

HARIJAN

Editor: PYARELAL

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TWO ANNAS

ELEVEN DAYS' CHARKHA CLASS

(By M. K. Gandhi)

The important part of an account given to me by Shri Kanu Gandhi of this class is given below :

"This class was conducted in the Bhangi Colony from 11-9-'46 to 21-9-'46. 156 men and women and three children participated, ages varying from 8 to 75 years. Due to the re-opening after the summer holidays of the schools and in a few cases to illness the number in the end went down to 126. On the 11th day there was a 1½ hours examination held in which 110 persons, 51 women and 59 men, took part.

"Two separate classes were held daily in the morning and afternoon. The morning class from 7 to 11 was attended mostly by office-going persons who could only stay for 2 to 2½ hours. The afternoon class from 2 to 5-30 consisted for the greater part of women.

"The minimum and maximum tuition worked out at 16 and 40 hours respectively. 20 persons knew how to spin before they came to the classes but all the other processes were new to everyone. Owing to lack of spinning wheels etc. the trainees were not able to practise at home in the beginning but when all the implements became available, they were able to fill this gap. The approximate speed per hour of spinning with 'tunai' of the learners who went in for the examination was as follows:

23 persons	60 rounds
22 "	75 "
10 "	90 "
17 "	100 "
8 "	125 "
5 "	150 "
1 person	239 "

"The count of yarn varied from 19 to 25. Few produced yarn of very poor quality. Coarse yarn was spun by those whose speed was the lowest.

"In order to create enthusiasm among the people an exhibition of all the processes of spinning was held on the 22nd instant. An entrance fee of one anna was charged. All Charkhas from the early village wheel to the modern Yeravda, Kisan and Magan Charkhas (the latter enables the drawing of yarn by both hands), the triangular bamboo Charkha were on view, as also implements of carding including, the bow with both gut and thread and the bamboo knife. There was also a special Charkha for spinning

wool. An interesting sight was a one-armed man who was turning the Yeravda wheel with his foot and drawing the thread with his left hand. His speed was 240 rounds an hour. In one section there were exhibits of different species of cotton and yarn of various counts. A tree of *devkapas* was also on view as well as pictures of the different kinds of spinning wheels, *taklis* and carding implements. Near by lay a heap of 78 lakhs of hanks of yarn for presentation to Gandhiji. Harijan girls and boys from the Kasturba Balika Ashram and the Harijan Industrial School respectively as also workers from the Delhi Khadi Bhandar rendered valuable help. The public took a keener interest than had been expected. The exhibition was opened at 1 p. m. by Shri Jaiprakash Narain and was to remain open till 5 p. m. but owing to an immense crowd it was decided at 2-15 p. m. to stop all entries for 1½ hours and all the exhibits which had been arranged in a large hall originally had to be carried into the open.

"Competitions were held from 2-30 to 5 p.m. by Gandhi Ashram, Chandani Chowk, Delhi. These included spinning with all its processes, plain spinning, competition for children of 12 years, spinning with eyes closed and spinning without breaking the thread. The competitors, nearly 500 in number, were very enthusiastic.

"It was intended to hold the evening prayer preceded by collective spinning in which many of the leaders had promised to join in the exhibition premises. This became impossible owing to the huge unmanageable crowd. The collective spinning was, however, held in Bhangi Colony. Jawaharlalji, Badshah Khan, Rajendra Babu, Fakhruddin Sahib, Jagjiwanramji, Dr. Pattabhi and Shri Shankerrao Dev, all took part for about half an hour. Badshah Khan drew 66 rounds and Jawaharlalji 100. Figures of others are not available.

"It was a pure accident that the close of the spinning class coincided with the Charkha Jayanti. Rajendra Babu performed the flag hoisting in the morning in Bhangi Colony.

"Thanks for valuable help rendered to the spinning class are due to Shri Brijkrishna Chandi-wala, Shri Krishnan Nair, Shri Kalkaprasad of Gandhi Ashram and to a worker sent specially for the purpose from Adampur Khadi Bhandar.

"Thanks for the loan of the hall and grounds for the exhibition are due to the Municipal Board and the Principal of the Bengali School."

In my opinion, this class has been of great value. The numbers of the learners, the class from which they came and the perseverance with which they worked are worthy of note. Thousands were drawn to see the small exhibition. Leaders joined in the collective spinning. All these should augur well for the future of Khadi. It is good to understand what perseverance can achieve.

New Delhi, 24-9-'46

(From the original in Gujarati)

FOOD RATIONING

A mistake is committed in the working of rationing in India. It consists in charging the cost of collection, transport, storage and distribution to the price of food. The resulting difference in price between what the producer gets and what the consumer pays is usually not less than 30 to 50% (and often more) of the value paid to the producer. The results of this discrepancy in prices are :

1. The producer is unwilling to part with the grain due to the fear that when short of it, he will have to pay more than what he got.
2. The depressing influence on the producer who hesitates to expand his sowings due to the fear of Government control and interference.
3. The stimulus to the black market due to the wide margin of profit.

It is suggested, therefore, that the incidental costs of food control (collection etc.) should be charged to the Treasury and the food sold to the consumer at the rate paid to the producer.

In addition to this, the price of food should be fixed by law for 1 to 3 years ahead, so that the producer and the consumer both know what they will get or pay for food.

Such an apparently simple measure as the changing of the incidental costs of food control to the Treasury will have the following results :

1. knocking out the black market completely,
2. encouraging the 'Grow More Food' tendency,
3. inducing the producer to part with his product, because he knows that he will always get what he needs at the same rate,
4. reassuring the consumer as to his future cost of living, and
5. creating a tendency to a uniform and low price of the basic necessities of life.

The revenue necessary to pay the cost of food control on these lines can be created by imposing a progressive sales tax on all non-rationed and non-controlled articles and highest on luxury articles. Thus the articles of first necessity like food will be subsidized by the purchasers of non-essential and luxury goods.

The proposition can be expressed tersely : the purchaser of goods non-essential to the maintenance of life and health will have to contribute to the costs of collection, transport, storage and distribution of essentials, so that they reach the consumer at the lowest possible price.

Maurice Frydman

PARADISE LOST

My little room at the Valmiki Mandir had a window at the back which looked out on to open ground. Red rock and rough grass made a ridge of high land beyond which only the wide sky was visible. This was for me a continual comfort, to which was added the quiet society of Bapuji's goats, who had a habit of coming and standing under my little window.

When I was a tiny child, I lived in my grandfather's country house. There were three different walks for which my nurse would take me. One along the road to the town, one to the village, and one past a farm and up a country lane to the hills. There the birds sang and the wild flowers bloomed. Whenever my nurse asked me, which walk I would like to take, my answer was invariably "Up'i lane"—Up the lane towards the hills—for me that was the world of joy and beauty. In Delhi, fifty years later, there was no "Up'i lane", but at least there was a semblance of the countryside, and so my heart was ever through the little window, away from the rush and turmoil of the great city.

On the last day of my stay, I was obliged to go to Chandani Chowk for doing some necessary shopping. From all sides every sense was wounded. The din of traffic and shouting of harsh voices beat upon the ears, ugly sights of dirt and tawdriness hurt the eyes, and nasty smells invaded the nose. But worst of all, were the faces of the people, reflecting as they did, the blunted senses and hardened minds within.

And this is called civilization. To object to it is called 'putting the clock back'. Chandani Chowk is not a slum, it is looked upon as a grand highway and shopping centre!

That evening I took the train for Dehradun. Looking out of the carriage window at dawn, I felt as if Paradise were spread before my eyes. The air was so clear and fresh, the forest rich in its autumn verdure—and now came a brook of crystal water dancing and sparkling over its rocky bed with flowering bushes and tall, feathery grasses on its banks. The forest opened out into a broad glen, the sun had risen over the mountains to the east, and a glimmer of golden light in the opening of the forest, showed Gangaji winding her sacred way towards Haradwar. My heart sang with the birds of the forest in thanksgiving to God.

Then I thought of the city folks in Chandani Chowk surrounded with their own hideousness. Have they come to such a pass that they prefer that to this? Have their eyes lost the power to see God in Nature? Have their ears been so rasped that they can no longer detect the singing of the birds, let alone the voice of the Silence? And their noses, do they seek the city smells rather than the pure sweet air of the mountains? I looked at my fellow passengers—two educated young men. One was deep in a book, the other was tucked up in a corner smoking a cigarette. I thought to myself how, when they got to Mussooree, they would seek

out cinemas, and there go into raptures over foreign scenery, flickering on a screen to the accompaniment of vulgar music. They would not turn their eyes in reverence towards the majestic snows of Kedarnath, nor would they listen to the voices of the wind wandering through the fragrant fir woods.

Alas for modern man! He is the victim of a fell disease, and glories in that sickness, calling it progress, enlightenment, knowledge!

9-9-'46

MIRABEHN

TRACTORS v. BULLOCKS

Tractor cultivation is a controversial question. Some people consider mechanization of agriculture the ideal goal for India, and some would not so much as look at a tractor.

There is a middle path during the development period.

In U. P. there are 79 lakhs acres of actually culturable waste lands. Much of this vast area is *usar* land which has become very hard, and in some cases needs extra deep cultivation in order to break up the *kankar* layer below the surface. There are other waste lands covered with tall deep-rooted grasses, and yet others especially in the *terai*, where even shrubs and small trees have to be uprooted.

For many years the cattle population of India has been deteriorating, and with the recent war, it has become alarmingly reduced owing to wholesale slaughter of animals for feeding the foreign armies (English and American), and prisoners of war. This means that, today, to try and deal with waste lands by means of bullock power would be so slow a process that it would be as good as useless. We have to overcome long years of administrative neglect in as short a space of time as possible, if we are successfully to stop the rot which is steadily undermining our countryside.

I would, therefore, advocate the use of tractors for bringing waste land under cultivation where it is situated in large blocks and is otherwise suitable. But after the land is reclaimed, I would not for a moment suggest that it should remain permanently under mechanical cultivation. The bullock is in every way economical for the Indian peasant. The bullock is fed from the products of the land, and gives in return valuable cowdung which is used for plastering of walls and floors, for fuel and for manure. The bullock can also be used for all kinds of work—carting, water-lifting and the like, whereas the tractor has to have expensive oil purchased for it from the bazar and it gives nothing back from its belly. At the same time the only kind of haulage it can do, is field cultivation on a broad outlay.

When we have developed village groves for fuel-wood, we do not want to find that cow-dung has been greatly reduced owing to the removal of the bullock from village cultivation. On the contrary, we want to find masses of cow-dung released for the impoverished Indian soil. Anyone who is familiar with Indian village life knows the part

which cow-dung plays. Without it the whole village dwelling structure and economic life would become broken down.

So it comes to this, that tractors be used for big scale reclamation and, during the years that these lands are being brought into a good cultivated condition, every effort must be made to control and improve the breeding of the present herds of cattle in the province, so that ever-increasing quantities of good bullocks become available for cultivation purposes (see Note on Cattle Wealth).

Before closing this note, I would like to express a word of warning regarding tractors. At present the tractors are being obtained from abroad. This means that spare parts, extra to those supplied, will be difficult to get and very expensive. At the same time expert engineers and mechanics are very difficult to find in India today. This means that before any big scheme is handled, men must be thoroughly trained for taking up the job, and local workshops must be provided at the spots where the reclamation work is to be taken up.

The implements are the most troublesome part of tractor cultivation, as they frequently break or get out of order, and if we are to look to foreign countries for both the implements and their parts, tractor cultivation is bound to be a failure. Anyway, it would be a blot on our own Swadeshi zeal as a Province if we fail to turn out tractor implements, which can be manufactured in India.

MIRABEHN

Cattle Wealth

No scheme of land and village development in India can be successful, unless the cattle problem is vigorously tackled. Cows and bullocks have suffered very heavy casualties during the war, having been ruthlessly butchered for feeding foreign armies and prisoners of war. This has reduced to a most critical condition the already pitiable state of the country's cattle.

Cattle cannot be bred in a day, and four to five years must elapse before we can expect any visible result. It behoves us, therefore, to take up the matter without delay. But unfortunately delay is the order of the day in the country.

Government servants have, therefore, to take up this cattle development in a new spirit, if it is to succeed. And, if it fails, then all other rural development fails with it.

A project has been passed by the Central and Provincial Governments to be financed on a half and half basis, which envisages the organization of the *goshalas* in the Provinces for improved cattle breeding. If this scheme is properly worked, great strides can be made in the right direction.

MIRABEHN

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OR

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HARIJAN

September 29

1946

FOOD SHORTAGE

(By M. K. Gandhi)

There is nothing so depressing as when fear pervades the atmosphere. I remember an occasion when the waters of the Sabarmati were rising fairly high and a message said to be from Sardar Patel was received after midnight to the effect that inside of an hour the Ashram would be covered with the rising waters and that we were likely to be drowned in them if we did not vacate. It was a most anxious time for all of us men, women and children. A sigh of relief went up to heaven when it was discovered that after causing some loss to property, the angry waters had begun to subside and that no loss of life need be feared.

Precisely in the same manner the danger of shortage reported from authoritative quarters bids fair to demoralize us into a panic which would be more fatal than real starvation. Such was my plight when a paragraph in the papers was read to me that of all the places in the world its intrepid Diwan had seriously contended that Travancore had a storage of food grains only for a fortnight. Knowing Travancore so well, I imagined all sorts of calamities, not merely for Travancore but for all India. Travancore with its luxuriant growth of edible tubers, cocoanut and fish had no need to starve for a single day, even though it might have no other supply from the other parts of India. My faith in Travancore kept me whole. And to my joy I discovered that the shortage was not of food but of wheat and rice only. Travancore can grow rice, not wheat. So far as the cereals are concerned the inhabitants of Travancore are rice eaters. They take to wheat with difficulty and under stress. Would that the present distress could make us shed our provincialisms and induce all India habits so as to make us feel fully at home, no matter which part of India we happened to find ourselves in. For the moment, however, my object would be fully served if all responsible men in India would definitely tell the people in their respective provinces, districts and states, not to look beyond India for supply of food but to grow what they can themselves and learn to eke out a living from their own produce. And, if the numerous authentic letters I receive are an indication of things as they are or should be, we need fear no starvation for want of life-giving vegetables plus a little milk for vegetarians and fish, flesh or fowl for non-vegetarians.

Let India realize that as yet we have no appreciable quantity of food from outside our shores. Many are willing to help but they are themselves for the most part sufferers or have more calls on them than they are able to cope with. The transport difficulty is very real for all of them and our own will commence when the foodstuff reaches our

shores. Internal transport and distribution constitute a problem by themselves. It is, therefore, practical wisdom to brace ourselves for the struggle and declare with one voice our resolve that we shall grow our eatables for ourselves and perish bravely in the attempt if we must.

This is the only way and no other.

New Delhi, 21-9-'46

QUESTION BOX

(By M. K. Gandhi)

WHAT USE AHIMSA ?

Q. Wherever in the world today one casts one's eye, there is nothing but violence and power politics to be seen. And this obtains even in democratic countries like England and America. Have you pondered as to what your *ahimsa* can do under such circumstances ?

A. It is true that power politics exist everywhere; but you are very much mistaken if you imagine that true democracy obtains either in America or England. The voice of the people may be said to be God's voice, the voice of the *Panchayat*. But how can there be the voice of God where the people themselves are the exploiters as England and America are ? They live on the coloured races by exploiting them. If the voice of the people is the voice of God, they will be above party. His scales will ever be evenly weighted with truth and non-violence. This statement embraces my reply. My *ahimsa* is neither maimed nor weak. It is all-powerful. Where there is *ahimsa*, there is Truth and Truth is God. How He manifests Himself, I cannot say. All I know is that He is all-pervading and where He is, all is well. There is, therefore, one law for all. Wherever in the world Truth and Non-violence reign supreme, there is peace and bliss. That these exist nowhere shows that they are hidden from man for the time being. But they cannot disappear for ever. That faith must sustain the faithful.

SHOULD FOREIGNERS BE WELCOME ?

Q. You say that Independent India will not fear foreigners who decide to live here as Indians. But has this happened in any country ? Where nationalism has been predominant, will you not admit that a certain amount of racial arrogance will remain ? Can even an Independent India escape from it ?

A. My faith that we need have no fear is unshakable. I can give strong evidence in support of it, but I do not think there is any need here for me to do so. This much only must be remembered that all foreigners will be welcome to stay here, only if they look upon themselves as one with the people. India cannot tolerate foreigners who wish to remain here with safeguards for their rights. This would mean that they want to live here as superior persons and such a position must lead to friction. It is inconceivable that the present friction between Britain and India should exist, if India became free. There is no freedom for India while the friction subsists. New Delhi, 19-9-'46

(From the original in Gujarati)

DO NOT ELIMINATE TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE

(By M. K. Gandhi)

A correspondent who sends his name and describes himself as devoted to service writes:

"I read your *Harijanbandhu* regularly. Recently in your reply to Shri Shankarrao Dev you have said: 'I have been saying for some time that the words "truth and non-violence" should be removed from the Congress constitution.'

"If this happens in the existing circumstances, people will lose their faith in Congress because they will feel that so long as it was not in power it was thought best to adhere to truth and non-violence but now that power has come it contemplates removing these words from the constitution. They might even infer that the removal is being resorted to in order to counter the Muslim League's threat of direct action.

"If these words are eliminated from the constitution, Congress will fall from the high pedestal which these means alone have secured for it. It will lose in prestige. You have always said that you yourself cannot go forward one step without truth and non-violence and is it not their adherence to these that makes the public think of Congressmen as trustworthy, merciful, full of the spirit of service and bravery? The tree must perish if its roots are destroyed. You must see to it that the roots go deeper and deeper and are not eradicated.

"Therefore, I feel that you should compel every Congressman to follow these principles and if he refuses, he must leave the Congress."

How can I, the champion of *ahimsa*, compel anyone to perform even a good act? Has not a well-known Englishman said that to make mistakes as a free man is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them? I believe in the truth of this. The reason is obvious. The mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve, in fact it worsens. And when compulsion is removed all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force.

Moreover, no one should be a dictator. Even the Congress cannot force its members to follow truth and non-violence. These have to be accepted willingly from the heart.

I have been recommending the elimination of these words from the constitution for over a year, long before the Muslim League contemplated direct action which makes no bones about *himsa* or *ahimsa*. Thus my recommendation has no connection with the League's resolution. But I have no help for those who invariably attribute sinister motives to my words.

I have strong grounds for my recommendation. Congress may not cover untruth and violence under the guise of truth and non-violence. Is not this an all-sufficing reason? If Congressmen were no hypocrites, nothing could be better than that Congress should adhere to these two pillars.

I could never wish the Congress, the moment it comes into power, to discard the very ladder by

which it has climbed so high. I believe that if Congressmen, while in power, renounce truth and non-violence, the lustre surrounding the Congress will grow dim.

We must all guard against one mistake. There is no rule against following what is not in the constitution. Indeed my hope is that when these words are removed all, or a large majority of Congressmen will heartily follow truth and non-violence even to the point of death.

The writer has forgotten to mention one thing which I should like to clarify. The words in the constitution are 'peaceful and legitimate'. I have no right to interpret them as truthful and non-violent, if they don't bear that meaning. Congress has adopted them as a policy, not as a creed. The question of my right to retain or eliminate them does not arise. But whilst it lasts, policy is tantamount to creed and hence becomes obligatory. Of course, my recommendation has no meaning if 'peaceful' can be interpreted as violent and 'legitimate' as untruthful.

New Delhi, 21-9-'46

(From the original in Gujarati)

Notes

Congress Ministers, not Sahib Log

A Congress worker asks:

"Should the Congress Ministers live in great state like their English predecessors? Will it be right for them to use Government cars for private work?"

From my point of view there can be only one reply to both the questions. If the Congress wants to continue as a people's organization, the Ministers cannot live as *sahib log* nor use for private work facilities provided by Government for official duties.

New Delhi, 20-9-'46

(From the original in Hindustani)

Not Sentiment but Reason

Prof. Brij Narain has devoted two columns of the *Lahore Tribune* in support of the Salt Tax. I dare not combat his arguments though they make little appeal to my lay mind. He has come to the gratuitous conclusion that I ask for repeal on grounds of sentiment rather than reason. He reminds me of armchair politics and philosophy. Salt Tax hits not only men, women and children, but also fish and cattle. Reason demands its immediate repeal. It is not the amount of the tax that kills, it is the monopoly and all it means that kills the poor villager and his cattle. Imagine what would happen if the poor were prohibited from breathing air or drinking water without permission of the Government. The condition as to salt is not radically different. The scientist has not taken the trouble to study what this prohibition to prepare salt even for one's own consumption has cost India.

Prof. Brij Narain will not allow the Congress to be nationalistic enough even to warrant its abolishing a monopoly which presses heavily upon all the poor people without distinction, unless the Professor ignorantly imagines that the Muslims have no poor to think of.

New Delhi, 22-9-'46

M. K. G.

About Khadi Bhandars

Since I wrote on happenings in the Karachi Khadi Bhandar, I have received several letters about other Bhandars also. The gist of these is given below :

1. Khadi in Bhandars is available only to friends of those in charge or to those who have influence.

2. Even if the Bhandar is replete with Khadi, the reply the ordinary customer often gets is that there is none.

3. Some Bhandars have no facilities for having yarn woven into Khadi, while others cannot supply Charkhas and their accessories.

4. In the circumstances Khadi workers in many Bhandars earn wages for doing no work. Time and again one's yarn is not accepted on the plea that it is too coarse.

It would not be right to console oneself by saying that all these complaints are untrue. Such conduct as described is unwise, callous and disloyal. None of these defects should obtain in any Bhandar, much less in Khadi Bhandars. How can Khadi command respect, if its servants behave in the manner described ? It is to be hoped that every Khadi Bhandar will become a model of service and thereby not only raise itself but also maintain the honour that Khadi carries.

New Delhi, 22-9-'46

M. K. G.

(From the original in Gujarati)

Superfluous Rations

An acquaintance in Delhi tells me that she and her husband are both wage earners and their joint income is in the neighbourhood of Rs. 500 p. m. They happen to have no children. She is able to save enough from their wheat ration to entertain a number of people every week without any difficulty. The woman in question suggested that a survey of families in Delhi—and this really should apply to all towns—might be taken and those persons who can afford to reduce their cereal rations should cede their quota.

Much can be done by voluntary endeavour if the will is there. During this crisis all entertainment should cease, whether public or private and, in any case, no foodstuff made out of cereals should be allowed to be served.

New Delhi, 22-9-'46

A. K.

FOR AGENTS

Agents are requested to take note of the following :

1. Please remember that agents have to deposit with us an amount covering the price of their demand for two months. A month's deposit will be treated as fixed and the other as current. Every week the cost of the copies sent to them would be deducted from the current deposit.

2. The amounts for the deposits are usually sent by the agents by cheques. Please note that we do not accept cheques. The amount should be remitted either by M. O., Postal Order or by a bank draft.

MANAGER

WEEKLY LETTER

WITH AN ENGLISH JOURNALIST

"India is on the march to Independence, it is coming whether there is an agreement between the Muslim League and the Congress or not. No one can stop it. It is her destiny. She has bled enough for it." In these words, Gandhiji who avoids giving press interviews these days reiterated his faith in India's destiny to a foreign press correspondent who was lucky enough to break through his (Gandhiji's) self-imposed cordon of silence and had a talk with him in the course of his morning walk in the yard of the Sweepers' Colony. The correspondent's question was whether co-operation between the Congress and the League would not help the attainment of Indian Independence and was not therefore desirable. "Of course, if there is heart-cooperation between the two, the progress will be quicker and smoother," added Gandhiji. "But it must be real heart unity—not a make-believe."

Gandhiji, who claims kinship with pressmen and therefore their friendship, began by telling this friend what he considered to be the function of journalism. "There are occasions when a journalist serves his profession best by his silence," he observed.

"But it is a journalist's job to purvey facts and let the public judge for itself," the friend argued. Did not Gandhiji believe in the capacity of the average man to judge correctly provided he had enough knowledge of facts ? But Gandhiji demurred. "Not knowledge of facts. What passes for facts is only impressions or estimates of things and estimates vary. Hence one gets different versions of the same event." As an illustration he mentioned the parable of the seven blind men of Hindustan, each one describing the elephant differently and each one believing himself to be right. "What is really needed to make democracy function is not knowledge of facts but right education. And the true function of journalism is to educate the public mind, not to stock the public mind with wanted and unwanted impressions. A journalist has, therefore, to use his discretion as to what to report and when. As it is, journalists are not content to stick to facts alone. Journalism has become the art of 'intelligent anticipation of events.'"

"As a public man and a social reformer," continued Gandhiji, "it is for me to judge when to say something and when to hold my tongue." The best contribution that he could make to world peace, he added, speaking of himself, was to be forgotten. "What the world needs is not words but action. Actions and thoughts tell far more than speech. And this applies to all men both great and small."

A HEAVY BROADSIDE

The friend poured in his broadside. What did he think of Russia ? "Russia is an enigma to me," replied Gandhiji. "It hurts me to think (if the reports are true) that a country which stood for the people has turned into an imperialist power."

But I may not pass judgment on a great people and a great man like Stalin. I lack the data."

"Was the world progressing? Had the making of life and struggle for existence easier in the modern world resulted in the dulling of man's instincts and sensibilities?"

"If that is your comment, I will subscribe to it," replied Gandhiji.

"And the atom bomb?"

"O, on that point you can proclaim to the whole world without hesitation," exclaimed Gandhiji, "that I am beyond repair. I regard the employment of the atom bomb for the wholesale destruction of men, women and children as the most diabolical use of science."

What was the antidote? Had it antiquated non-violence? "No," was Gandhiji's reply. On the contrary, non-violence was the only thing that was now left in the field. "It is the only thing that the atom bomb cannot destroy. I did not move a muscle when I first heard that the atom bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to myself, 'Unless now the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind.'"

"What would be your fatherly advice to a young man about to launch into the world," Gandhiji's interviewer asked next.

"To hold his tongue," replied Gandhiji and added, "was it not Shakespeare who said, 'Lend everybody thine ear, thy voice to none?'"

"You followed that policy fairly in your own case," put in the friend.

"Yes," replied Gandhiji. "I used to think in my early days that I was a dunce and an idiot, that I should never be able to speak. Now I feel thankful for that disability."

"You have been a fighter all your life. What has fighting done for you?" next asked the friend.

"It has braced me for the next struggle," replied Gandhiji. "Fighting has done me good. What it has done to others, I do not know."

"Considering that the difference between the Muslim League and the Congress has narrowed down to one or two basic issues," remarked the friend, reverting to the earlier topic, "would it not be better to make a little sacrifice to secure agreement?"

"You cannot sacrifice a principle to gain a doubtful advantage," replied Gandhiji.

"After hearing both sides of the controversy," finally remarked the friend, "an outsider feels at sea. The only course, it seems, is to suspend judgment under the circumstances."

"When two parties cannot agree and both are sincere in their convictions it is clear one of them must be wrong," replied Gandhiji. "Both cannot be right. The world must be the arbiter in that case. It dare not withhold judgment. It has often been found in the progress of non-violence that even people who want to be perfectly just come to wrong judgment."

Before taking leave the friend tendered Gandhiji congratulations in advance on his coming birthday.

"I attach no importance to it," replied Gandhiji. "Every day one is reborn. I, at any rate, am."

THE SEVENTYEIGHTH BIRTHDAY

Without being aware of it, it seems he was uttering a prophesy. A little incident in connection with the birthday celebration on the 22nd instant dramatized it for all. The anniversary programme in the Sweepers' Colony consisted mostly of spinning activities in one form or another — spinning being so close to his heart and that of the late Kasturba Gandhi, the date of whose demise by chance coincided with the 78th birthday anniversary of Gandhiji according to the Indian calendar this year.

The day's programme was to open with a flag hoisting and salutation ceremony which was to be performed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad. A local friend who was in charge of the day's programme had planned to have refreshments served to Harijan children and the volunteers after the ceremony. Gandhiji came to know of it just by chance early in the morning. It gave him a shock. As is his wont he turned the searchlight inward to look for the cause. It seemed to him that the inwardness of the Charkha had been forgotten by his comrades. "The music of the Charkha murmurs sweetly," he explained at the evening prayer gathering, "that we were all one, born to be equal sharers in the goods of the earth with no one higher or wealthier than the other. Yet the world is today full of inequalities of wealth and invidious distinctions of high and low. This is folly. In our arrogance we forget that we are all one day going to be levelled with the dust by death that knows no distinctions." The second lesson was that we are to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow — what a Russian savant has called "bread labour" and the third was that if we are one of and with the people, we should refuse to give food to those who are not in need or to take more than we need for health. If we all did that there would be no scarcity of food in this land and we would refuse to look across the seas for food stuffs. Yet his nearest comrades were about to make the mistake of serving refreshments after the *jhanda-vandan* by Dr. Rajendra Prasad to volunteers and Harijans who were not in need of such. Was it not criminal to fritter away foodstuffs that would serve to keep alive twenty men, to provide titbits to Harijans and volunteers who were certainly not suffering pangs of hunger? They were deceiving themselves if they thought that thereby they served the Harijans. The real hunger of the Harijans which needed to be satisfied was not for morsels of food but for decent living as self-respecting, equal citizens for a square deal as human beings, for freedom from fear, inculcation of clean and sanitary habits, thrift, industry, education. That required perseverance, self-sacrifice and patient intelligent labouring on our part. If they gave him money to feed Harijans he would refuse to accept it, he remarked. For, he did not want to make beggars and idlers of them. He pointedly referred to the fact that Dr. Rajendra Prasad was

their Food Member who wanted to save for the famishing every morsel of food. In the circumstances he very much questioned whether the oversight of his comrades was not due to his being lax with himself. Was he not allowing himself to partake rather too freely of the fruits that were placed before him? The lesson of yesterday, he concludingly remarked was a grave warning for all, if we are to learn truly the lesson of the Charkha.

HEART SEARCHING

Gandhiji is in the habit of giving menu instructions separately for each meal—the menu being strictly regulated according to his physical condition, conditions of rest and work in prospect, mental strain and such other factors. That evening he scribbled out instructions that the juice of sour limes instead of the usual orange juice was to be served with his milk. What right had he to use oranges when he could possibly do with sour limes and jaggery?

His diary that night contained the following significant entry: "The inwardness of the spinning wheel seems to have been forgotten. I was angry. I have to consider what my duty under the circumstances is. It seems to be so very hard to maintain detachment of mind in the midst of this raging fire. My heart searching continues." "I am filled with agitation," he remarked to a close comrade in the course of a talk. "Why could not I suffer this inner anguish with unruffled calmness of spirit? I am afraid I have not the detachment required for living up to 125 years. That also explains why Charkha and Khadi are making such slow progress. Success of Khadi is impossible without infinite patience. A burning passion coupled with absolute detachment is the key to all success."

New Delhi, 24-9-'46

PYARELAL

CRIMINAL WASTE

The following is the gist of a long letter from one who writes from personal knowledge. The writer gives five instances of the mismanagement and inefficiency of those concerned which result in a colossal loss of foodgrains.

1. Entire lack of suitable storage for foodgrains which are thus exposed to destruction by rats, insects, etc.
2. Exposure of foodgrains to rain in *mandis*, railway goods, platforms and in front of retail shops.
3. Exposure of grain in uncovered heaps in *mandis* and in front of retail shops, so that millions of birds etc. feed on it all the year round.
4. Use of old, worn-out bags as containers for foodgrains with resultant loss in transport by spilt grain and pilfering.
5. The prevalent practice of marketing grain in an uncleaned state whereby not only the producer and consumer lose but there is unnecessary loss in transport.

The loss caused through lack of suitable storage alone is reckoned at 3½ million tons and from the other four causes at 1½ million, making a total of 50,00,000 tons every year. Lack of proper storage, apart from causing loss of 5 to 10% in weight of the foodgrains because of rats and insects eating the best portion, is responsible also for deterioration in the quality due to exposure. Grain merchants

are apathetic, while authority is dilatory and inefficient, if not unconcerned.

The writer recommends that grain merchants must be compelled by law to provide themselves with suitable storage accommodation for foodgrains. No trading license should be granted or renewed unless proper storage is in existence. 50% of the loss could be stopped at once by plastering floors and walls, whitewashing, cleaning and disinfecting ceilings, making doors rat-proof and in some cases lining the walls with burnt brick of existing stores in *mandis*. Government should be the first to set an example in the matter of erecting permanent storage units and letting the people see the accruing benefit.

Between Lahore and Lyallpur the writer recently saw thousands of bags of wheat lying uncovered in open trucks or between rail tracks in heavy rain and not a single one of the Government officials on the spot responsible for the safety of the grain, took the trouble to raise a finger to prevent the perishing on that particular day only of 40,000 maunds of wheat. The same applies to other places all over the country. Waste of spilt grain could be stopped by making compulsory the use of double new bags as containers for grain.

It would be desirable to have the grain cleaned at the place of production. This would enable the producer to receive full value for his grain and use the small grain and screening for cattle and chicken as well as constitute a large saving in road and rail transport.

The Government is spending Rs. 150 crores for the purchase of food and allowing the equivalent of that sum in foodgrains to be destroyed in our own country.

In addition the writer refers to what has already been commented on more than once in these columns in regard to the wanton waste of food in our homes, the necessity for growing more food on every available scrap of land, of surveying what cultivable land can be tilled forthwith and water whether by wells or other means provided. He also recommends the stoppage forthwith of the use of cowdung as fuel in cities and proper use of all kinds of refuse for manure.

New Delhi, 19-9-'46

A. K.

[All the suggestions made by the writer can and should be adopted at once, if a major disaster is to be averted.]

M. K. G.]

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