the cottage weaver. He purchases yarn from the Government and sells it or gives it on credit to such of his customers or clients as he likes. In fact, a large portion of the small quota of yarn supplied by the Government leaks, thanks to the master weaver, through unknown channels and never reaches the real weaver in the locality. Once in February, in the Chinalapatti area, three-fourths of the yarn which was supplied by the Government disappeared within 3 days. Near about Gandhigram, the workers caught hold of a person who had paid Rs 800 to the master weaver for yarn worth Rs 240. He belonged to some place far away. It is difficult to say how much yarn thus finds its way elsewhere and the poor weaver is denied his morsel. There is no satisfactory machinery to see that the master weaver supplies the yarn to the weavers for whom it is reserved. Thus the master weaver is allowed to play with the lives of 27 lakhs of people — a number sufficient to bring into trouble even a prosperous Government, and more so one like Madras.

Lastly, I come to the fundamental question of the policy of the Government (Central as well as State) towards cottage industries in general, and handloom and *khadi* in particular. In this connection, I cannot do better than quote from a speech of Shri A. Vaidyanath Ayyar, which he gave in the Madras Assembly on 13-2-1951. He said :

"The Government have not been behind-hand in parting with crores of rupees to organized industries. In the case of the Madhurai Mills, for instance, for the purpose of finding the margin of cotton price between the Indian price of Rs 800 or Rs 900 and the world price of Rs 3,000 the Government have made a free gift of Rs $1\frac{1}{2}$ crores during the last one year in order to enable it to work. It means an annual subsidy of Rs 600 per labourer, or Rs 50 per labourer per month. That has been paid by the Government of India to one mill which is employing 25,000 labourers. Why not the Government try to give a fair help to the weavers so that they may be having enough yarn with which they may work their looms?" (Madras Assembly proceedings).

One is forced to believe that the ruling authority in India follows a policy which is detrimental to the interests of the exploited masses. It is high time to ask it to mend its ways. For once those millions are on the march none can say how it will end.

ON WAY TO SHIVARAMPALLI IV

March 12, Pandharkavda (Fifth halt, 12 miles)

Vinobaji inaugurated a *katai mandal* here. Dr More of Yeotmal, the organizer of the Gandhi Memorial Fund for Berar had also come. He had inspired the young men, who organized the *katai mandal*.

To the audience which gathered at the evening prayer Vinoba explained why, although they had obtained Swaraj, they did not feel its glow. All over the world people liken the attainment of freedom with sunrise. It should dispel darkness, and create warmth and provide energy and enthusiasm for work. On sunrise, people were expected to proceed in batches to their various avocations and join their hands together for co-operation in order to create wealth. These indications of Swaraj were not much in evidence. Instead, there was anxiety to be read on all faces.

Every leader was heard to emphasize the necessity of producing more food and articles of manufacture. But food and articles could not be produced by speaking about them. Man must work with his body and limbs in order to produce them.

A *katai mandal* had been opened that day in that village. Vinoba had paid it a visit during the course of the day. In a town of eight to ten thousand inhabitants, he found only 3 or 4 persons plying the *charkha*. Every person of every age and both sexes needed cloth. But they all purchased mill-cloth for the purpose. He often wondered, Vinoba said, that people never cared to think about the amount of cloth which was annually produced by mills, in which the talents of so many eminent and expert leaders, capitalists, engineers and scientists were employed and such a huge amount of capital was sunk. But it was necessary that they should know the facts. Before the commencement of the World War, the mills produced cloth at the rate of 17 yards per capita. Last year, i.e. 10 years after the war, the production came to 12 yards per head, and we are told that in the ensuing year the production would be still less, — something like 11.25 yards, because of strikes and other causes. Such was the grand performance, which the mills reported! People asked Vinoba that since there was Swaraj now, why should mills not supply all the necessary cloth? He could not reply to that; he could only point to the fact that they were unable to do so. People had informed him that the black-market price of a pair of *dhotis* was Rs 15 to 20. It showed that the production being insufficient, the rich consumers competed with the poor ones, and took away whatever could be obtained at whatever price possible. The poor could not expect to get cloth under these circumstances. Did they want cloth? If they did, they could get it only by producing it themselves. Whoever spun for one hour per day would be able to produce 15 yards per annum; if he gave only half an hour, he

could still produce 7½ yards which with the help of 12 yards of mill-cloth would give India all the cloth she needed. But it could not be done, unless one worked. So, Vinoba advised them not to waste time in discussing problems, but to get to work. If the mills improved and were able to solve the problem later on, they were welcome to do so. But as long as they were unable to do it, would it not add, he asked, to the amount of cloth, if they span themselves? People could not increase the wealth of the nation without putting themselves to work.

If that village or town determined to produce its own cloth, it would be a great achievement — a considerable addition to the wealth of the country. What applied to cloth, applied to other things also. He hoped that the small *katai mandal* would persevere in its efforts and induce others to join their ranks.

People told him that to spin was to go back to a past age. What an argument to make when there was actual scarcity of cloth, and they wanted it badly!

He was told that the population of Pandharkavda had decreased from 9,000 to 8,000 during the past few years. The reason was that people had been going to towns in search of work. But mere migration could not give employment, if they were not prepared to work. What was important was work and not migration. Swaraj meant freedom and opportunity to work and produce wealth through work. The people should set to work if they understood the meaning of Swaraj.

March 13, Patan-Bori (Sixth halt, 12 miles)

Chalbardi is a small village, four miles from Pandharkavda. The Patel there had made arrangements for our breakfast. Villagers came a long way to receive us. They were anxious to listen to Vinobaji who, as soon as his seat was arranged, began to spin on his *takli*. He made the *takli* speak for him. They all keenly observed the yarn that was being produced. Vinobaji then explained to them why they must spin and stop the flow of wealth going out of the villages. Women there do not observe *purdah* in the sense Muslim or Marwadi ladies do. But they do observe *purdah* in the sense that they do not go out of their houses at all. The Patel had tried his best to induce them to come out for Vinobaji's *darshan*. But they kept peeping from inside the doors and windows. The Patel came and requested Shrimati Mahadevi to go and speak a few words to the women. She too first vainly tried to persuade them. When they would not, she ordered them to come out — and they followed her, except about fifteen ladies. It was strange that those were the ladies who knew how to read and write, and had received some schooling. It was possibly due to the influence of the neighbouring district, where Muslim ladies observe *purdah*. Vinobaji put a question to the ladies in Telugu. Thereupon they talked

to him freely and that too in the presence of their men, who, though very advanced now, were according to the ladies responsible for their prison-life.

At Patan-Bori the last place in Berar, on the border of the Hyderabad State, Vinobaji preferred to speak in Hindi, as people understood both Hindi and Marathi. It was one of the biggest meetings. Not only women but girls also attended in large numbers. After Vinobaji had finished his speech the girls surrounded him and requested him to speak in Marathi. Vinobaji tried to humour them away but they persisted and got one more speech in Marathi, which was in a more homely style. The audience, which was just on the point of leaving the meeting, again sat down quietly.

It was only a night's journey from Wardha to Hyderabad by train, said Vinobaji. But they had preferred to walk, and even there their desire was to visit smaller villages. He had not boycotted the train or the 'plane. He wanted even swifter airplanes than what they had at present. If possible he would like to reach Delhi in an hour. But everything had its limitations. Eye-glasses, however useful they might be, could not replace the eyes. They could only assist them. Similarly they needed these machines of high speed. He did not hate them. But the legs had their absolute value. The foot journey had some special advantages which airplanes could never bring!

He then related how in old days our ancestors used to carry Ganga water to Rameshwaram, and vice versa—a distance of about fifteen hundred miles. The tradition of carrying water from such distant places naturally brought and bound people together and created a common culture. The whole country experienced a sense of unity which was independent of political rule.

"What is the picture today?" he asked. Hundreds gathered at the booking office without knowing one another. Nobody had the leisure to know or enquire about anybody else. The foot journey could be utilized for education and knowledge of the country. It could be a source of self-purification, and help them in identifying themselves with the people. It was for this that he had decided to travel by foot. Explaining the implications of *Sarvodaya*, Vinobaji referred to Socialism and Communism and said that all these words were very attractive but were of no avail if attractive work was not done. *Sarvodaya* stood for the good of all without exception. This naturally implied that my interest should not clash with that of another. Naturally, that meant that all were one and united. *Sarvodaya* therefore was bound to look after the most backward, the most neglected. That is why they had

been visiting the smaller villages and establishing contacts with the people.

The villagers were the very backbone of the country. They formed the real country, the soul of it. It was in the villages that Indian culture could be seen even today. Even the children in villages were more cultured than those in cities. They knew how to remain peaceful in meetings while the city boys created all sort of confusion. The villagers were very poor, they had not sufficient food to eat. But they received their guests, and did not send them away hungry. They respected them. Villagers might have changed the form of their clothes, but their heart was yet the same.

Vinobaji disapproved the tendency of the villagers to go to reside in towns. He advised them to supplement agriculture with *goseva*, weaving, *telghani*, *gur*-making and such other industries as were possible in the village. It was only with the help of the villages that the country would be saved. Their attachment to the land was so great that they would not leave their lands even at the cost of their lives.

(Translated from Marathi)

D. M.

Musahar Sammelan

On January 30th the first Musahar Sammelan was convened at *Kusheshwar Sthan*, under the aegis of Musahar Seva Mandal. Five thousand Musahars coming from Rosera, Singhia, and Berout police stations in the district of Darbhanga, and Baghari police station in the district of Monghyr attended. Many resolutions were passed, the most important, that was passed unanimously, being as follows:

"In view of the fact that the Musahars in a large number of cases are almost all Harijans, (and) all over the State of Bihar live in places not easily accessible,—as a consequence of which the protecting arms of law and the Constitution do not reach them, resulting in the denial of fundamental rights of citizenship to about 35 lakhs of people who are being brutally assaulted and dispossessed of homestead and other lands and in places even raped with impunity; thus creating a situation which is sure to undermine the prestige and power of the State unless controlled in time, this session of the Musahar Sammelan requests the Government to create a special police force to go round the Harijan villages and apprehend the law-breakers and also establish special law courts to give the aggrieved cheap and speedy justice."

V. H.

CONTENTS	PAGE
MANILAL GANDHI'S FAST AND OUR DUTY .. K. G. Mashruwala	49
MANILAL GANDHI'S STATEMENT	50
PROHIBITION AND SECRET MARKETS OF LIQUOR .. M. P. Desai	51
DOLE GETS A START .. Shrikrishnadas Jaju	52
PLIGHT OF WEAVERS IN MADRAS .. Suresh Ramabhai	53
ON WAY TO SHIVARAMPALLI—IV .. D. M.	55
NOTE:	
MUSAHAR SAMMELAN .. V. H.	56