

HARIJAN

12 Pages

Editor: PYARELAL

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TWO ANNAS

BRIJKISHORE BABU

The death of Brijkishore Babu after a prolonged illness removes a seasoned and war-worn fighter from Gandhiji's Old Guard of *Satyagrahis*. His name recalls one of the most glorious chapters in the history of *Satyagraha* in India. It was during the Champaran mass *Satyagraha* struggle that Gandhiji first contacted him. As yet comparatively an obscure figure in Indian politics, he had gone to Champaran at the importunity of an equally obscure man — Rajkumar Shukla. There was a general outcry against the tyranny of the notorious compulsory indigo plantation which reduced the cultivator to a virtual serf of the European indigo planter. It was a century-old evil, well entrenched behind powerful vested interests and the false tradition of White prestige. Before entering into the fray Gandhiji consulted the local leaders connected with the movement. Besides the late Brijkishore Babu there was Rajendra Babu, who had already won his laurels at the Bar and was tipped for a High Court Judgeship, and a band of half a dozen lawyers. Brijkishore Babu was regarded by them all as their chief.

After a night's full discussion Brijkishore Babu and his followers threw in their lot with Gandhiji.

"But you will have to cease to regard yourselves as lawyers or leaders," Gandhiji told them. "You will have to become copyists and translators. Your main job will be to interpret and translate."

"We shall take time to consider," replied Brijkishore Babu, speaking for them.

The next day he communicated their decision to Gandhiji. They never wavered. Paying a glowing tribute to his memory in his after-prayer discourse the other day, Gandhiji told his audience how instead of sending a message of condolence, he had said in his wire to the deceased's relatives that they should rejoice that Brijkishore Babu had been relieved of his suffering by merciful death. He referred to his firm, unwavering faith and iron will. "Once his mind was made up, he never changed or looked back." He had strong, saving common sense. A shrewd politician, the shrewdest perhaps in Bihar, he had earned the reputation of being a skilful manager of the party machine before he came into contact with Gandhiji. His devotion to Gandhiji was boundless. He sent his daughter Prabhavati even before she became the wife of Shri Jaiprakash Narain to the Sabarmati Ashram. She became as

Gandhiji's own daughter. Brijkishore Babu was a star of no mean lustre in the firmament of Bihar and his memory would ever be cherished.

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

PYARELAL

Notes

How to Combat Unholy Boycott

A correspondent from Mercara (Coorg) writes to say that many youthful reformers do not believe in animal sacrifice offered to the village gods. Therefore, he says, the villagers have threatened to boycott them. What are the reformers to do?

Reformers all over the world have no easy task. The threatened boycott should have no meaning for the reformers. They must be ready and willing to submit to the hardships entailed by the boycott. They should on no account be angry with the villagers who honestly believe in superstitious practices. It is a question of the real education of the people. These village gods have no existence except in the villagers' imagination. Unmindful of the boycott, they should calmly persevere in their reasoning with the villagers, rendering them all the time such services that the villagers may be in need of. Patience and perseverance will overcome the mountains of difficulties that may face the reformers. The reformers may not summon police assistance against the villagers.

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

Ways of Violence

A straight line is one. Non-violence is a straight line. Lines that are not straight are many. A child who has learnt how to handle a pen can draw as many lines as he wishes. He won't draw a straight line except perhaps by chance. Several readers ask me whether in the violence "permitted" by me several things mentioned by them could be included. Strange to say all the letters received are in English! The writers should re-read my article and they will at once know why I cannot answer those questions. I am unfit probably for the simple reason that I have never practised violence. Above all I have never permitted violence. I have simply stated two grades of bravery and cowardice. The only thing lawful is non-violence. Violence can never be lawful in the sense meant here, i. e. not according to man-made law but according to the law made by Nature for man. Though violence is not lawful, when it is offered in self-defence or for the defence of the defenceless, it is an act of bravery far better than cowardly submission. The latter befits

neither man nor woman. Under violence, there are many stages and varieties of bravery. Every man must judge this for himself. No other person can or has the right.

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

The Coming Congress Session

A basketful of letters are before me in connection with the Meerut Congress session to be held shortly. The correspondents complain of the 'lavish' expenditure that is advertised to be incurred in connection with it. I must refuse to sit in judgment upon the doings of the Reception Committee. I have neither the wish nor the required leisure for study in facts. The following however, I can say without the necessity of studying facts and figures. It may be of some use to the Committee.

There should be no *tamashas*. The Congress session is any day a serious business to be tackled seriously. There can be no side-shows. Crowds should not be attracted. The fact of the Congress session being held is by itself enough attraction.

All illuminations should be strictly avoided. Food to be provided should be of the simplest kind requiring little or no fat and sugar in its preparation. Uninvited guests should bring their own provisions or refrain from coming.

Sanitary arrangements should be perfect and serve as a lesson to all comers. Sight-seers should be discouraged.

New Delhi, 19-10-'46

Why These Tears ?

In his letter of birthday greetings to me, Principal Kalelkar relates an interesting and instructive Chinese story, of which I give below the following translation for the benefit of the readers of the *Harijan* :

"Dr. Wellington Koo, at one of his meetings in London, once narrated a sweet story about a Chinese family. The eldest member of the family was considered, as with us, the head of the family. As such he had the right to use an ancient family stick by way of punishment whenever necessary. Once a hundred-years-old man used the stick on the back of his seventyfive-years-old son. Tears ran down the withered cheeks of the son. The father asked the cause of the tears which he had never before seen him shed on a similar occasion. The son replied, "Father, your stick has lost its original force. Your feebleness hurts me. Hence the tears." Kakasaheb was present when the letter was received. I gave it to him to read and he gave me the following story as having been told to him by a Tamil friend :

"One day a High Court judge of Madras is said to have gone out with a friend at the end of the day's work instead of going home as usual. When, therefore, he reached home late in the evening he met his mother standing in the doorway waiting for him. "Why have you come late?" asked the old lady with a slap on his face. Tears rolled down the son's cheeks.

The friend remarked that it was but natural that a grown-up learned man like him should feel

insulted on being slapped like that. It was strange on the mother's part to have slapped him.

"No, there was no insult in that slap," promptly replied the judge. "It is my proud privilege to receive a slap from my revered mother now and then. My eyes became wet only because I missed this time the strength that used to be in her slap. Evidently she has grown old and weak. Should not that hurt a dutiful son?"

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

(From the original in Gujarati)

Fireworks during Diwali Days

I have received several letters complaining of the use of fireworks to celebrate *Diwali*. The complaints are justified. I wrote against this practice in the columns of the now extinct *Navajivan*. I do not know whether the writing had any effect. At present when fire surrounds us, surely there can be no *Diwali*. It is sinful to have fireworks of joy or illuminations or parties consuming sweets and the like while millions are starving.

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

(From the original in Gujarati)

What About Dakore ?

A friend from the Kheda District, who keeps *bhangi* men and women in his house as his own brothers and sisters, writes : "Big temples in Madras are being thrown open to Harijans. Is it not strange that the deluded Gujarat should not throw open the Dakore temple?" If the deluded Gujaratis become sane, Dakore temple can be thrown open today. But if Gujarat must find joy in hugging a shameful custom, who can prevent her ?

On the Trustees of the Dakore temple rests a heavy responsibility.

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

(From the original in Gujarati)

M. K. G.

Errata :

In the article "Some Posers" in the *Harijan* of 6-10-'46, page 339, column 1, para 2, line 3, "trouble-shooting" should read "trouble-making."

On page 350 in the *Harijan* of 13-10-'46, column 2 line 6 for *self-suppressive* read *self-expressive*. In column 2, para 3, line 2, after 'arts' add 'and crafts.'

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RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE A. I. S. A. ON 10-10-46

1. The A. I. S. A. believes out of its own experience that the means of bringing about conditions in which there will be no scarcity of cloth as is now prevailing in India and other countries of the world such as Malaya etc., lies in the utilization of the spinning wheel and the handloom. India is the only country where the manufacture of Khadi from hand-spinning and hand-weaving has been going on from ancient times and where today, in the face of the extensive existence of cotton mills, pure hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi is being produced through the A. I. S. A.. During twentyfive year's working of the A. I. S. A. nearly seven crores of rupees have been distributed as wages to the poor spinners and weavers.

2. Those Governments that realize the importance of village industries and want to do Khadi work will have to work along the following lines :

(a) A five year plan should be made in which all the students of all the primary, middle and normal schools should be taught spinning. At least one handloom should work in every school. Basic education should be introduced in these schools in the quickest possible time and on the largest possible scale.

(b) Multi-purpose co-operative societies should be started through which the Khadi programme should be executed as a part of village reconstruction work.

(c) Steps should be taken to grow cotton in those areas where it is not a cultivated crop at present. Proper arrangements should be made so that spinners may easily get *kapas*, and all spinning accessories.

(d) Khadi experts should be trained and research work should be conducted for the improvement of Khadi work.

(e) In some form or other spinning should form a part of village uplift work and therefore the employees of the Co-operative, Education and Agriculture departments as also of the District Boards, Local Boards, Village Panchayats, etc. would have to pass the preliminary examination in Khadi (Khadi Pravesh). No fresh appointments should be made unless the applicant passes the above examination.

(f) There is no control at present on hand-woven cloth made from mill yarn. This should be controlled.

(g) Only hand-spun yarn should be used in the looms of the Textile Department and in weaving schools. Spinning and weaving should be conducted in jails.

3. Provincial Governments and States are, therefore, requested to universalize the use of Khadi by the adoption of the above measures along with others. The A. I. S. A. and its branches are ready to help to the fullest extent in carrying out the above programme.

4. Mill owners are requested to help in the carrying out of this important work. The Governments and mill owners in consultation with the Charkha Sangh should so arrange that mill cloth should not be sent to those areas where spinning and hand-weaving work is possible. In addition to this, they should see that no new mills are set up and that no new spinning and weaving machinery is indented for the existing mills. The management of the cotton mills should be conducted under the advice of the Charkha Sangh and the Government. There should be no import from abroad of any cotton yarn or cloth. The Governments should make the necessary enactments to give effect to the above and carry them out.

CULTURAL CONQUEST

For over 20 years I have seen little of fashionable Indian society or Government circles. All my life in India has been spent amongst Indian Indians. But last spring, when, in the hope of being able to bring some benefit to the peasantry, I took up the job of Honorary Special Adviser to the U. P. Government, "Grow More Food", I found myself plunged into new surroundings. Strange looking people, each trying to look more English than the other, were on all sides. I looked in despair at my office staff. Mill cloth everywhere, shirts tucked inside ugly English-cut trousers, foreign style coats on, in spite of oppressive heat, and Bata shoes tightly fitting the feet. This was bad enough, but when I began to ask their names I found they were all Mistrs: Mr. Sharma, Mr. Varma, Mr. Gupta and so on, and when they spoke of anyone they all said Mister so and so. Then came the peons and *chaprasis*, obsequiously saying '*Hazur, hazur*', and my discomfiture was complete!

The embarrassment was mutual. When I refused to be called "Miss" or "Madam", they groped like foreigners for Indian forms of address, and when I began to dictate letters, and, eliminating "Mister", substituted "Shri" and "Saheb", it necessitated re-typing many pages, because the foreign habit had become too deeply engrained to disappear forthwith.

After a few days I started out on a long tour of western U. P., and then a new set of troubles faced me. The Inspection Bungalows and Circuit Houses were all furnished in purely English (in India) style. Stuffy smelling sofas and chairs, quantities of tables, large fashionable beds, with rails or panels along the top, so that you could not throw your arms above your head on a hot night—and the nights were hot enough in May and June—bad smelling carpets on the floors harbouring years of dirt and dust, gauze in the windows keeping out all fresh air, and worst of all unsteady commodes (which are a nightmare for those who do not like to sit in European style) placed in every bathroom, and always in close proximity to the living rooms. As to the kitchens the less said about them the better.

Is it not time that these unsuitable customs in speech, dress and mode of living, quit India along with the *raj* they represent?

MIRABEHN

HARIJAN

October 27

1946

HAND-SPUN V. MILL CLOTH

(By M. K. Gandhi)

The Premier of Madras has fallen foul of the big capitalist interests such as the Chamber of Commerce and even some Congressmen. I have had cuttings sent to me from the Madras Press. I am sorry to say that the criticism seems to me to be interested and ignorant.

My name has been dragged in the controversy. That I sponsor the Premier's scheme should not affect a dispassionate discussion of the very simple problem.

The simple question is merely this: Can Khadi become universal in Madras if encouragement is given by the Madras Government to new mills being erected or old ones being so expanded as to enable them to double production? Are the villagers expected to be so simple as not to understand that it would be merely playing with Khadi, if mill cloth heavily aided is to be dumped down in their midst, probably at a rate cheaper even than cotton required to weave a particular length of Calico? This happened when Japan sent her Calico to India.

The Madras Scheme is undoubtedly meant to utilize a part of the idle hours of the villagers for spinning sufficient yarn to clothe themselves. Is it chimerical to induce and expect the people to utilize their idle hours to do useful, national, honest labour?

It will be time to declaim against the Madras Government when there is a feasible scheme to find useful and more remunerative employment for all who need work. It is hardly an honourable pastime to dismiss from consideration honest servants of the nation by dubbing them idealists, dreamers, fanatics and faddists.

Let not capitalists and other entrenched personages range themselves against the poor villagers and prevent them from bettering their hard lot by dignified labour.

The great flaw about new mills in the Madras scheme was detected by me. It was when the Textile Commissioner was convinced of the absurdity of the two things running side by side and the feasibility of the scheme as envisaged by the A. I. S. A. that he ventured to recommend it to the Madras Government. His reputation will be at stake if it is impracticable or unworkable, not the critics.

This is work for democracy by a democratic Government.

Hence the scheme must be popular at least where it is to be tried.

It must not be one man's scheme but the whole Government's.

It must have the backing of the Legislature.

In no case may it smack of compulsion.

It must be intrinsically practicable and of benefit to the masses.

These conditions of success are all reduced to writing. The Government have accepted them *in toto* after, I understand, full discussion with experts and among themselves.

Let it be remembered that the existing Madras mills will not be touched at present. That the whole mill industry will be affected, if the scheme spreads like wild fire as I expect some day such a thing must, goes without saying. Let not the largest capitalist rue the day when and if it comes.

The only question then worth considering is whether the Madras Government are honest and competent. If they are not, everything will go wrong. If they are, the scheme must be blessed by all and must succeed.

New Delhi, 17-10-'46

THE TRAVAIL

A friend was discussing with Gandhiji the other day the recent gruesome happenings in Calcutta. His sensitive and refined spirit shrank from the very idea of narrow communalism. What filled him with anguish was not the loss of life so much, deplorable as it was, as the degradation of the human spirit that had resulted from the Calcutta happenings. "Even those who never thought in terms of communalism are now becoming communal-minded. But that was not all. The madness has spread."

As Gandhiji sat listening to the stories that came from Bengal, his mind was made up. "If I leave Delhi," he remarked, "it will not be in order to return to Sevagram but only to go to Bengal. Else, I would stay here and stew in my own juice."

He consulted two friends from Bengal that evening about it. "Allow us to go there first and report," said they. "Give us a chance to do our bit and then, if necessary, you can come." Gandhiji agreed.

In the course of the talk, one of them asked Gandhiji whether he would recommend fasting to check the orgy of communal madness that was spreading in Bengal. Gandhiji's reply was in the negative. He narrated how a valuable colleague from Ahmedabad had invited him to immolate himself. "We believe in the non-violent way but lack the strength. Your example would steady our wavering faith and fortify us." The logic was perfect and the temptation great. "But I resisted it and said 'no'. There is no inner call. When it comes, nothing will keep me back. I have reasoned with myself too about it. But I need not set forth my reasons. Let people call me a coward if they please. I have faith that when the hour arrives God will give me the strength to face it and I won't be found unready."

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

"Fasting cannot be undertaken mechanically," he proceeded. "It is a powerful thing but a dangerous thing if handled amateurishly. It requires complete self-purification, much more than what is required in facing death with retaliation even in mind. One such act of perfect sacrifice would suffice for the whole world. Such is held to be Jesus' example."

"The idea is," he continued, "that you appropriate to yourself and assimilate the essence of his sacrifice, symbolically represented by the bread and wine of the Eucharist. A man who was completely innocent offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act. 'It is finished' were the last words of Jesus, and we have the testimony of his four disciples as to its authenticity.

"But whether the Jesus tradition is historically true or not I do not care. To me it is truer than history because I hold it to be possible and it enshrines an eternal law—the law of vicarious and innocent suffering taken in its true sense."

He then proceeded to show how the lesson of Jesus could be applied to the present situation. "A Hindu and a Mussalman braved the fury of the maddened crowd in Bombay and went down together literally clasped in a fatal embrace but refused to desert each other. Rajab Ali and Vasantrao Hegishte similarly fell to mob frenzy in the attempt to quell it. "What came out of it?" people might ask, "the fire still continues to rage." I do not think for a moment it has gone in vain. We may not see the effect today. Our non-violence is as yet a mixed affair. It limps. Nevertheless, it is there and it continues to work like a leaven in a silent and invisible way, least understood by most. It is the only way." As a further illustration of his remarks he recalled the history of the Champaran *Satyagraha*. There had been several bloody risings within half a century preceding it against the infamous compulsory indigo plantation. But each attempt had only resulted in fastening the rivets tighter than ever before. Then came the Champaran mass *Satyagraha*, untainted by acts of violence, and a century-old evil was overthrown in less than six months.

"Go forth, therefore," he concluded. "I have done. I won't detain you for a day longer. You have my blessings. And I tell you there will be no tears but only joy, if tomorrow I get the news that all the three of you are killed."

"It will be pure joy to be so killed," they echoed.

"But mark my words," he resumed. "Let there be no foolhardiness about it. You should go because you feel you must and not because I ask you to."

"That goes without saying," they answered together as they took leave to go forth and face the flames.

IN GOD'S HANDS

Remarked Gandhiji at the evening prayer gathering that day that he had received numerous messages from Bengal inviting him to go there and still the raging fury. Whilst he did not believe that he had any such capacity, he was anxious to go to Bengal. Only he thought it was his duty to wait till Pandit Nehru's return and the meeting of the Working Committee. But he was in God's hands. If he clearly felt that he should wait for nothing, he would not hesitate to anticipate the date. His heart was in Bengal.

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

PYARELAL

ELOQUENT FIGURES

(By M. K. Gandhi)

When Shri S. Venkateswaran, the Provincial Textile Commissioner, was in Delhi specially for the purpose of the Madras Khadi scheme, I asked him to give me his own figures on the assumption that Madras had no mills and had to clothe the whole Presidency in Khadi.

Here are the figures which speak for themselves:

"Population of Madras Province	53 millions
Number of families in the Province	53,000,000

4

Quantity of handspun yarn that each spinner can spin every day, working 1 hour per day	3/8 of a hank
Total quantity of yarn that will be produced per family per month of 30 working days	11-1/4 hanks
$\frac{3}{8} \times 30 = 90/8$	

(One spinner for each family)

Production of handspun yarn per family per annum	= 135 hanks
= $12 \times 11-1/4$	= $9-9/14 = 9.64$ lbs.
	or 10 lbs. roughly equal to 30 yds. of cloth (width 44' average)

Total production of Khadi cloth in the Province	$30 \times 13.25 = 397.5$ million yards
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Quantity of Khadi cloth required for clothing the entire population at 20 yds. per adult and 10 yds. per child	
37 millions $\times 20$	= 740 million yards
16 " $\times 10$	= 160 " "
	900 million yards

Percentage of production to the requirements of cloth	44.1%
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"It seems to follow that we cannot get enough hand-spun yarn for meeting the cloth requirements in full unless each family contributes a spinner working, in the average, for about 2-1/2 hours daily, or unless we can secure about five spinners for every two families in the Province.

"*Handlooms required*: On the assumption that an average weaver, even after due training, cannot weave more than five yards daily, or 125 yards per month (allowing five days, every month, for festivals and other days of rest), the number of looms required for the production of 900 million yards is 6,00,000. The number of handlooms weaving cotton yarn in this Province now is only a little over 5,00,000. The number of cotton yarn looms will, therefore, have to be increased by at least 75,000 to make the Province self-sufficient in terms of Khadi."

Is it extravagant to expect every five persons out of eight to spin one hour per day, say for love of the country of their birth?

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

WEEKLY LETTER

THE ORGY OF MADNESS

The week's events were not calculated to lift the darkness that had descended on Gandhiji's spirit and to which I referred last week. "I am trying to take my bearings, to see where I stand," he casually remarked the other day in the course of a conversation. He has since been pouring out his anguish in a series of prayer gathering addresses. There was first the flood havoc in Assam. Thousands had been rendered homeless, property worth lakhs had been destroyed and many lives lost. That was an act of God. But far worse than the news from Assam was the fact that an orgy of madness had seized a section of humanity in Bengal. Man had sunk lower than the brute. Reports were coming through that the Hindus, who are in a very small minority there, were being attacked by Mussalmans. Ever since he had heard of the happenings in Noakhali he had been furiously thinking as to what his own duty was. God would show him the way. He knew that his stock had gone down with the people so far as the teaching of non-violence was concerned. They still showered affection upon him. He appreciated their affection and felt thankful for it. But the only way in which he could express his thanks and appreciation was to place before them and through them the world the truth which God had vouchsafed to him and to the pursuit of which his whole life was devoted, even at the risk of forfeiting their affection and regard. At the moment, he felt prompted to tell them that it would be wrong on the part of the Hindus to think in terms of reprisals for what had happened in Noakhali and elsewhere in East Bengal. Non-violence was the creed of the Congress. It had brought them to their present strength. But it would be counted only as a coward's expedient if its use was to be limited only against the British power which was strong and while violence was to be freely used against our own brethren. He refused to believe that they could ever adopt that as their creed. Although the Congress had an overwhelming majority of the Hindus on its membership rolls, he maintained that it was by no means a Hindu organization and that it belonged equally to all communities. He had told Acharya Kripalani, who had succeeded Pandi. Nehru in the Presidentship of the Congress, that it was going to prove no feather-bed for him. If the Chief Minister of the Cabinet had to wear a crown of thorns the Congress President would have to lie on a bed of thorns. The late Sir Syed Ahmed had called Hindus and Mussalmans the two eyes of India. The Congress President could not possibly discriminate between the two. He was pledged to equally serve both. He, the speaker, had therefore asked him to proceed on a mission of peace to East Bengal to teach people the art of dying without killing. It should be his privilege to demonstrate it by his personal example. He was going there with his wife not to protect one party

but to stop the fratricide which threatened to overwhelm India. It was a good beginning for Acharya Kripalani and his wife. Sarat Babu, the brother of the late Subhas Babu, was going with them. He knew no barriers of caste or creed. Some years ago he was staying at Sarat Babu's house. He came to know how Subhas Babu used to look up to Sarat Babu.

The fair name of Bengal was being tarnished — Bengal that had given them so much, Bengal the home of Gurudev whose *bhajan* they had just heard sung. That hymn asked God to make the devotee wide-hearted and fearless. It was with that hymn on their lips that they were going and it was the audience's duty to wish them every success.

A WORD TO THE MUSLIM LEAGUE

He appealed to the Muslim League too to turn the searchlight inward. They had decided to come into the Interim Government. He hoped they were coming in to work as brothers. If they did, all would be well. And just as he had exhorted Hindus not to slay Mussalmans nor harbour ill-will towards them, so he appealed to the Muslim League, even if they wanted to fight for Pakistan, to fight cleanly and as brothers. The Qaid-e-Azam had said that minorities would be fully protected and everyone would receive justice in Pakistan. It was as good as Pakistan where they were in the majority and he implored them to treat Hindus as blood brothers and not as enemies. It boded ill for Pakistan if what was happening in East Bengal was an earnest of things to come. He hoped both Hindus and Muslims respectively would stand mutually as surety and pledge themselves to see that not a hair of the head of the minority community in their midst was injured. Unless they learnt to do that, he would say that their assumption of the reins of power was a mere blind. What was going on in Bengal was not worthy of human beings. They had to learn to be human beings first.

NOT STRAIGHT

Gandhiji's hope that the coming of the Muslim League into the Interim Government would prove to be a good augury was, however, destined soon to receive a rude shock by the inclusion of a Scheduled Caste name in the list of the Muslim League's nominees. It might be supposed, Gandhiji remarked after the evening prayer on Wednesday last, that a man like himself ought to be glad that another seat had been given to a Harijan. But he would be deceiving himself and Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah if he said so. The latter had said that the Muslims and Hindus were two nations. The League was a purely communal organization. How then could they nominate a Harijan to represent them? Gandhiji feared their whole mode of entrance into the Cabinet had not been straight. He could not sense any generosity in the nomination of a Harijan in their quota of five seats especially when he read what was happening in East Bengal. He was, therefore, forced to wonder whether they had come into the Cabinet also to fight. He hoped, neverthe-

less, that his fears would prove to be wrong and that they would work there as brothers, out to serve India as a whole. He hoped too that the Harijan member would prove a worthy son and servant of India.

WOMEN'S ORDEAL

"It is not death that matters but how you meet death," he remarked on another occasion. To die at the hands of one's brother is a privilege, provided you die bravely. But what about women who were being abducted and forcibly converted? That no one could be 'converted' forcibly was here beside the point. "And why should Indian women feel so helpless? Is bravery the monopoly of men only? Women of course do not generally carry swords though the Rani of Jhansi did and outdid all her contemporaries in the valour of the sword. Still all cannot become Ranis of Jhansi. But all women can emulate the example of Sita whom even the mighty Ravana dared not touch. Ranis of Jhansi could be subdued."

"Let no one dismiss the example of Sita as legendary," he proceeded and gave the example of Olive Doke who dared to go and live among the unclad primitive Negro tribes in the heart of Africa without fear of molestation. It was that higher type of valour which he wanted Indian womanhood to cultivate. The military and police might protect them from abduction but what about those who had already been abducted or who might be abducted in spite of the police and the military. They ought to learn to die before a hair of their head could be injured. He averred that it was possible for a woman to put an end to herself by choking or biting the tongue.

DEATH BEFORE DISHONOUR

The next evening he had to revise the technique suggested above. Dr. Sushila who had heard him the day before had told him—and Dr. B. C. Roy who saw him the next morning confirmed her statement—that one could not end his life by choking or biting one's tongue. The only way known to medicine for instant self-immolation was a strong, poisonous dose. If this was so, he, the speaker, would advise every one running the risk of dishonour to take poison before submission to dishonour. He had, however, heard from those given to *yogic* practices that it was possible by some *yogic* practice to end life. He would try to inquire. His was not an idle idea. He meant all he had said. The very fact of steeling oneself for death before dishonour braced one for the struggle. Woman in our country was brought up to think that she was well only with her husband or on the funeral pyre. He would far rather see India's women trained to wield arms, said the speaker, than that they should feel helpless. The vogue of carrying daggers and revolvers by women was on the increase. He knew, however, that arms were a poor weapon when it came to the matter of defending one's honour against odds. Arms were a symbol of one's helplessness, not strength. When one was deprived of them, generally there was nothing left but surrender.

He then referred to a letter received from a Muslim friend to the effect that he (Gandhiji) was ready to condemn atrocities by Muslims but preferred to be silent when Hindus committed them. He could only say that the charge was baseless. To him all human beings were like his blood brothers.

DECENTRALIZING KHADI ORGANIZATION

I wrote at length last week about the various questions that were discussed at the last meeting of the Charkha Sangh. Another question that was discussed was about the devolution of the authority of the Charkha Sangh to local Khadi organizations. It was suggested that the formulation of Khadi policy for each unit of area should be left entirely to local bodies which should be completely independent of the central organization. Gandhiji, while he was entirely in favour of the maximum decentralization of initiative and responsibility, was opposed to the creation of local committees of untrained men and women to take the place of Khadi workers. For organization of Khadi work what was needed was a body of technicians and experts, men endowed with business talent and filled with the spirit of service. There was no room in it for personal ambition or power politics. The latter had become the bane of the Congress. To get rid of corruption in the Congress organization he had suggested that it should convert itself into an organization of workers. To introduce an element of democracy into Khadi work would be to kill Khadi. The Charkha Sangh was not a democratic organization in the sense the Congress was. It was an organization created by the Congress for the building up of democracy. Like the Directorate of the Bank of England, it was a business organization first and last. Only it was motivated by an altruistic, not profit motive. A business organization of a democratic body could not be bound by the procedure of the democratic vote.

"We want to disperse in the villages," proceeded Gandhiji. "A Khadi worker can have no use for any other sanction save such as persuasion and service can command. The moment he seeks to arm himself with any other, he kills Khadi."

"To make Khadi universal," finally asked a friend, "you need to inspan the co-operation of everybody."

Gandhiji replied that since Khadi workers were expected to be full servants of the people, their worth if there was any could create public opinion in their favour. The need was not for a committee of members who may be a hindrance rather than help, whereas if service drew supporters they would be a powerful help.

"What would be the authority of the A. I. S. A. after Khadi became decentralized?" was another question.

The answer came quick. It was that the authority of the Sangh would be merely moral and, therefore, more potent than at present. Its function would not be to provide money or material but only to smoothen the way for Khadi work by the creation of a moral sanction. It would lend the Khadi workers the use of its name but not seek to impose its will upon

them. Its moral authority would be available to anybody who accepted its policy. Even its present assets would be put at the disposal of any unit that was ready and considered fit to claim autonomy, provided only that it guaranteed the right use of the assets allotted to it and bound itself to return the same after a certain period. The Charkha Sangh would have the right of inspection but even that would be at the will of the autonomous unit.

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

PYARELAL

CHARKHA MANDAL

1. Members of the Charkha Mandal will give six hanks of yarn per year or 320 rounds per month. The condition is that the yarn should be spun on the days fixed by the Mandal and at the place fixed for community spinning. The members will have to make their own slivers by *tunai* and spin them. They will be called Associates.

2. An Associate will pay Re. 1 as admission fee and further give 320 rounds of yarn per month, spun as in clause 1. He will remain an Associate so long as he gives the monthly quota of yarn.

3. The Mandal should make rules as to the time and frequency of community spinning. Anyone who fails to give the quota of yarn for 2 months will be struck off the roll. If he wishes to become a member again, he will have to pay the admission fee a second time. No one will be able to become a member a third time in the same year.

4. Efforts should be made to open such *mandals* in every *mohalla*, village and small town. There may be a central office for each district or province.

5. It is the intention to fix a national day for every month in the whole country, when community spinning should be held at the respective *mandals* at one and the same time.

6. Efforts are being made to start spinning classes along with the *mandals* in various places. At these classes the various processes beginning with hand-ginning with a rolling pin, *tunai*, slivering and ending with spinning will be taught. The admission fee will be one rupee. Those who join the Mandal within a month of learning these processes in the Charkha class will not have to pay an additional rupee for admission to the Mandal. They will only have to give 320 rounds of yarn.

7. Although the yarn spun every month will belong to the Mandal, the spinner in question will be able to buy Khadi with that yarn. The Associates will have the first preference in getting Khadi.

KANU GANDHI

[The Charkha Mandal has evolved out of the three spinning classes held in the Bhangi Colony. How I wish such *mandals* would spring up all over the country! Before that can happen a number of *mandals* should be opened in Delhi. There are several clubs for play and enjoyment. Why not have many *mandals* for national work? —M. K. GANDHI]

New Delhi, 18-10-'46

(From the original in *Hindustani*)

AN ATTRACTIVE PICTURE

There is a tiny national *Grama Vidyalaya* in the village of Gambhira in Gujarat. Eight students of this school aged from 13 to 17 observed Gandhiji's birthday anniversary by spinning among themselves 36,920 rounds or 578 hanks of yarn in 1,275 man-hours from the 16th of August to the 21st of September. Generally they spin for one hour every day. Besides this, on Gandhiji's birthday, six wheels were kept plying without a break for 24 hours, turning out 43 hanks, while one spinning wheel was kept going non-stop for 77 hours producing 30 hanks. In all 651 hanks of 20 to 32 counts were spun.

The spinners have all written letters to Gandhiji giving a charming account of their school and surroundings.

The students of the *Nutan Rashtriya Grama Vidyalaya* themselves sweep the school and clean their latrines. Off and on they do scavenging in the village itself. They are proud of it too. Writes one of them: "I have always felt that even if we can render no other service to the country, we can contribute our mite by keeping the school building and its surroundings neat and clean. It is pure joy." Another takes pride in the fact that they are all taught to be above narrow prejudices and the feeling of distinction between man and man. They wear Khadi woven from yarn of their own spinning. They have laid out a flower garden for themselves. A girl student describes how on Gandhiji's birthday they built a model of Gandhiji's hut which they decorated with yarn spun by themselves and how they swept clean the village on that day. But to their sorrow they found, while returning after the flag salutation ceremony, that the villagers had already spoiled the roads and footpaths. "They do not seem to realize the importance of cleanliness and sanitation," she bewails.

Other letters indicate a keen interest on the part of the students in the various local problems such as the Harijan question, deterioration since the last five or six years of the village land owing to floods, erosion and so on.

New Delhi, 14-10-'46

PYARELAL

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