

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS



GOVERNMENT HOUSE
SHILLONG

October 31, 1950.

MESSAGE FOR THE READERS OF
THE "HARIJAN"

I have seen with gratitude the response which men of varied means are making to the Assam Earthquake Relief Fund opened in the columns of the "Harijan". I know that the people of Assam and the victims of the earthquake will share with me this gratitude. The consequences of the earthquake are still enveloping us and floods are recurring in the earthquake areas as a result of fresh rainfall which is sending greater torrents of water to the plains as the hill sides have lost a part of their vegetation. The beds of rivers have silted up and at several points the surrounding country has subsided. Therefore, recurrent floods in the earthquake areas are leading to fresh problems of relief. The people of India have responded so generously to the call of the victims of the earthquake. But the needs of the situation are also very great and every rupee received from readers of the "Harijan" will give more power to our hands to help the distressed. I hope they will continue to take interest in the cause of the earthquake sufferers and aid will continue to come from them to help us to deal with the situation.

Jairamdas Doulatram

(Jairamdas Doulatram)

LIFE OF LABOUR

[Shri Vinoba observed a three-day fast beginning on the 8th October, the *Charkha Dwadashi*, at 11 a.m. and broke it with a little buttermilk on the 11th. Shri Vinoba has been doing rigorous agricultural labour for the last few months. This hard life of his has become a cause of anxiety to several of his friends. They pressed him long not to overwork himself, as he was doing, till at last, he yielded to their affectionate importunities, and consented to reduce his daily labour to a certain extent. While commencing his fast, he made the following observations :

"My life has so far been the life of a *bhikshuka* (mendicant). In future also I have to live on charity. But I have now resolved to accept alms of body labour only. I shall of course continue to do physical labour myself to the best of my capacity."

At the time of breaking the fast, Shri Vinoba made a speech in Marathi to the following effect.—D. M.]

I cannot say whence I got the inspiration for fasting, since I had not thought of it before. I had been thinking of leading a life of labour ever since my release from jail (1944). This idea was present before my mind even earlier ; only I took the decision during my detention. Every thing has its appointed hour, and until that hour comes the thought is not translated into action. I felt that the hour had come and I, therefore, resolved to begin the life of labour on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti. I discussed this matter with Shri Vallabhsami a day or two earlier ; but even at that time I had no idea of a fast.

Although I believe that there is a definite place for fasts in spiritual life, I regard fasting as of secondary importance. I have been mainly influenced by *Bhakti* and *Vedanta* in my growth, both of which give to fasting a secondary place. Therefore, although I have lived near Bapu and have had to undergo fasts on particular occasions I hold that fasting is not a state of *yoga*. We do not tell the *charkha* that we would take work out of it without feeding it with oil. Just as the *charkha* is not a part of us, so too the body is not a part of us. Once we are convinced of this truth, we are not expected to deprive the body of its necessary sustenance. Nonetheless I felt a spontaneous inspiration and observed a fast for three days.

A three-day fast does not by itself signify much ; but it is very significant to me because ordinarily I am not favourable to fasting. But I felt an inspiration and just did it.

The aim of this new step is obvious. We desire that there should be brotherhood, love and the rule of non-violence in the whole world. This desire cannot be fulfilled so long as every able-bodied individual does not take to body-labour. We have taken a vow of body-labour and have given it a place in the eleven vows. We daily repeat it during our prayers. But, for various reasons, we have not been able to resolve to live only on body-labour. This is due to the circumstances in which we have been placed, and there-

fore, we are also not to blame. But now that India has attained Swaraj, we must live up to our faith with greater determination. Only then will it be real Swaraj. It would show the path of salvation to the whole world. If we do not stand firm on our faith now, we shall stand on slippery ground and either lose our freedom or make India a violent country. We have to steer clear of both these dangers. Therefore, we must purify and strengthen all our vows. The vow of body-labour which is an integral part of our *sadhana*, is not so difficult. Complete observance of non-violence is very difficult and almost impossible ; not so this vow. Even today millions of people eke out their living through physical labour ; but they have no faith in the dignity of labour. It will be no impracticable proposition if we decide to live like them with the addition of full faith in it. Such decision would make our life worth living and would also purify public life.

Since a few days ago we have engaged ourselves in the labour of turning the Persian wheel at the well. Men, women and children, from the ages of 8 to 80 join the work. All of them serve the same mother earth. What an auspicious sight ! If this faith in labour persists, there would be happiness everywhere and the whole world would become a Heaven, and a *gokul*. About this I have not even an iota of doubt. Let us, therefore, commence this work with determination and unflagging faith. May God give us the necessary strength !

This resolve of mine may appear to be personal as all resolves are personal in the beginning. But ultimately such resolves do not confine themselves to the individual. I have made this beginning on behalf of the whole society. Our work here has been progressing satisfactorily on the whole ; by God's grace the deficiencies will gradually disappear. I hope the new experiment will enable us to live a life which may be called life of *Samya-yoga* (disciplined equality), of non-violence or of religion. If this happens, our life will be blessed.

VINOBA

(Translated from the Hindi *Sarvodaya*, October '50)

GUR REGULATIONS

Last year *diwali* was made bitter by sugar ; this year *gur* has been chosen by the Government to make it so. Although stern measures against a few black-marketeers are said to have had a good effect on the market, they have not been able to prevent the sudden disappearance of *gur* from the various bazars of India. Those who do honest trade or have become unnerved after the reported stern measures, have begun to sell off their stocks purchased at higher prices with loss to themselves.

The dumb consumer and the village producer suffer silently, unable to understand this new method of bringing about sudden fluctuations

in prices, surplus and deficit of commodities, and the ruin of small-scale occupations. The Congress organization was meant to be the advocate of the cause of the dumb millions living in remote villages. But it has lost that role and, willingly or unwillingly, become the helpmate of the big industry, the city-dweller and the war machine. The village industrialist and the *grama sevak* approach the Congress offices and the Congress organs to get help against policies which mean the ruin and exploitation of villagers. Formerly the Congress used to take up their cause and even prepare them for a Satyagraha, if applications and negotiations failed to bring relief. But the Congress can no longer do so, because it cannot go against the policies framed in New Delhi and other State capitals.

A *grama sevak*, who prepares *gur*, *ghani-oil* etc. in a village in U.P., has been complaining to me for nearly a year about the obstructions he has to face in the matter of transport. He is unwilling to pay the usual bribes, and there is no doubt that the obstructions are ultimately due to want of that lubrication. Being not altogether resourceless, uninfluential and wanting in pluck, he approached all sorts of high and low officers, took notes even from M.L.A.'s and others, and got sympathetic answers and courteous treatment from every one. But with all that the machine itself would not move, and while he saw others getting their goods booked promptly, he had to wait until the goods deteriorated in quality. More than once he thought of going on a fast as the only type of Satyagraha he could think of. But he was dissuaded by me from doing so. It is kind of him that he honours my advice, although I have not the least idea of how I can help him out of his difficulty, and although he feels that I am unnecessarily preventing him from taking what he considers to be the only step open to him.

The new licence rules for *kolhus* have added one more obstacle in his way. He again showed his inclination to offer Satyagraha against this order. I advised him not to take a radical step, but just apply for a licence. He tried, and now finds that it is as difficult to obtain a licence for *kolhus* as to obtain facility for the booking of goods. He says that the following conditions must be fulfilled before a licence can be obtained:

(a) the *kolhu* must have worked in 1948 (he commenced his in 1949);

(b) the application must be approved by (i) the *panchayat*, (ii) the Co-operative Union, (iii) the Cane Development Department and lastly (iv) the Licence Committee, which is composed of a representative each of the Sugar Industry, the Union, the Cane Development Department, and the Deputy Collector; and

(c) various other details.

By the time all these formalities are over the cane-season might be over.

He upbraids me for dissuading him from taking a radical step, saying —

"While I abide by your decision, I must tell you that a weak lead like that will mean the ruin of all village industries. The unscrupulous policy of the East India Company was the cause of the destruction of the *khadi* industry of India. The weaver was so harassed that he gave up his occupation and some weavers are said to have even cut off their thumbs to disable themselves from carrying it on. I am afraid that a similar process might be repeated under the aegis of an Indian Government by the various industrial companies.

"But you are more learned and wise than I am, and perhaps understand things better than I do. So I bow to your decision."

I have similar letters from others also. They reveal the feelings of exasperation, frustration and helplessness.

The *Amrit Bazar Patrika* reports that a "Press Note says that despite the promulgation of an order for such regulation by the Uttar Pradesh Government, a large number of *kolhus* are being set up in factory zones without a licence." I have received letters urging the launching of Satyagraha on this issue. I hesitate to advocate the step, because I do not see suitable non-violent atmosphere and discipline for the purpose, and do not personally know any one fitted for such non-violent leadership. I also wish to avoid embarrassment to Government already overwhelmed with difficult problems.

But I must not conceal my feeling that if the people lose hope of mending the matters and of successfully offering non-violent Satyagraha, something worse than this might spring up.

Wardha, 1-11-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

ASSAM EARTHQUAKE RELIEF FUND

From 30-10-'50 to 4-11-'50

Name & Place	Rs as ps
Shri Headmaster, Gujarati School, Sambalpur	31 0 0
Shri Motilal Chandalya, Bigod	5 0 0
Shri Mohankumari Chandalya, Bigod	5 0 0
Shri Rikhab Raj Karnavat, Jodhpur	5 0 0
Shri Kanchanlal Desai, Surat	11 0 0
Shri Asarva Municipal School No. 1, Ahmedabad	9 9 0
Shri Bhojak Bhogilal Kalidas, Vadnagar	1 1 1
Shri Kamlabehn Bhogilal, Vadnagar	1 1 1
Shri Balkrishna Chimanlal, Mota Udepur	1 1 1
Shri Vrajlal Kalyanji Shah & Co., Vile Parle	25 0 0
Shri Amarnath Anand, Jammu	25 0 0
Shri Mulji Bhimji, Anand	13 0 0
Shri Dwarkadas Bij, Amritsar	10 0 0
Shri Kausalyadevi Beri, Amritsar	10 0 0
Shri Rampyari, Amritsar	3 0 0
Shri Padnavati, Amritsar	3 0 0
Shri Shiladevi, Amritsar	3 0 0
Shri B. Damodar Laxman Prabhu, Kanhangad	5 0 0
Shri T. Venkatramayya, Kolar Town	2 0 0
Shri K. P. Krishnan Nayar, Elambullasserri	1 8 0
Shri T. S. Achyatrao, Thimmammanahalli	1 0 0
Shri Maganlal Gopalji Bhuta, Thalia	1 0 0
Sum already acknowledged	16,413 14 0

Total 16,586 2 3

HARIJAN

Nov. 11

1950

NEW YEAR DAY GREETINGS

(By M. K. Gandhi)

[This letter of New Year Day greetings written by Bapu from Champaran to Shri Maganlal Gandhi then in the Satyagrahashrama, Sabarmati, is reproduced, from *Mahadevbhaini Diary* (Gujarati), Vol. IV.]

New Year Day, 1974 (Vikram),
Motihari (Bihar)

What shall I give you on this auspicious day? I am trying to send to you what you and I and many others lack. If you get that you have got everything. But what could I give if I were to follow the rule that only he who possesses can give? But let us pray for it together.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

Read this, ponder over it. Read it over again. Read the original in English from the Bible and translate it into Hindi. Ruminates over it and strive to have even for one moment a large glimpse of Charity that is Love. Mira had that glimpse and felt its pangs. If we could have the glimpse and feel its pangs and could have the capacity to make others feel those pangs, we could move the world. But though the thing is in me, I feel that I lack it every

moment. The lack is indeed great. Due to this lack I sometimes feel like "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal". Only yesterday I did not find time for those who wanted me. This tortured me. This is no sign of charity. I was "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal".

May the new year be fruitful to you. May your physical, mental and spiritual capacities go on increasing and may you out of your love lay all those at the feet of Mother India. This is my wish. And these are my blessings.

Bapu's *Ashirvad*

VEILED CASTE PREDOMINANCE

To resume the discussion of the last week: I notice a movement in several parts of India to revive caste, communal or provincial predominance and keep backward sections, minority communities and immigrants from other provinces in a subordinate position as much and as long as possible. At times the movement is one of open violence and arrogance, at others it is subtle and veiled under the very name of the casteless and secular Constitution of India. In spite of our hundreds of castes, sub-castes, sects and sub-sects, each awaiting its opportunity to assert itself over others, the society is roughly divided into three or four sharply divided groups. The largest of these is the so-called *savarna* Hindu group.

In South India generally (i.e., including Marathi-speaking provinces), it is further subdivided into Brahmans and non-Brahmans, the former with a long-established predominance over the latter in intellectual spheres, and the latter with an equally long-established predominance in agricultural, industrial and commercial spheres, as also in numbers. But barring a small enlightened section, with all its internal divisions and jealousies, the *savarna* Hindu group is generally united in its suppression of the *avarna* Hindus, whether of the Harijan castes or the *adivasi* tribes. No doubt that both Harijans and *Adivasis* are extremely backward sections of India. They are illiterate, a majority of them landless, resourceless, and some of them even homeless. But excepting such *Adivasis* as are ostracized socially also, they are socially in a more advantageous position than Harijans. The word *Harijan* has a particular social implication. Economically, educationally and politically a Harijan may be as high as Dr Ambedkar or Shri Jagjivan Ram. But when the word *Harijan* is applied to him, it suggests that he belongs to a particular group, which is regarded by *savarna* Hindus to be so low as to be unfit to be physically touched, not to mention to be housed with, dined with, or to be allowed even to touch their food or water. Even if such contacts take place unconsciously they are regarded as more contaminating than the contact of a small-pox or cholera patient. Neither education, nor money nor high character can remove this

social disability. This is a deliberate crime against humanity, and its heinousness does not diminish simply because it is perpetrated under alleged scriptural sanctions, immemorially old customs, or by reason of the fact that the very people crimed against seem reconciled to it. Various religious teachers and social reformers of very high and noble character rose from time to time among the *savarna* Hindus who protested against this inhuman custom and tried to befriend and absorb these unfortunate people among the *Savarnas* as much as their times allowed. But the sin was not eradicated, and it fell to Gandhiji to give to that movement a greater and more vigorous impetus than any hitherto known. These people were hitherto known by various derogatory designations like *antyajas*, *atishudras*, *asprushyas*, *achhuts*, *chandalas*, *pariahs*, etc. Gandhiji sought to give them the dignified name of Harijans. But misunderstandings and misgivings of a political nature prevented the acceptance of that name by some of the leaders of these castes and their political followers. They declined to accept any generic term, which would include all of these socially suppressed people, and preferred to be simply listed as distinct castes in a special schedule. The necessity for their special treatment was unanimously recognized. And so, for practical purposes, the only result of the political opposition to the term *Harijan* was that this group came to be recognized under two generic designations, namely, Harijans and Scheduled Castes. The former became the popular name, the latter a political and legal name. Some of the provincial governments recognized the title *Harijan* also. Both signify the same section of Hindus. This is what Gandhiji wrote in respect of the name :

"If a separate register of 'untouchable' classes had not come to stay, at least for the time being, the common name *Hindus* might have answered the purpose. But the separate register makes it absolutely necessary to know the 'untouchable' classes by some name, and if such is the case, why not give them a name that truly befits them and has no ill-flavour about it? I regard 'Harijan' as a fitting name because the Caste Hindus cannot be properly considered God's children but the 'untouchables' certainly can." (*Harijan*, 11-3-'33).

The Constitution of India has abolished, so far as it can be done legally, the social disabilities of Harijans. To implement the spirit of the abolition, various State governments have passed laws and taken ameliorative measures to see that Harijans actually become socially equals of *savarna* Hindus. But neither the framers of the Constitution, nor the legislatures of States, nor the social reformers could have shut or can shut their eyes to actual facts prevailing in society.

And the actual facts are that despite the Constitution and despite legislations, a very great part of *savarna* Hindus is not yet mentally prepared to behave with Harijans on terms of equality. It is not merely a case of incapacity to overcome life-long habits, but there is a deliberate attempt to keep them oppressed and suppressed socially. The *Savarnas* know well that if Harijans are kept at a safe distance socially, not much need be done in an active manner to keep them economically and educationally backward and exploitable. Hence, deliberate attempts are made to maltreat them. The very law declaring their equality is subtly interpreted to create hurdles in their way. Audaciously enough, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the very body specially created by Gandhiji to act as the jealous guardian of these people and bring about their complete amalgamation with the *savarna* Hindus, has been accused of perpetuating the separate Harijan class by the continuance of its services to them and maintaining their special institutions.

As a matter of fact, the policy of the Harijan Sevak Sangh and its workers has been from the very beginning to so conduct the movement as to make Harijans indistinguishable from other Hindus. While to meet the necessities of the immediate situation all types of special institutions and facilities for Harijans have been created, there is a pronounced movement for broadening these institutions from time to time so that not only the various Harijan castes should associate together, but Harijans and non-Harijans should live, study and mess together, and even inter-marry. The Scheduled Castes should not merely disappear from the Constitution and law, but should become incapable of being pointed out in the society itself. The word *Harijan* should disappear as signifying a particular section of Hindus. If it has to stay, it should become a synonym for Hindus. In the same article, from which an extract is given above, Gandhiji wrote further :

• "I have suggested the real method of abolishing the distinction between caste Hindus and Harijans, namely, by caste Hindus performing the purification ceremony of ridding themselves of untouchability and becoming Harijans themselves. And if it was open to any one to be classified as 'untouchables' in the register for 'untouchables', I should most decidedly advise caste Hindus to declare themselves as such and to live also as such. That will be a substantial and organic method of amalgamating the two into one body."

As long as the process of amalgamation is incomplete, and it remains necessary to distinguish 'untouchables' from other Hindus, surely 'Harijan' being an inoffensive designation is "the best name to know them by".

Wardha, 24-10-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

BIRTH CONTROL METHODS

The *Indian News Chronicle* of Delhi has recently started what they call a Forum, rather like some American newspapers have, under the aegis of which they have subjects of interest discussed with speakers both for and against. I believe these gatherings are fairly largely attended. At any rate the one over which I presided on the subject of birth control attracted a great many people from various groups and a large number of those present were young men and women.

Ever since I came into office, I have been pressed by women co-workers in the field of social reform, by both men and women of the educated classes as also by Members of the Parliament to initiate measures for birth control. Now while I am wholly in favour of birth control, because I realize that women in particular suffer greatly because of frequent births and the progeny of our people is deteriorating in health because of the poor condition of health of the young mother who has often to stand one pregnancy after another without giving her any time to recuperate her strength, as also on account of other causes such as mal-nutrition and under-nutrition and overcrowding, I am totally at variance with the means for birth control which are suggested by its advocates. I need hardly say that our educated class thinks mainly in terms of city dwellers and also mainly in terms of educated men and women. There are also, perhaps, a few women amongst the poorer classes whom our social workers can reach in cities, where their organizations are working. But they also invariably think of birth control by the artificial means of contraceptives which have taken a firm hold of people in the countries of the West. I am totally unable to reconcile myself to this view and the longer I live and the more I serve the cause of health and the closer contacts I have with the sick and suffering humanity, both in town and hamlet, the more convinced I become that it will be a fatal step for our country to resort to these methods. The speakers on the day on which I presided at this particular meeting, both men and women — and they included men and women of the medical profession also — were all in favour of adopting the artificial means of contraceptives for attaining the goal we all have in view. I spoke out as strongly as I could against attempting to achieve our object by such means as have been adopted by the western countries. In my opinion we can give an impetus to birth control in our country by ways and means which ought to come instinctively to us if we are true to the best traditions of our civilization. Perhaps in no country in the world has continence been advocated with such emphasis as in India by all our saints and sages. Self-restraint therefore, on the part of both men and women, and particularly on the part of men, must be the first

weapon in our armoury if we are to battle successfully against over-production of our humanity. Secondly, I am of opinion that if we educate our people not to marry their daughters until they are of 22 years of age and not to marry their boys until they are of 27 years of age and even older if they are not in a position to earn their livelihood by then, we shall be dealing a big blow not only to the numerical production of children but also to the production of weaklings. We should make tremendous efforts to raise the standard of living in our country. The moment these standards are raised the birthrate will begin to come down of itself. None of these things are easy to do. Artificial methods seem to the average man to be easy of attainment and hence they are advocated by all and sundry. I look upon this as a danger signal because it is always the strait and narrow way that leads to salvation. Man will be man is no argument, in my opinion, in helping him to give way to the animal passion within him; but that is the main argument used in favour of birth control by means of contraceptives. In other words the protagonists of this method advocate free latitude to be given to both men and women to practise self-indulgence with impunity. After all even the very land which we cultivate to give us food has to be given rest because it cannot continue to remain fertile if it is over-cultivated. And yet man is not willing to exercise that same self-restraint when it comes to his own animal passion. He is willing to waste the God-given seed and the God-given soil on which that seed should bear fruit for the sake of satisfying his own lust and unwilling to restrain himself for the sake of a virile and healthy humanity. I challenge the statement myself that birth control by the artificial means of contraceptives has proved a success either physically, mentally or morally for the people of the West who have practised it over a number of years. On the other hand, it has contributed in no small measure to a lowering of standards of morality and to a disregard by both men and women of the fundamental responsibility given to human kind for procreation. All this apart, the artificial methods referred to in this regard are wholly impractical in our country because of the ignorance of our people, the lack of scientific medical aid available to them and also because of their high cost.

The longer I live the more strongly I realize how unerring Bapu was in his appraisal of this question as he was in his appraisal of everything to which he gave his deepest thought. I can only hope that India will remain true to him and listen to his warning. But I often wonder how far we are drifting away from his teachings. We have only recently celebrated his *jayanti* but how many of us truly rededicated

ourselves to try to follow in the way he would have had us go? Anyhow as long as I am Health Minister the above is the policy that I shall advocate for our people as far as birth control is concerned.

AMRITKAUR

NOTES

Communal Peace in Uttar Pradesh

Readers will be glad to learn that the Id, Muharram and Puja holidays passed off in perfect amity and peace throughout Uttar Pradesh—including Fyzabad and Ayodhya, which had particularly become a centre of disturbance for more than a year now. I am informed by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Chief Minister, U.P., that so far as he is aware this is the first time that Muharram, Puja, Ramlila and Dashera have been celebrated without any communal trouble throughout the State, in spite of all of them falling together. "Government officers were, of course, alert, but credit must go to the people. But for their goodwill and tolerance, mere Government alertness could not have succeeded in maintaining peace."

U.P. deserves to be congratulated for this gladdening news. Let us hope that this amity will continue throughout the year and every year both the communities will celebrate their respective holidays peacefully with mutual goodwill.

Wardha, 1-11-'50

Sacrificial Labour

The other day I referred to students doing boot-polishing for collecting funds for the Assam Earthquake Relief work. Similar reports have come from other places also. For instance, Shri Haribhau Phatak of Poona sends a report of a function that took place under the auspices of the Poona Municipal School Board. Shri B. G. Kher, Bombay's Chief Minister, who presided on the occasion was requested by the Poona District Food League to present a hoe to the Municipal School No. 35, which had successfully grown *bajari* in 1½ acres of land belonging to the Municipality. The sale proceeds of this crop will be sent to the Assam Relief Fund as resolved by the Boys' Parliament of that school.

The modern generation has lost faith in humanity. It tends to believe that money is the only incentive that can make man work. It is gladdening to see that the younger generation falsifies that belief. The labour which a man does for the service of the unknown afflicted brings far more satisfaction than money or comforts purchased with money. Such labour blesses both the donor and the donee.

Wardha, 25-10-'50

K. G. M.

THE PLACE OF SELF-SPINNING

[Dr Kailasnath Katju's deep love for *khadi* is well known. He takes a very keen interest in popularizing and encouraging it in whatever position he is placed. When, therefore, he makes any suggestions regarding the *khadi* work they deserve careful consideration by all *khadi* workers. Some time ago, at a meeting of the *Khadi* and Hand-loom Weaving Board he made a speech, in which he examined some of the fundamental principles and practical aspects of *khadi* afresh. He kindly sent me a copy of his speech, which I submitted to Shri Shrikrishnadas Jaju and Krishnadas Gandhi for careful study. Both of them have done so, and Shri Jaju has made detailed comments thereon. As the matter is important for all those who take interest in the promotion of *khadi*, I reproduce first the relevant parts of Dr Katju's speech. This will be followed by Shri Jaju's opinion thereon. For facility of reference, the speech has been divided into convenient paragraphs, which have been numbered and given appropriate headings.

— K. G. M.]

Dr K. N. Katju's Speech

1. *Dearness of Khadi*: These days *khadi* has become very costly. Spinning wages have gone up. Weaving charges are anything between 6 to 8 annas a yard and cotton also is expensive. The result is that the demand for *khadi* is falling and stocks have accumulated in various production centres.

2. *Doubts about Self-sufficiency Programme*: I am aware that the Charkha Sangh now aims at self-sufficiency and the endeavour is that the spinners should as far as possible use their own home-made cloth, thus eliminating the necessity of *khadi* sales to a large extent. I confess that sometimes I become doubtful about the prospects of the self-sufficiency drive. There must be some inducement to make the movement a success.

3. *Economic use of Idle Hours and Cost of Self-spun Khadi*: Formerly *khadi* workers—in which category I include myself also—used to go about and preach the doctrine of self-sufficiency mainly on the ground that by utilizing their idle hours in spinning the villagers would be able to save some of the money on their domestic cloth bill by using home-spun *khadi*. But today that argument is not open. Even the out-of-pocket expenses which a spinner must incur before he is able to get a pair of *dhotis* for himself are higher than the cost of a mill-made pair of good quality *dhotis*. Let us consider the figures in some detail. A pair of *dhotis* would require about a seer and a half or so of cotton and the cost of this cotton would be Rs 3/- or over. Weavers are reluctant to weave home-spun yarn. They have become accustomed to weaving mill-made yarn which is of uniform quality and I am told that these days weaving charges for home-spun yarn are about 8 annas a yard. Thus a 10-yard pair of *dhotis* would involve Rs 5/- weaving charges. Then there would be at least 8 annas on account of bleaching charges. The out-of-pocket expenses therefore would be anything between Rs 8-8 as. to Rs 9/-. The cost of a good durable mill-cloth pair of *dhotis* is Rs 7/- or thereabouts. I have

not said anything so far about spinning at all. An average home-spinner would take at least 10 hours to spin yarn sufficient for a yard of *dhoti*. Thus a 10-yard pair would require 100 hours' spinning labour. The proposition therefore comes to this: on the one hand, you have 100 hours of spinning labour *plus* Rs 8-8 as. out of pocket to get a pair of home-spun *dhotis*. On the other hand, you can get a pair of equally good, if not better, mill-made *dhotis* for Rs 7/- altogether. By purchasing therefore a mill-made *dhoti* you save the 100 hours' labour and also Re 1-8 as. in cash. This is irrefutable logic and I do not know how we can go to a poor villager and induce him to embark upon this self-sufficiency enterprise on any reasonable ground, leaving patriotism apart.

4. *Mill Cloth no longer Foreign*: Then again formerly we used to say that the purchasing of mill-made cloth meant really sending money outside the country. But now in this free India the textile mills are all Indian-owned, labour is Indian and all earnings in textile mills go into Indian pockets. If the Government determines to nationalize the textile industry eliminating private capital altogether then the argument against self-sufficiency through hand-spun cloth would become much stronger.

5. *Alternative Employments to Spinning*: One cannot ask an ordinary villager, badly in need of supplementing his meagre income, to throw away his 100 hours' labour absolutely for nothing inasmuch as it would be sheer waste. He can utilize these 100 hours in a variety of other ways, in some other cottage industries such as basket-making, rope-making, etc. and make some money out of them.

6. *Question of Leisure*: We talk about idleness in the villages and plenty of spare time that the villager has which we think he wastes in sheer laziness. That picture is overdrawn. For the housewife it is a very hard life. She has to work hard, look after her husband, her children, keep her home clean, tend the cattle, and, if necessary, to assist the husband in his cultivation also. The man may have a few hours now and then when he has not much to do on the farm. Therefore, do what they may, a family can only manufacture a very limited yardage of cloth and the per head share of that cloth in the family would be a few yards only. This may mean a very simple austere way of life, but to-day everybody talks in favour of raising the standard of living.

7. *The Place of Khadi*: I therefore think that the self-sufficiency policy should be very carefully re-examined from all points of view. *Khadi* should be encouraged as providing a supplementary source of income to the unemployed

in the rural areas, particularly old men and women, and they must be paid wages. From this it follows that *khadi* should be sold and a *khadi* market developed. *Khadi* was always expensive, but in our Independence movement days it was tagged on to that movement. It became the outward symbol of our national struggle and therefore there was a good *khadi* market though it never went beyond Rs 50 lakhs or so in the year. I think *khadi* should again be connected with some political or social movement so that people should consider it necessary as a point of honour and as a point of duty to wear *khadi* and pay for it even though expensive. In my opinion every one who thinks it his duty to safeguard our freedom and Independence should consider it his bounden duty to encourage *khadi* by purchasing it for himself and his family.

8. *Improvement in Khadi Technique*: I suggest that all efforts should be made to lower the costs of *khadi* production. Weaving charges have become exorbitant. Weavers should be trained to work on hand-spun yarn. They should become accustomed to it. On the other hand effort should be made for the proper training of spinners so that yarn turned out by them should be of uniform quality and not very inferior, uneven stuff.

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