

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

## HANDLOOM AND KHADI

The reader will find elsewhere Shri C. Rajagopalachari's appeal asking the people to patronize handloom cloth in preference to mill-cloth. It is clear that his appeal is not addressed to Khadi wearers, since all Khadi is handloom cloth. It is an appeal to those who use mill-cloth and cannot be persuaded to adopt Khadi.

In order to plead for handloom cloth it was unnecessary to insinuate that the Khadi movement has deteriorated into "an obscurant denominational doctrine or metaphysics." If at all, Government and the weavers should be thankful to the Khadi movement that unaided and even obstructed by Government it has maintained for more than 25 years now a few thousand weavers. Given the proper encouragement, it could have supported several times more. It was the crores of spinners, who, till the advent of the spinning mill, were the only support of "every thirteenth man of the nation." The mills in spite of their gigantic capacity have failed to protect them. They have done everything to ruin them. The *charkha* cannot but protect them. It was not an obscurant or a metaphysician, but a hard *bania* who foresaw that the expansion of the mill industry must sooner or later destroy the handlooms, as it has destroyed the *charkha*. The majority of the founders of the Charkha Sangh were shrewd businessmen, — good and able cousins of mill-owners. They did not put their shoulders to their task out of unintelligent sentimentalism. It was envisaged as a clear economical, social and political struggle for preventing the exploitation and ruin of the masses by a few State-protected industries. True, they were not defeatists to take the struggle as foredoomed to failure in a machine-age. The struggle is hard, but it represents the cause of the millions. That is a guarantee of its eventual success. Meanwhile it has to be carried on like a Hundred Years' War.

This unfortunate and unnecessary sling at the Khadi movement will unavoidably have an adverse psychological effect on Khadi. Men of weak faith will take it as a permit to drop Khadi. All the same, my faith in Khadi does not

prevent me from endorsing Shri Rajaji's appeal to all those who cannot appreciate Khadi to prefer the handloom cloth to the wholly mill-cloth.

I understand that the Madras Government has on its files an order that Khadi should be used in the various departments of the State. The Press reports that Shri Rajaji has decided that handloom cloth should be patronized by the State and has made similar recommendations to the Government of India. Does this mean rescission of the previous order? The Madras State will do well to state its policy clearly in regard to Khadi, as it will affect the Khadi work in that State.

Shri Rajaji says, "The State provided no workshops, no training centres and no educational facilities" to handloom weavers. Why is there a research department for the mills, and not for the *charkha* and the handloom? With the appeal to the public, the Government itself must also see the obvious and frame its textile policy so that the mills cannot kill handloom cloth or Khadi. But this will require separate discussion.

Wardha, 2-7-'52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

## Easy Conscience for Public Money

Shri N. V. Gadgil, former minister of Works, Supply and Production in the Central Government said that big schemes and 'petty accounting' went ill together, and that when schemes for bringing millions of acres under irrigation and generation of millions of kilowatts of electricity were being executed, the House should not be unduly perturbed if there was a little wastage here or there, or some petty official was corrupt. — P.T.I.

Though Shri Gadgil is no longer in office, I am afraid he represents an attitude, which is common among a large body of office-holders in public institutions. If this is the way in which ministers look at waste and corruption, it is impossible to expect that corruption can ever be put down or waste prevented.

Wardha, 29-6-'52

K. G. M.

## DRINK, DRUGS & GAMBLING

By Mahatma Gandhi

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### SHRI JAYAPRAKASH'S FAST

The method of fasting has more often been abused than rightly used since Gandhiji. To a certain extent, it was so even during his lifetime. Shri Jayaprakash's fast is an instance of its right use in its purest form. It is directed against nobody. It is essentially for self-correction.

During his negotiations with Shri Kidwai, connected with the postal employees' strike in 1946, he passed on to the postal employees an assurance which Shri Jayaprakash thought Shri Kidwai had given. Shri Kidwai later denied that he had given any such assurance. As a gentleman, Shri Jayaprakash felt that he had no alternative but to accept on its face value Shri Kidwai's repudiation.

But the matter could not be left there. It had to have a sequel. If Shri Kidwai had not given the promise under question, it was all a mistake on Jayaprakash's part. A cashier who accepts and passes on a defective cheque without a proper scrutiny, makes himself liable for the penalty of his negligence. As a representative and custodian of the interests of the postal employees, who had put implicit trust in him—his integrity and intelligence—he owed it to them to make an atonement for his mistake to prove himself worthy of their trust. That is what he has done by his present fast.

At a time when chaos and confusion is overtaking the thinking of even those who claim to follow Gandhiji, it is good to see a person like Jayaprakash setting an example in the practice in its purest form of a method that is essentially identified with Gandhiji's philosophy of Satyagraha. We seem to be heading for a time when the only thing that might prove our salvation will be the realization of the power of Satyagraha and the capacity to wield it, which a few determined, disciplined, pure spirits might be able to show. Fasting is the key to the release of the power that is non-violence. It acts through self-purification and therethrough the purification of others. If it is applied scientifically it must affect even the sceptics in spite of their scepticism. Its action depends on nobody's sufferance. At times it may seem to produce no direct, tangible effect upon the opponent. Even then it acts in an unseen manner. And in any case it brings us added strength, the strength of sincerity, humility and capacity for serene and detached thinking which are essential to the right understanding of others and therefore their transformation.

Shri Jayaprakash's fast bears the hall-mark of uttermost sincerity. As such it should command the sympathy and respect of even those who do not see eye to eye with him and it should help to remove any surviving trace of acrimony or misunderstanding that might have been generated among the parties in the past and make a rapprochement between them possible.

New Delhi, 1-7-'52

PYARELAL

PS.

A special duty devolves on friends and sympathizers of Shri Jayaprakash. They can help or they can hinder. They should particularly note the following from Shri Jayaprakash's statement on his fast:

"The fast being an entirely personal affair, I do not want any publicity, agitation or any sympathetic public manifestation in connection with it.

"The postmen, particularly, should not feel that they have any responsibility in the matter, and should not indulge in any agitation on my account."

Any attempt to raise a public agitation or revive old issues would be in contravention of Jayaprakash's wishes. His statement must be taken on its face value by his friends and opponents alike. To do otherwise would be an aspersion on his sincerity and an act of disloyalty towards him. It will certainly sabotage the good effect which his fast should otherwise produce. This also means that they must accept Shri Kidwai's repudiation on its face value without any mental reservation just as Shri Jayaprakash has done.

The efficacy of fasting as a method of Satyagraha depends upon its inwardness. Let those who are interested in it bear in mind the following from one who was an expert in its technique:

"He who fasts in the expectation of fruit generally fails. And even if he does not seemingly fail, he loses all the inner joy which a true fast holds."

New Delhi, 8-7-'52

PYARELAL

### ARTHIK SAMATA MANDAL

(Economic Equality Association)

Readers might be aware that towards the end of May, about 200 Constructive Workers met at Patamata (Vijayawada District, Madras), under the presidency of Shri J. C. Kumarappa. The Conference passed three resolutions (summarized below), and set up a Committee consisting of Shri J. C. Kumarappa (Chairman), Shri G. Ramachandra Rao, alias, Gora (Secretary—he should be distinguished from Shri G. Ramachandran of Maganwadi, Wardha), and three other members to work among the people for the programme formulated in the resolutions.

This Committee met last week at Maganwadi, Wardha, and decided to found a new association called Arthik Samata Mandal (Economic Equality Association), with its head office at Patamata (Vijayawada, Madras). The Object and Programme of the Mandal are set forth as follows:

*The Object:* The object of the Mandal shall be to strive through truthful and non-violent means for the establishment of economic equality among the people of India.

**Programme:** To achieve the object, the Mandal will undertake the following programme:

(a) Educate the people to understand how economic inequality in society results inevitably in social tensions, conflicts, and loss all-round in terms of the general welfare of the people and how a proper and lasting solution can be worked out only through truthful and non-violent methods.

(b) Carry conviction to all those who are in any way responsible for the exploitation of others in society that they must make atonement by giving their voluntary co-operation in the task of establishing an egalitarian and classless social order.

(c) Help organize those suffering under exploitation to stand up for justice and be ready when necessary for non-violent direct action.

(d) Carry out the various items of the Constructive Programme to make clear in practice how economic equality depends on the organization of the economic life of the people on the basis of decentralization, and to generate the non-violent strength inherent in the people.

(e) Fight for social equality as part of the struggle for economic equality and thereby removing such evils as caste, purdah etc.

(f) Take all other necessary steps from time to time for the fulfilment of the object of the Mandal.

In the course of his Introduction to the Constitution of the Mandal, Shri J. C. Kumarappa says:

"As no non-violent society can be created or exist where there is a wide disparity of economic well-being the Conference chose as their main plank a programme to bring about economic equality. To this end three resolutions were passed, one for the agrarian sector, one for the equalization of urban incomes and the third for building up the business of the country. These are set out in the following pages, and are now being placed before the country to gather public opinion, collect together patriots from all schools of thought to steadfastly work for the emancipation of the people from economic thralldom. The Arthik Samata Mandal has been formed to give effect to these resolutions.

"Those who feel one with the delegates to the Patnamata Conference are warmly invited to join this newly formed Arthik Samata Mandal without caste, creed, sect, or party alignments and plunge into this movement which aims at laying a sound foundation for a free nation. I am sure many will want to partake in this enviable task of placing our nation back on a path worthy of its ancient culture, tradition and history, thus help to establish a non-violent society which may be the harbinger of world peace on a non-violent basis."

The following is a summary of the resolutions:

# 1. Abolition of Landlordism and Redistribution of Land

Economic Equality has today become the demand of the age everywhere in the world. But economic equality is possible only when the means of production are owned directly by the actual producers of wealth who are primarily the peasants, labourers, and artisans. India is predominantly an agricultural country and hence land is the greatest single means of production. India today, however, is not self-sufficient in food. We are up against a food crisis for the last four years and yet Government has failed to enthuse the cultivators to grow more food to meet the growing menace of starvation.

One of the main reasons for this state of affairs is the lack of incentive for greater production among those who actually work on the land. Land is often and largely owned by those who do not themselves till it. Hence it has become most urgent that all proprietary rights in land, which are of a feudal nature be abolished forthwith without compensation and land be equitably distributed among those who personally cultivate it. Redistribution of land should be the first major step towards the establishment of Economic Equality and would go a long way in creating a psychological atmosphere in the country whereby people would voluntarily come forward to increase the production of national wealth in every field of economic activity.

## 2. Ceiling on Incomes

"The minimum income should assure to an average family adequate food, clothing and housing accommodation, which may be expressed on the basis of the present price level by a monthly income of Rs 100/-. Every effort should be made to reach up to the minimum standard as early as possible. Disparity in incomes in every sector of economic life should be levelled down. Under such a social order the gap between the minimum and the maximum incomes should not be such as would jar upon the public conscience.

"Ceiling on incomes should be in force on all income groups, none being allowed to hold any property which will yield an income greater than the maximum laid down. Ceiling on all incomes be at present imposed at twenty times the minimum income, to be brought down within a reasonable period of time to ten times the minimum income."

## 3. Swadeshi Movement

This conference looks with growing dismay upon the indiscriminate influx of imported consumer goods into the country, since the attainment of independence. The situation is worsening every day and all industries, including the large scale and the small scale, are affected. The people who once fought hard for Swadeshi since 1905 are also fast losing the Swadeshi spirit. The economic development in India has become lopsided, as during her long period of slavery, and very little is being done to restore its proper balance. When all other nations in the world are giving protection against foreign imports to their national industries engaged in producing consumer goods and fostering the Swadeshi Dharma, our Government is not doing anything seriously, in this direction. Much of our foreign exchange, gathered at great sacrifice, has already been frittered away in purchasing consumer goods such as are being produced or could have easily been produced in this country and which often are not indispensable.

Gandhiji gave a new definition to Swadeshi that Swadeshi should mean primarily village-made articles and only then Indian-made articles. This conference earnestly appeals to the people to purchase village-made articles and only whenever village-made articles are not available, India-made articles, but never to purchase foreign articles unless they are absolutely indispensable and no Indian counter-part is available. The conference further urges upon the Government of India to control foreign trade and ban all import of consumer goods, to the extent it is necessary, to give full protection to indigenous products.

Resolutions 1 & 2 have been addressed to the Sarva Seva Sangh. It has been asked, in the first resolution, to call upon the Government to take steps before 31st March, 1953 to make such necessary changes in the Constitution as would enable the programme of land distribution to be implemented; and in the second resolution,



to call upon the people of India, to adopt suitable non-violent means and launch on a programme of action not later than the same date, to see that the demand for a ceiling on incomes is accepted and given effect to. The resolutions have not yet been placed for consideration before the Sarva Seva Sangh.

Further particulars and information may be had from the Secretary of the Mandal, Patmata (Vijayawada).

Wardha, 23-6-'52

M.

## HARIJAN

July 12

1952

### DRINK AND PROHIBITION

A large body of legislators, including Congressmen, seems to have entered the legislatures with a determination of sabotaging prohibition. The propaganda carried on against it and the policies which are being unfolded in some of the States cannot have any other meaning.

The Madhya Pradesh Government, indeed, began its retreat before the new elections. It appointed a Committee with terms of reference which clearly indicated that it wanted recommendations which would enable it to facilitate drinking. Now, it "has decided to lift the ban on the publication of advertisements relating to liquor, and also to exclude medicinal and toilet preparations containing alcohol from the definition of liquor as defined in the State Prohibition Act,"... reports *The Times of India* (29-6-'52).

In defence of the lifting of the ban, it is said that the Supreme Court has held that the provision "relating to punishment in regard to advertisement relating to liquor was invalid as it contravened the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression." (*Hitavada*, 28-6-'52). It will be necessary to study the Supreme Court's ruling. It seems strange to common sense that when the Constitution lays down a particular duty upon the States, the States should not have at the same time the power to take proper measures for preventing acts which would hinder the performance of that duty. If a person, for instance, writes a book on 'The Art of Committing Forgery' and advertises the book, can not the book and the advertisement be banned and if the ban is disobeyed, the act punished?

The majority report of the M. P. Prohibition Committee seems to have recommended a system of rationing in liquor. In articles of food, which are subject to rationing and controls, Madhya Pradesh has followed the happy policy of allowing a free market in conjunction with rationing. It has saved the inhabitants of Madhya Pradesh many difficulties and harassments of the rationing system. It could do it,

because it is a surplus province in the production of food. A province with sufficient food can also easily be a surplus province in liquor. So, if the same policy of rationing with freemarket is adopted in liquor also, there will be no need for any law relating to liquor whatever. No policy will be needed to seek out underground distilleries and arrest clandestine drinkers. A pretty good amount of bribery and corruption will also automatically come to an end.

The clear directive in the Constitution is, of course, a hurdle. From the mentality of a large body of legislators it would seem that they believe that that article was passed rather absent-mindedly; perhaps, under the opiating influence of the newly erected Samadhi of Gandhiji or of some leading prohibitionist like Dr. H. C. Mookerji in the Constituent Assembly. Any way, in whatever other matters the opposition groups in the legislatures might try to oppose the Congress Government at every step, it seems it will not be difficult for the Congress parties to divide the Opposition for obtaining a two-third majority for deleting the directive.

Day after day we are told that prohibition has failed. I should rather say that in view of the amazing weakness which the Congress Organization and the Congress Governments have shown in taking all those steps which were needed for implementing the prohibition policy, the amount of success it has achieved is greater than the Governments deserve the credit for. The other day I received a complaint that a certain District Magistrate "drank all the twenty-four hours of the day". I communicated the complaint to the Government of the State. I was informed that it was not true that the District Magistrate "drank all the 24 hours of the day" but it was regretted that it could not be said that the officer totally abstained from drink. Of course, no one can be literally drinking "all the twenty-four hours of the day." The point is how long he is not sober during the waking hours of the day.

It is not now a few years since the Congress Government with its well-known and hitherto unopposed policy of the total prohibition has come to power. It is more than four years since we attained independence, and the right to make whatever changes the nation needed in the manner of its governance. We have duly enacted a Constitution in which a clear directive of enforcing prohibition has been laid down. The Constitution is not a party programme; but a national document, binding upon every party that might come to power. So long as the present directive stands on the Constitution, no party can scrap the prohibition policy. In face of all this can it be imagined that an Indian Government and any statutory body of India can retain on their staff any officer—big or small who can not do without drink? It should look strange, in any other prohibitionist country, if this clear duty of removing from the services every

drinker were neglected by its government. And yet we have among our ministers, legislators, High Court Judges, Commissioners, Collectors, Doctors, Heads of Army and Police, and hundreds among the rank and file of public servants, people who are good drinkers. How can a police officer or a magistrate, whose own mouth smells of alcohol, conscientiously arrest or punish a person found in the same state?

It should be clear that a person who wants to drink regularly, even on so-called medical grounds, cannot, must not, be a holder of public office. Permits for drink on medical grounds should not be meant for public officers. If they cannot work without a regular intoxicant, they are unfit for any office in Government or semi-Government institutions, whatever other job they might be fit for in the country. There is no look down upon a person addicted to drink in saying this. There are in this world, many noble-minded and talented people, who are addicted to drink. But this country is opposed to drink. Hence, they might practise any profession or serve the society in a manner, which does not make them public officers.

One of the pleas frequently advanced is loss of revenue. It should be clear to every legislator that under our Constitution, every Government is debarred from thinking of making a revenue out of drink even if it be literally true that "there is a distillery in every house". Can Government be allowed to contemplate issuing permits for committing robbery, adultery, breach of trust, accepting bribes, or making revenue out of such crimes, even if there was no family in the country, in which one or another of these offences was not committed? Until recently we had, and perhaps there are still, in some of the States groups of people designated, Criminal Tribes. The assumption was that every one of them was an actual or prospective thief. There are also some castes, whose members honestly held that thieving was their hereditary *dharma*! What was the way Governments thought of dealing with them? Did they think of issuing permits to them and making a revenue out of what was believed to be their firmly established vocation? Such drastic steps were taken to suppress them that eventually the very laws became more oppressive than their crimes. When a practice or habit is regarded as deserving eradication, no legislator or government worthy of respect can contemplate or suggest exploiting the habit for earning revenue. *Shruti* (Spiritual and Moral Teaching), *Smriti* (Law) and *Rudhi* (Customs) should all be directed and amended for eradicating evils and not for pampering them.

The propaganda for sabotaging prohibition incessantly carried on by some of the papers should in all decency stop. It is even more objectionable than what a propaganda against war effort during the years of World War II was

in the eyes of Mr Churchill or Lord Linlithgow. Even in the midst of a war peace might be propagated, but not war during peace; because peace is good, war is an evil, even if it is at the time an unavoidable one. War effort is, at best, a short time programme. Peace effort is a permanent one. So, too, drink in relation to prohibition. Drinking cannot become even a short time national emergency. The utmost emergency it can claim is when an individual is in a state of collapse. Propaganda which tends to encourage drinking must be considered an anti-social act in India.

If prohibition is not successful let all those steps be suggested, discussed and put into operation, which will make it a success. If a family is brought up teetotaler, it is not going to be ruined; not so if it is brought up in drinking. Hence, if it be true that there are private distilleries in many a house, organize measures to put an end to them.

Wardha, 30-6-'52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

#### SUPPORT HANDLOOMS

(By C. Rajagopalachari)

I have taken up a few minutes of All India Radio in order to make an appeal on behalf of the lakhs of families who are still engaged in what made India famous throughout the world in the old days, viz., the noble crafts of weaving. The cottage handloom industry flourishes today as well as it did in ancient times and the fingers of the weavers are as deft today as ever they were. There are more looms today than there were in the old days. There was no competition whatsoever in ancient days, but today there is a giant competitor in the shape of mill-manufactured cloth which has copied the handloom and like an ungrateful child seems to kill the mother. The handloom weavers of our State are some of the best craftsmen in the world. Is it not a great pity that they are suffering and their families are starving on account of want of purchasers of their cloth? Should men go and buy mill-cloth leaving the handloom weavers in distress? I have no hesitation in assuring everyone that the cloth produced on the handloom in our State is as good cloth as any textile of that class produced by machinery. If it is a question as to whether one should buy mill-cloth or handloom cloth, I have no hesitation in making my most earnest appeal that you should prefer the handloom cloth and feed the families of the handloom weavers who follow an honest and noble occupation.

In spite of many decades of competition handlooms have survived. The mill industry with plentiful capital and a strong organization for production and distribution and for propaganda, has not been able to kill the handloom, thanks to the fly-shuttle and to the traditional skill of our weaver families. The handloom has maintained its own against the mill and is not



only not dead, but is quite able to supply plenty of cloth, and very good cloth and cloth which is attractive enough to suit the tastes of consumers of real good taste, both men and women. I am sorry the dyers by using cheap dyes have brought the reputation of handloom cloth down. Our people are very fastidious and particular about colour and it was criminal to let cheap dyes ruin the weavers' market.

No mathematical calculations or economic doctrines can be a substitute for human happiness where numerous families are concerned, who follow a traditional occupation based on family apprenticeship. The State provides no workshops, no training centres and no educational facilities. Everything is provided in the little cottage of the weaver and in his family life. No call is made on the State for land or capital or training institutes or supervision. This national asset we should not lose or allow to be destroyed by neglect.

My appeal on behalf of the handloom should not be understood to be a letting down of Khadi. A social welfare movement should not deteriorate into an obscurantist denominational doctrine or metaphysics. The weaver prefers to use mill yarn. Let him do it. For it enables him to produce enough to maintain himself against the competition of the weaving mills. Khadi is also handloom cloth. The appeal on behalf of the handloom is automatically an appeal on behalf of Khadi also.

Let any weaver buy any hand-spun yarn that might be offered for disposal and made available to the weaver. If it is good cheap yarn, he will buy and use it up. Let him mix it as he likes with such yarn as he finds it necessary to use. Let us leave the matter entirely to the skilful weaver who knows his business. Let him adjust his materials and his requirements. Only, let us insist that he should not call his product by the name of 'Khadi', if he has used mill yarn or mixed mill yarn with hand spun. If he does not tell people that his cloth is pure hand spun, we need not put obstructions in the way of his normal weaving business. Both hand spun yarn and mill spun yarn may be woven on the handloom and the cloth is handloom cloth, though not Khadi or called by that name.

I earnestly appeal to every one to patronize handloom cloth wherever it may be available and for every purpose for which it can be used, in preference to mill-cloth. We should help the weak. We should save the handloom weavers and their families from starvation. We can make everything we wish out of handloom cloth, provided we pay a little attention.

No subsidies and other helps can come up to the help that the public can give. Ultimately any subsidy can help only if the public will buy. If the people decide to help the handloom weaver and buy his cloth which is both durable and decent, our handloom weavers need not be un-

happy. One out of every twelve families in our State is a weaving family that desires to maintain itself on honest labour and seeks to clothe the people for a very moderate wage. The children are brought up in the family craft without any assistance from the general public or the State. A part of the house is the workshop and family life is not broken up or endangered as in the case of factory work. A self-respecting and self-supporting section of the population of the order of six millions appeals to you and the appeal cannot be rejected. Buy handloom cloth whenever you want cloth. Do not let mill-cloth printed and made up to appear like handloom cloth attract you. Do not be deceived by such imitations. It would be a crime—deliberately to prefer the imitation to the real hand-woven cloth.

Freedom and political rights must rest on occupational balance. Political freedom cannot but break down if we neglect the foundations of national life. Every twelfth person in our State is a weaver. Do not let him starve.

### AN INEQUITABLE LAW

The Bombay Tenancy Act gives the owner of agricultural land the right to evict a tenant, however old, if he fails to pay the stipulated rent or share of crops within time. When an application by the landlord is made to enforce this right, a period of fifteen days is allowed to make the payment. Neither the right to evict nor the short period of fifteen days seem to be just and equitable. The stipulation is comparable to the right to foreclose a mortgage for failure to pay interest, or principal and interest, within the stipulated period. According to the old Common Law of England, this stipulation was literally enforceable. But the Courts of Equity denounced this right as being against good conscience and, ever since, the maxim, 'Once a mortgage always a mortgage', has become an accepted principle of the law of Mortgage. Since, in India, Courts of Law and Equity have never been separate, the principle has been incorporated in the Indian law of mortgages as if it had always existed. No mortgage can be foreclosed without a decree of the Court and the Court gives pretty good time to the mortgagor to redeem his debt. The limit is even extended from time to time if part payments are made, the principle being that the mortgagor should not, as far as possible, be deprived of his immovable property.

The same principle should be applied with even greater tenacity in the case of agricultural tenancies. The tenant being the actual cultivator and producer of food, he should not be deprived of the privilege and preferential claim to do so to the farthest limit possible. His total eviction should be the last step against him, if at all. The absentee landlord's right to the land must be recognized, if at all, as only secondary to that of the actual cultivator. It should be particularly

so, when he has cultivated it for a number of years. The rent must be regarded as an ordinary money debt and the mere failure to pay it cannot be made an excuse for depriving him of the land outright, even if there were a stipulation for doing so in the lease-deed.

Unfortunately the present Bombay Tenancy Act has not recognized this principle of equity and good conscience, and old tenants are being deprived of their fields for inability to pay the rent even on account of natural causes, such as failure of rain or floods. This is very unjust.

The law has been hitting hard particularly on the tenants of the Adivasi areas who are too backward and poor to make themselves effectively heard. The condition of the Adivasis of the Thana District is extremely deplorable. Even in good years, they do not have sufficient food left to them after the payment of the owner's share, and for at least a couple of months they almost starve. When the year is bad and successively so for a number of years, as during some years past, their condition is indescribable. The law must be speedily amended. Rent of agricultural land must not stand on a different footing from an ordinary debt.

Wardha, 25-6-'52

K. G. MASHRUWALA

### AHIMSA, THE ONLY WAY

[The concluding part of Shri Vinoba's speech on the Buddha Jayanti day, at Lucknow.]

Now that we are independent, we are free to weigh up and choose any of the many ways open to us for refashioning our society. We are a big nation; and our responsibilities are as big. Each one has got to find an answer to the central problem of our country, which is: what means shall we adopt for its economic and social reconstruction? During Gandhiji's life-time, we tried Ahimsa. But we cannot claim much credit for it, because we adopted it as the only course open to us under the circumstances, and not out of our free choice. Our enemy had greater force of violence at his command than we. And we could see that the only ground where we could be superior was that of Ahimsa. Naturally we took to Ahimsa. But now it is different, we can make a free choice. We can choose either of the two: violence or non-violence. We can expand our army and strengthen our air-force and navy. And we may ask the people to make sacrifices for this purpose even though they may or may not have clothing and food.

And since Gandhiji is no more with us, we can decide freely, with a mind untrammelled by his influence. It seems that God took him away from us just to give us an opportunity to decide freely what we think best. But let us weigh up the different alternatives. If we choose *himsa*, the way of violence and physical might, whether we like it or not, we will have to accept the tutelage either of Russia or America, of course, freely. The question, then, is: are we going to

be the camp-followers of a foreign nation of our free will? It is clear that in this way it will take a long time, say, fifty years or even more to gather strength, and even then, we may not be as strong as they. The ultimate result will be that we may again be slaves. And, in case, we become stronger than they, we will prove to be a danger to the world even as they. And we must think deeply as to whether in the name of independence and the free exercise of our choice we want to be slaves or a danger to the world.

India is free today. And yet we import cloth from outside, we even send for experts from outside. The arms and even the men to train our forces come from outside. We depend on outside nations even in the matter of education. Do we then intend to continue to be slaves? Are we going to put our independence to this use? In our case, God seems to have decreed that either we should follow the path of Ahimsa, with faith and courage, or accept the position of a satellite to those who are masters of *himsa*, armed might. This is so, because India is a composite country, very much like a continent with various religions, languages, provinces with different cultural backgrounds and customs of social and individual life. Many of these provinces equal the size of the big European countries. Is it possible to harmonize these differing communities into a single nation with the force of *himsa*? New problems are cropping up before us at every step.

The Andhras want to be formed into a separate State of their own. It is not that they want themselves to go out of the Indian Union. Their demand is not unjust. But should they then resort to violence for its satisfaction? If we approve of violent methods, we cannot find any fault with the assassinator of Gandhiji. His ideas may have been wrong, but we will have to admit that he was honest, for he had courage of conviction and that he made a big sacrifice in acting up to it at the cost of his life. If then you hold that men are free to resort to violence for upholding their honest convictions, I assure you, you will end up by breaking the country into fragments. Violence may appear to solve at times a problem here or a problem there, but it will create many more for every one that it solves. Instances are not wanting even today of the Harijans being denied entry into the temples. Now will it be right for the Harijans to take to violence because untouchability has not yet been fully eradicated? If you believe that it is proper to take to violence for a right cause, you must grant that there is nothing wrong in it.

Hence, bearing all these considerations in view, we have to decide which are the proper means to follow for solving the several problems with which we are faced. If we take to evil means for achieving good ends, there can be no end to our problems. On the other hand if we take to non-violent means, all problems will be



resolved in due course and be no more, not only in India, but in the world. This is why I want to resolve the land-problem peacefully. It is no small problem. I ask people to gift the land they have. I do not beg it though as a *brahman* I am privileged to do so. I would have begged, had I been asking for it for myself. When, however, I ask for it as a representative of the poor, I do not beg; but I claim to teach the people their duty of divesting themselves of their extra riches. And I have come to believe that God is using me, weak though I am, to complete the task which He had commenced through Buddha. The work I am made to do is the continuation of the 'Dharma-Chakra-Pravartan',—revolving the Wheel of Dharma,—which Buddha had started. And mark what I pronounce with the same commanding voice as that of the lion which drowns all other smaller voices and rings clear across the forest: *The land has already come to me; it has already gone to the landless. It remains for you only to choose the manner of effecting the transfer.* There is a tin of *ghee*, which is meant for burning. You have to decide whether you will set fire to it or will offer it to the sacrificial flames to the accompaniment of the Vedic hymns. Remember that it is not only the monsoon winds and rains that unrestrictedly enter the country from outside. Great revolutionary ideas also enter the country, and they cannot be stopped. Like the monsoon winds, they sweep away all barriers. No Siegfried or Maginot lines can prevent their entry. The great ideas of this age shall come to our country and go from here. The equal sharing of wealth is the cry of the age and it will come to be. Land will have to be redivided. I have no doubt that it can be done peacefully. I can see it quite clearly and this is why I speak so confidently about it; and this is why I ask you to wake up, for as Tulsidas sang to Rama, I sing to you, who are but other forms of Rama: "The day is dawning and the birds on the trees are chirping merrily, and it is time when gifts should be made to the poor; so get awake, Oh Rama!"

I said that just as ideas from elsewhere can enter into our country, so also they can go forth from here and travel across the world. The *Bhoodan-Yajna* movement is comparatively a small one but it has attracted the attention of the people from all over the world and they are praising it. They say that a strange thing is happening in India; people part with their lands voluntarily! And really it is a phenomenon which deserves to be pondered over with humility and in the spirit of a seeker of Truth. While all over the world outside of our country, nations are busy slandering one another and grabbing whatever they can, here in India begins the dawn of a new and happier age, the age of giving, and the indwelling Lord is waking up. Hence I am sure

that if we keep patient and continue to work with faith and courage, this idea and the truth it embodies will certainly go forth from here and encompass the world. But for that we will have to emulate the zeal and faith and the spirit of sacrifice of the great disciples of Buddha. We should apply ourselves to this fresh revolution of the Wheel of Dharma with the same devotion. And if we are able to do so, we will impart a new and a better shape to the world.

I have said elsewhere that at the time of deluge when the earth gets submerged in water, Rishi Markandeya keeps safely afloat, and he it is who ultimately saves the world from utter destruction. The world today is hurrying headlong to the brink of abysmal ruin; its activities in every form—through their propaganda, commerce, manufacture of atom-bombs etc., are helping its death-march. In this mad race, the country which keeps cool and collected like the Rishi Markandeya will alone be saved, and to her will come the leadership of the world, of leading the world to light from out of the darkness. I do not say this out of vanity; I am humbly expressing only the truth. Humility is necessary and should be assiduously cultivated for it is the foundation on which to build progress. But Manu prophesied long ago:

"The great men born in this country will set the ideal and the people all over the world will learn from them." And that prophecy, I find, is very near being fulfilled, if only we will make proper use of this opportunity.

I assure you that you have the capacity to set the ideal for the world to follow. You were granted a leader under whose guidance, you were able to win your independence through Ahimsa. Even today there are persons of great strength of character and piety in our land. Listen to them and act on their advice with faith and courage, and the glory of having saved the world will be yours.

(Abridged from Hindi)

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