

# HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

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TWO ANNAS

## WAS GANDHI A TRADITIONALIST ?

[The *Vigil* published a series of instructive articles by Acharya J. B. Kripalani in its issues of July 22, 29 and August 5. Acharya Kripalani examined therein the views of the Socialist Party of India as expressed by its President, Shri Ashok Mehta, at their Conference held in Madras last month. It appears that Shri Mehta considered Gandhiji's approach to be a return to traditional patterns of life! Shri Kripalani has explained at length how this view is erroneous, and has given a scholarly exposition of Gandhiji's attitude towards industrialization, mechanization and the political set-up of the country. This part of his articles is reproduced here with the permission of the editor.—K. G. M.]

### Machines and Industries

It is no "traditional patterns of life" to which Gandhiji calls. It may seem so to the uncritical. But to those who have made an effort to understand, the patterns are only apparently old. To use a Marxian expression, they are "similar patterns" on a higher intellectual, moral and spiritual level, the level of a new awareness. Even Communism was once tribal.

Take for instance the *charkha* and *khadi*. These are traditional instruments of production. But did Gandhiji want the *charkha* to remain as it was? The Spinners' Association offered a prize of one lakh rupees for a *charkha* which could produce at least four (?) times its present quantity of yarn. When asked by a Socialist if the village industries movement was not meant to oust the machine, Gandhiji replied, pointing to the *charkha*, "Is this wheel not a machine?" The Socialist said that what he meant was big machinery. Gandhiji replied: "Do you mean Singer's sewing machine? That too is protected by the village industries movement, and for that matter all machinery which does not deprive the masses of men of the opportunity to labour but which helps individuals to add to their efficiency and which a man can handle at will without being its slave."

**Socialist:** "What about great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity."

**Gandhiji:** "Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying implements or tools with the help of electricity. But then village communities of the State would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do? Will you give them work or will you have their owners cut them down, for want of work?"

"I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. I would not care for asphyxiating gases capable of killing masses of men at a time. The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human hands has its inevitable place, but all that will be owned by the State and used entirely by the State for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the labour of the many."

"But even you as a Socialist would not be in favour of an indiscriminate use of machinery. Take printing

presses. They will go on. Take surgical instruments. How can we make them with one's hands? Heavy machinery will be needed for these. But there is no machinery for the cure of idleness today but this (the wheel he was plying). I am adding to the wealth of the country....."

**Socialist:** "Then you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuse which is so much in evidence today?"

**Gandhiji:** "I would unhesitatingly say, yes; but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be overworked and machinery instead of being a hindrance will be a help. I am aiming not at the eradication of machinery, but its limitation."

**Socialist:** "When logically argued that would imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go."

**Gandhiji:** "It might have to go. But I must make one thing clear. The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the Singer's sewing machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented."

**Socialist:** "But in that case there will have to be a factory for making Singer's sewing machines and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type."

**Gandhiji:** "Yes, but I am Socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalized or State-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as motive."

In 1928 he wrote in *Young India*: "The economic constitution of India for the matter of that should be such that no one should suffer from want of food and clothing.....Everybody should get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally realized if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses."

Later on, in 1940, he said in *Harijan*: "I do visualize electricity, ship-building, iron works, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. But the order of precedence will be reversed.....I do not share the Socialist belief that centralization of the necessities of life will ever conduce to the common welfare when centralized industries are planned by the State." (Since then we are glad to say the Socialist position has been greatly modified by what is now called 'pluralism'.)

I make no apology for giving this long quotation. I do so because, despite repeated denials by Gandhiji that he does not want a return to the past, the fable once created still persists, and that not only in Socialist circles but even among Congressmen and the general public. The fact is that superficial observers are deceived by the similarity of the *charkha* with the old *charkha* that men and women were obliged to use to produce cloth in olden days. Today, whether it is the *charkha* or the loom or any other old machine or tool that is used for the



production of *khadi* or anything else, it is deliberately adopted in preference to heavy centralized machinery in mills and factories for a purpose which is novel and revolutionary.

In the case of Gandhiji the purpose was to establish an equalitarian, democratic social order free from exploitation. It is also used in the case of India to mitigate the colossal chronic unemployment and semi-employment of the millions of peasants whose holdings are uneconomic and for an ever-increasing army of landless labourers. Were the *charakha*, the loom or the carpenter's or smith's instruments used for this purpose in olden days? Surely there is a world of difference between an axe that is used for cutting trees and the same axe used for cutting human heads. The guillotine is only an axe manipulated in a particular way. To confuse an old cottage industry with its revival under modern conditions, and with intention to increase its efficiency, when possible, by means of mechanical energy of a type that can be universally supplied, and made available in minutely regulated quantities over long distances (e.g. electricity), is a piece of conservatism of which Gandhiji was never guilty.

We may not forget that the spirit of conservatism very often takes refuge in seemingly modern things and institutions. Progressive and scientific spirit demands from us to be ever ready to investigate and experiment with new theories, proposals and schemes. We cannot merely brush aside a scheme of radical reform simply because it uses old forms and phraseology, readily understood by the masses. This is neither a scientific nor a radical attitude towards life. A revolutionary, even as a moral and spiritual reformer, tries to go beyond words and forms to the spirit of any proposed changes in material instruments, patterns of thought and behaviour. It is absurd to think that everything that has the appearance of modernity is progressive or revolutionary. If, indeed, the modernity is of the times in which the members of a radical group were born and under whose patterns of thought and behaviour they were brought up it becomes reaction of the worst type. Most of our economic and industrial thought and behaviour belong to the age of steam, which was a new and radical invention in the 19th century. Steam could work most effectively only in centralized mills and factories. To consider this and only this type of production as the most suited economically, politically and morally to the changed times when electric power is available and all big machines have come to have standardized parts, is to be needlessly conservative. When this conservatism becomes unthinking fanaticism, it becomes reactionary.

The decentralization of industry in a densely populated country with an increasing population is not merely to give work to idle hands and increase production and thereby the wealth of the country, it is not merely an economic proposition but has also its sociological, political and moral value. It is not our purpose to enter into these here. For the present argument it is sufficient to show that what is superficially considered as Gandhiji's return to "traditional patterns of life" is not really so, unless unconsciously we ignore or deliberately misrepresent what Gandhiji in reality proposed and worked for.

### Political Organization

In politics it is well known that Gandhiji wanted semi-independent republics (*panchayats*) to manage fully all their local affairs; the Central Government he conceived as a federation of such *panchayats*. Here are his own words: "My idea of village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants and yet interdependent for many things in which dependence is necessary. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food and produce its own cloth.....The village will maintain its theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own water-works.....as far as possible every activity will be conducted on co-operative basis. There will be no castes.....there will be compulsory service of village guards who will be

selected by rotation.....the Government of the village will be conducted by the *panchayat* annually elected by adult villagers, male and female. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required....."

This shows that not only did Gandhiji believe in decentralization of industry so far as it was possible and practical, that is, so far at least as the primary necessities of life are concerned, but he believed no less in the devolution of political power. So far as culture is concerned, when Gandhiji makes every village a semi-independent republic and when he wants the village to have its own theatre, public hall etc. and when it is well known that he emphasized the role of the individual in the group, so that he was often called a philosophic anarchist, and when he wanted full freedom and toleration for every faith, one cannot but be convinced that he believed in cultural variety. How could he do otherwise being a votary of non-violence? I suppose all this is what the Socialists call 'pluralism' in all fields of human life and activity, a pluralism which yet makes for a peaceful unity based upon unchanging fundamental moral values and, what flows from this, the purity of means for achieving desirable ends.

J. B. KRIPALANI

### DOMESTIC WEAVING IN U. S. A.

[The life and writings of Ralph Borsodi of U.S.A. will be found very instructive by *Sarvodaya* workers. His views on self-sufficiency, decentralization, back to village life, and education have a remarkable similarity with those of Gandhiji, subject, of course, to environmental differences. His book *Flight from the City* is almost entirely a personal narrative of the adventures of the Borsodi family in establishing a productive country home. The adventure began a quarter of a century ago. Some years later, another friend John Loomis joined them with his family. After a quarter of a century's experience, Mr Borsodi emphatically gives his people the message "Abandon the city while you can." One of the chapters of the book is devoted to the "Loom and the Sewing Machine". As it will be interesting to *khadi* workers, extracts from the chapter are reproduced here with the kind permission of Mr Borsodi. It must be borne in mind that Mr Borsodi has not considered the question of home-spinning. He has taken mill yarn for granted.

—K. G. M.]

Before the era of factory spinning and factory weaving which began with the first Arkwright mill in Nottingham, England, in 1768, fabrics and clothing were made in the homes and workshops of each community. Men raised the flax and wool and then did the weaving. Women did the spinning and later sewed and knitted the yarns into garments of all kinds. The music of the spinning-wheel and the rhythm of the loom filled the land. Perhaps one-third of the time of men and women—one-third of their total time at labour—was devoted to producing yarns and fabrics which they consumed.

In the place of loom-rooms in its homes, America now has thousands of mills employing hundreds of thousands of wage-earners. Many of the wage-earners in these textile mills are children in spite of the campaigns against child labour. And the wages paid by these mills are notoriously the lowest which prevail in industry in this country. Instead of healthy and creative work in the homes, we have monotonous and deadly labour in mills.

A trifle over a third of the production of the cotton industry is used for industrial purposes. Two-thirds of the production of cotton and nearly all of the production of the silk and wool industry go to the consumer either as piece goods or home sewing, or cut up into wearing apparel by clothing manufacturers. This means that only 10 to 15 per cent of the total number of factories and workers in the entire industry are engaged in producing for the needs of other industries. All of the rest are doing work which used to be done in the home and much of which might still be done there. And our



experiments with sewing and weaving tend to show that it can be done at an actual saving of labour or money.

If all the resources of modern science and industry were to be utilized for the purpose of making the spinning-wheel, the reel, and the loom into really efficient domestic machines (as efficient relatively as is the average domestic sewing-machine), the number of textile-mills which could meet the competition of the home producer would be insignificant. And if modern inventive genius were thus applied to these appliances for weaving, there would be no drudgery in domestic weaving; a saving of time and money would be effected; the quality and design of fabrics would be improved, and everybody of high and low degree would be furnished an opportunity to engage in interesting and expressive work. Such improved machinery would occupy no more space than is now wasted in many homes and the loom-room would give to the home a new practical and economic function.

The biggest market for these looms is, I believe, in the institutional field. Weaving is one of the favoured methods of "occupational therapy" in the ever-increasing number of institutions for nervous and mental disorders which we are erecting all over the country. The strain of repetitive work in our factories and offices, and the absence of creative and productive work in our homes, particularly for women, children, and the aged, is turning us into a race of neurotics. Weaving is being revived after a fashion, as a therapeutic measure to restore these unfortunates to health. What a ghastly commentary upon what we have called progress. Having taken the looms out of homes during the past century and transferred them to factories, we now find that the absence of the creative work they used to furnish is producing an ever-increasing number of neurotic men and women, and an endless number of "problem" children. So our physicians are putting the loom into their institutions in order to make the victims of this deprivation well again. Then they turn them, after curing them, back into their loomless homes to break down again.

The looms built for occupational therapy and hand-weaving generally are deliberately designed to increase the amount of manual work which those who operate them have to perform for every yard of cloth produced. As a result the actual production of cloth is slow and laborious. Yet there is no reason why this should be so. The right kind of loom would enable the average family to produce suitings, blankets, rugs, draperies, and domestic fabrics of all kinds of a quality superior to those generally produced in factories and on sale in stores at a far lower cost after taking time and all materials and supplies into consideration. The artistic and emotional gains from the practice of this craft would therefore be a clear gain.

In the average home, a loom which will weave a width of a yard is sufficient. Ours is able to handle fabrics up to forty-four inches in width. While many things can be made on a simple two-harness loom, we find the four-harness loom a more useful type because of its greater range of design. But every loom should be equipped with an efficient system for warping, and with a flying shuttle, if it is to enable the home-weaver to compete upon an economic basis with the factory. Neither of these is expensive—in fact (the whole investment in equipment in order to weave need not exceed \$75 if one can make the flying shuttle arrangement oneself. The shuttle attachment on my loom was home-made and took me only three or four hours to put together. With such a loom, even an average weaver can produce a yard of cloth an hour and a speedy weaver, willing to exert himself, can produce thirty yards per day. Since it takes only seven yards of twenty-seven-inch cloth to make a three-piece suit for a man, it is possible to weave the cloth for a suit in a single day on a small loom, and in less than a day on a loom to handle fifty-four-inch cloth.

Our experiments in the weaving of woollens for men's and women's clothing have demonstrated the practicability not only of cutting out of the budget most of the expenditures for ready-made garments, but even the expenditures for fabrics. The garments made from fabrics woven in the Borsodi homestead suggest not only the great variety of garments for which it is possible to weave the fabrics, but the fact that they are, if anything, more attractive than those which are usually on sale in retail stores ready-made.

(The first suit cloth which I wove) was made from yarn home-spun in the Kentucky mountains; the cloth was woven and finished in our home; the suit was made up by a tailor operating a one-man shop near our place. The yarn cost \$4.50; the tailoring \$30. I had it appraised by various so-called experts at the time, and they valued it all the way from \$60 to \$90. One friend, who could not qualify as an expert but who has his suits made by Fifth Avenue tailors, said that he had paid \$125 for suits no better than this one. Incidentally, the suiting was the first which I ever wove.

This matter of tailoring brings up one of the amusing follies of modern civilization to which we pay no attention but for which we pay nevertheless, over and over again. The strictly tailored costumes which men now wear have nothing but custom to recommend them. They require great skill in sewing; they are therefore impractical for manufacture at home. Yet they are artistic monstrosities. They do nothing to set off the human form. They are not even utilitarian. Most of the hard work of the world is done by men who wear overalls or cotton garments which are not tailored at all. While suits are practical enough for the work which men do in offices, they are much too hot for indoor use—especially in houses which are steam-heated. A foolish convention, however, makes us all wear them. With women's garments, the field for weaving and for the needlecrafts, even with prevailing styles, is much broader.

(Along with the loom) the sewing-machine is a most important piece of domestic machinery. It is doubtful whether any other piece of machinery pays larger dividends upon the investment made in it. Yet it remains a tool, to be used when needed and laid aside, perhaps for months at a time, when no sewing has to be done. In combination with the loom, the sewing-machine takes on new significance both economically and artistically.

(While the economic saving is important by itself) to me the part which our loom and sewing-machine have played in creative living is, if anything, more important than the service they have rendered in making us less dependent upon earning money.

RALPH BORSODI

(Abridged and adapted from *Flight from the City*)

#### Correction :

In *Harijan* of August 26, 1950, page 223, column two, line seven of last paragraph from bottom, please read *decided* for *designed*.

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—Gandhiji

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# HARIJAN

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## ENCOURAGING PRODUCTION

Let us consider what should be done immediately to encourage production of food and cloth. Long-term plans are, even if difficult of execution, easier to lay down. It is the 'First Year' plans, steps to be taken in this very season or the next, which present difficulties of every sort.

Administrators must give up their negative attitude as much as they expect the people to do so. It is no use irritating the people by saying that the question of distribution does not arise until there is sufficient production. It would be possible to say so without giving offence if it were a question of equitable distribution of motor cars, cycles, or rubber toys. But in the distribution of essentials of life, — food, cloth, houses, — the question of equitable distribution cannot be subordinated to that of production. It is particularly so where the producer of these articles himself suffers from maldistribution, and helplessly sees before his own eyes godowns full of grains, cloth etc., which his muscular efforts have produced, but which he cannot touch without being regarded a robber, while rats, vermin and damp destroy them by tons on account of sheer neglect, and a great deal is consumed in luxurious dinners and put up for sale in sweet-meat shops. How can people look kindly to a system of controls and rationing, which does not allow A to get regularly his rationed food and sugar on the ground that stocks are insufficient, but at the same time allows B to hold a conference of five thousand people for three or five days, or C to obtain sufficient flour and sugar to prepare and sell sweet-meats, which he does not use and cannot purchase even if he wanted to?

This means, also, that the negative attitude towards controls and rationing must also be given up by the administrators. It is no use merely repeating that controls cannot be removed, and that they have come to stay. If they cannot be removed they must be improved. The landless village labourer must understand how the system, in which controls and procurements operate throughout the land, while rationing is so arranged that only the poor employees of cities derive some comfort from it, is for his benefit. Otherwise, one of the several evil effects of the controls is the ever-increasing and continuous migration of villagers into cities and towns, making production as well as distribution of food more difficult than what it already is. If it is held that controls cannot be removed without creating a serious crisis in city life, the least thing necessary is to make radical alterations in

their system. The effect of controls should be to create in the people a desire for and habit of being law-abiding, and a realization that, even if they have to put up with some hardships, the system is for their moral and material benefit. If the controls can be maintained only by penal laws made stiffer day by day, they are, at their best, like driving a horse up a hill with a tightly drawn bridle. The horse would only break down, he cannot climb. So also the nation.

I do believe that regulation of distribution of food-stuffs is necessary for the nation in our present situation. The distribution cannot be left entirely to the operations of a free market. But the regulation must be brought about through the people's own 'Trustees'; by people, I mean, the men and women whose muscular efforts create the food and who are most affected by maldistribution. There must be sufficient stocks within the sight of the people, — as far as possible, in their own village, except where the village is constantly liable to be damaged by floods or heavy rains. The management must be in the hands of a person, whom the non-propertied masses might regard as *their* man, and not a servant of the Government or the nominee of a political or communal group.

There need not be a uniform way of bringing this about. Preferably, it may take the form of a co-operative society of landless peasants and artisans and people below a particular economic level. Or, it may be managed by a respected, charitable, philanthropic or constructive institution.

The cultivation of cereals and pulses must be encouraged to the maximum extent, and not according to paper calculations of the nation's necessities. This can be done in various ways: e.g. collection of a fixed quantity of stipulated grains (and, if necessary, in some places, cotton and a few other things) in lieu of revenue, settled for a number of years; grant of remissions in *taccavi* loans, bonuses, or particular agriculture amenities to cultivators individually or villages as a body, showing a better produce than their recorded average; reservation of a particular percentage of food crops and raw cotton for the benefit of people, who are landless (or almost so) in the village; sale of food and raw cotton to them in exchange of hand-spun yarn or cloth, (or, if it can be managed without complications, other articles needed by the village, or saleable outside); payment of a part of wages in the form of food. These items are illustrative, not exhaustive.

All this would, of course, need a kind of village *Swaraj*. But this *Swaraj* will be of a very different pattern from those sought to be set up under the names of *panchayats* and *janapads*, which are democratic in form, but in reality oligarchies of powerful interests. On the other hand the organizations suggested



above may be apparently quite undemocratic. The form is less important than substance; and the substance of democracy is that the machinery must command the love and respect of the people.

Wardha, 30-8-'50

K. G. MASHRUWALA

### TRADE UNIONS AND PARTY POLITICS

The labour movement is basically a movement for the amelioration of the conditions of the lowly and down-trodden. After the achievement of freedom, the important question facing the trade unions is: What should be the method of achieving this? It is clear that unless trade unions become powerful in the land the aim of the amelioration of the conditions of workers which they have in view cannot be achieved; and even if achieved, it cannot be adequately maintained. This power can be acquired in two ways: namely, either by aligning with, or influencing, a leading political party in the country, or by placing before the country their own programme of administration.

At the first sight it appears that without their collaboration with political parties, the trade unions will not be able to achieve their objectives. This is no doubt true from the short-range view. Some short-lived gains are likely to be achieved, and more quickly, through the help of leading political parties in the country. In the long run, however, there is a great risk of the objectives of labour being torpedoed if trade unions submerge themselves into political parties.

While there can be no objection in seeking the assistance of political parties for achieving labour objectives, the course of trade-union workers becoming members of such parties, or active members of political parties leading and managing trade unions, is definitely harmful to the interest of labour. A labour movement cannot, except of course when it is in a position to frame its own programme of administration with a view to capture the Government of the country at the next elections, afford to play with politics without creating serious obstacles for itself in securing its legitimate aims. The safest course for it is to steer clear of all political parties in the land and confine its activities to items connected purely with the amelioration of the condition of labour. If this is done, support can be obtained from all the political parties in the country without making labour a subject of controversy.

By joining political parties the trade-union workers will be frittering away a good deal of their energies which they could more usefully utilize in making their unions strong and in serving the cause of labour. It was for this reason that at one stage in the history of the political freedom of our country, that seer among men, Mahatma Gandhi, decided that the workers of the All-India Spinners' Association and the All-India Village Industries Association should not be active members of the Congress and

should not have any connection with politics. That salutary rule applies equally appropriately to trade-union workers of our country today.

The present position of trade unions in the country is very weak. They are not yet properly organized in the industries in which they exist, and there are quite a number of industries which have no trade unions at all. A common feature of the existing trade unions is that, with very few exceptions, they are run by unripe political leaders or under leaders of various shades, against whom there is a growing charge of handling labour more in the interest of their own political affiliations than of the workers whom they seek to represent. In not many of these trade unions the actual workers of the relevant industries are found to be evincing any genuine interest. There is no awakening and organization among workers themselves on correct lines. Regular meetings of the unions is not one of their features, nor are regular payments of periodical subscriptions made by the members. Inspections have revealed that in good many cases neither complete lists of membership are maintained, nor proper accounts of moneys received are kept. This is all so, obviously because the trade unions have not been formed on right lines and are not developed and run by the proper type of men. At times the formation of these unions is only a paper transaction to support one political party or another; and the workers who are managing the show are not real trade-union workers, but leaders or under the hands of leaders of different political groups in the country, who have no scruples in utilizing the unions more for their political affiliations than for the real benefit of workers. With such composition it is not surprising that our trade unions are not serving the cause for which they stand and hence there is immediate need to recast and reorientate them.

There are at present so many currents and cross-currents in the political life of our country, — Communists, revolutionaries, Socialists, Congressites, etc. — and each one of them has its counter-part in the sphere of labour. The ideologies of different labour unions emanate from the political group whose shadows they are. And, instead of there being a common line of thought and action with the sole object of serving the interest of workers these unions are becoming an arena of conflict between one political party and another. To win the support of labour — the unintelligent, illiterate, and ignorant labour — they vie with one another in pitching their demands against the employers and the Governments as high as they can and imagine that they can live and prosper on the transitory recognition which they get from their clientele in this way. They have not the courage and moral strength to tell the correct position to labour and to guide it on healthy lines.

The task of administering labour unions and putting them on a sounder basis has, in the



present atmosphere, become very difficult. Those who are concerned with the administration of subjects pertaining to labour are finding it increasingly difficult to reconcile different warring elements, which have now made their home in the sphere of labour. Their everyday strike notices for all types of imaginable and unimaginable demands on behalf of labour are not permitting the administration to settle down to doing something really solid and tangible for them. In its own interest, therefore, it is essential that the labour movement in the country should be conducted entirely on an economic basis and should be completely shorn of all political tinge. The workers in labour unions should, as far as possible, come from amongst the ranks of labour itself; and if any outsiders are interested in serving the cause of labour, they should do so as whole-time workers unconnected with any political group and uninfluenced by any particular political ideology. In the present economy of our country the best service could be rendered to labour if their organizations would work with purely economic and social objectives.

Again, it is evident that the labour movement in our country is still in infancy. It cannot stand on its legs unless properly nourished from within. Any spoon-feeding from outside will not give it real strength, and in no case will such outside assistance do any good to labour when it is given with the sole object of extracting support for the objectives of a particular political party.

The labour movement in the country is clearly not in a position to draw up its own political programme with the ultimate object of taking the reins of Government in its hands. That course is positively dangerous unless and until the movement gains requisite strength of organization and succeeds in educating the mass of workers. The process would take time and is not helpful for the immediate need. Thus the movement can neither align itself with the one or other of political parties in the land nor draw up a political programme of its own. In the best interest of labour, therefore, its trade unions should keep themselves aloof from the wrangles of political parties and build up their own strength apart from them.

There is no harm, however, in properly organized trade unions of industrial, agricultural and other classes of workers seeking the assistance of political parties and taking their help, when necessary, without aligning or merging themselves with such parties. This line would enable the trade unions to keep themselves aloof from any political obligations and get help from the party or parties with voice in the country. If trade unions are organized on sound non-political lines and if actual workers are trained to work for them, there can be no doubt that they will gather strength much sooner than is imagined; and with such strength in their organization they can make their voice heard effectively in all spheres, political parties, employers and Government.

Two essentials in the first step of proper organization of trade unions are: (i) workers themselves running the unions as purely economic and social organizations, and (ii) if any outsiders are interested in them, their whole-time devotion to the activities of the union and complete absence of any political affiliation.

The need of the hour in our free land today is that workers' trade unions should immediately be built on altogether non-controversial and non-political lines and the workers in that sphere should realize the sanctity and value of keeping their activities aloof from burning politics. It is then alone that our labour unions can be of real service to the class for which they cater; and it is then alone that the toiling section of our people can get the benefit which the administration is so anxious to give it.

THAKUR KULDIP NARAIN SINGH, I.A.S.

### A VILLAGE SURVEY

[Note: Shri S. V. Kamat was once a staff member of the All India Village Industries Association, Wardha. He also worked in the Palm Gur Department of the Government of India. Now he is working in a village.]

A few enthusiasts, wishing to work in the rural areas, decided to camp together for a week in a village with the purpose of surveying it. We chose Bhimapurwadi, a way-side hamlet in Karnatak. The survey proved a revelation. Besides the survey we also undertook to erect a temporary trench-latrines with the help of indigenous grass and bamboo. We had taken our requisite cereals so as not to be a burden upon any one. We ground our flour and spun together for 40 minutes every day.

This novel daily routine surprised the village people out at the same time endeared us to them, and helped us a great deal in collecting genuine data from house to house.

The main occupation of the agriculturists in this tract of about 100 sq. miles is tobacco cultivation—the richest money crop of Belgaum District and probably of the Bombay State. During the last decade huge profits have been made by some enterprising farmers, who also act as stockists-cum-middlemen to the buyers. The processing of tobacco needs a number of female labourers. Even then they are not fully employed.

Bhimapurwadi is a typical labourers' village. They have specialized in collective work such as bunding, cleansing of wells, field-repairs etc. If any such 'project' is to be completed in a radius of four miles, their services are preferably requisitioned.

We gathered the following information about their living:

1. *Population*: 85 families with 564 individuals: that is, less than seven souls per family. We came across a household consisting of 22 members. Their 'house' measured 30 feet x 8 feet divided into three partitions. Besides the daily routine, all the events from birth to death took place in these dingy apartments. But unlike the city workers most of the members, including children of 5 years or more, spent their time in the fields. At the most 10 members were to be found under this roof at a time. Open-air farming and simple food have hardened their physique.

2. *Language*: Excepting 5 Jain and 3 Muslim families all the rest speak Marathi. The Jains speak Kannada and the Muslims in a dialect which is a mixture of Hindustani and Marathi. It is a bilingual tract where Jains and Lingayats are Kannadigas while the Marathas, Harijans and Brahmins belong to Maharashtra.

3. *Age*: The age census revealed that early marriages are still the rule of the day. There was a married girl below 10 and there were only 5 unmarried girls in the 10-15 group. But this premature matrimony is only



in name as until the girl attains puberty she stays in her father's house.

4. *Education*: Compulsory education has raised the number of literates to 125; but even then, the rule does not seem to apply to the fair sex. There are only 9 female literates. The number of adults who know reading and writing is 35.

5-6. *Vocations and Subsidiary Occupations*: The entire population is agricultural. There are three carpenters, two cobblers, two tailors, one barber's and one shopkeeper's families. But all of them also till the soil. All governmental and public work is entrusted to a *sanadi*. He is also responsible to sell the tobacco that is pooled together by the workers. It is directly sold to a *jarda* (edible tobacco) manufacturer at Poona, without paying any commission to middlemen. This collective effort is also shown in executing minor field works as mentioned at the beginning.

7. *Land*: More than 90 per cent of the land is owned by 3 persons. It was equitably tenanted by these hardy folk, some four years back. But after the advent of the tenancy legislation they have been deprived of that privilege. Strictly speaking Bhimapurwadi is now a labour colony. Socialist ideas have reached here too, and as the days advance it is but natural that their awakening will demand agrarian justice.

8. *Income*: As there is no fixed salary it is very difficult to assess the total income of a villager. For field work the labourer is usually paid in kind. For growing tobacco the owner gives him a quarter of the total yield. Manure and other expenses for the crop are incurred by the owner, and like all other crops this one also depends on the vagaries of climate. "But a hardy farmer is seldom betrayed by Nature," said an adept tobacco grower. Meticulous care is needed for the growth of quality tobacco and that is why this tract is able to absorb more labourers.

9. *Expenditure*: Ordinarily more than 70 per cent of the rural population does not have to buy its food requirements (except salt), as it is either grown or earned in exchange. But the sagacious farmers of this part become opulent by growing money-crops. Recently an order was passed that not more than one-fourth of the land should be allotted to such non-food-crops. This was effectively set at naught by them by cunningly including vast areas of waste lands, consisting of sandy soil in the total area. All this resulted in creating a dearth of cereals. The entire landless labour has thus to depend on rations, partly supplied by Government ration shops and the rest by the black market. As this is a live necessity of the landless labourers, food grains are openly sold in the village bazars, at about double the controlled price. Hence we calculated that an average family of seven requires Rs 400 for its food and Rs 200 for cloth. Whatever extra cash is left behind is squandered on tea, cinema, travelling and petty luxuries.

10. *Cattle*: There are 66 oxen, 7 cows and 116 buffaloes (mostly she buffaloes). The predominance of the last species is due to its milching quality. Oxen are required only for the preliminary agricultural operations. Hence their small number.

11. *Habits*: We were astounded to see the number of tea addicts. They numbered nearly 400. As soon as a child leaves its mother's breast it takes to tea. The only abstainers were three families and a score of hardy workers. More than Rs 4,000 went out of the village in purchasing tea and sugar annually. There was practically no other drain of wealth as smoking is restricted to village-made *chilim* (earthen pipe) and betel leaves are locally available. The havoc wrought by liquor in pre-prohibition days would seem modest as there were only a few drunkards and they also did not indulge in it daily; tea has entered all homes and is consumed every day.

However restricted the scope of this survey, it gave us a clear glimpse of rural India. Living in their midst, we were able to penetrate deeper into the problems that

have been troubling the villagers. Our mode of life was totally devoid of pomp and awe and it dispelled prejudice and fear that they usually harbour against interrogators. Even this village which is supposed to be better off than most of our Indian villages suffers heavily from ignorance, poverty and insanitation.

S. V. KAMAT

## INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE AND GOODWILL

### VI

Gandhiji has himself described how he came to the conclusion that 'the nearest approach to civilization based upon non-violence is the erstwhile village republic of India.' (*Economics of Khadi*, p. 589).

'As I was picturing life based on non-violence, I saw that it must be reduced to the simplest terms consistent with high thinking. Food and raiment will always remain the prime necessities of life. Life itself becomes impossible if these two are not assured. For non-violent defence therefore society has to be so constructed that its members may be able, as far as possible, to look after themselves in the face of an invasion from without or disturbances from within. Just as a domestic kitchen is the easiest thing in such circumstances, the *takli* (hand-spindle) or at most the spinning wheel and the loom are the simplest possessions for the manufacture of cloth. Society based on non-violence can only consist of groups settled in villages in which voluntary co-operation is the condition of dignified and peaceful existence. A society which anticipates and provides for meeting violence with violence will either lead a precarious life or create big cities and magazines for defence purposes. It is not unreasonable to presume from the state of Europe that its cities, its monster factories\* and huge armaments are so intimately interrelated that the one cannot exist without the other. The nearest approach to civilization based on non-violence is the erstwhile village republic of India. I admit that it was very crude. I know that there was in it no non-violence of my definition and conception. But the GERM WAS THERE.' (Capitals the present writer's.) (*Ibid*, pp. 588-89).

'If a country's vital requirements are produced through a centralized industry, it will find it necessary to guard them even as a capitalist guards his treasures. A country whose culture is based on non-violence will find it necessary to have every home as much self-contained as possible. Indian society was at one time unknowingly constituted on a non-violent basis. Mayne has shown that India's villages were a congeries of republics. In them there were no ladies or gentlemen, or all were.' (*Ibid*, p. 572).

\*According to Beveridge, there are four main harmful by-products of industrialization: (1) unemployment, (2) urban squalor, (3) malnutrition, and (4) total war. (*India and the Four Freedoms*, O. U. P., p. 51).

†In men as in ants, war is bound up with the existence of accumulations of property to fight about. See Julian Huxley, *On Living in a Revolution*, pp. 61-66.



'I suggest that if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to de-centralize many things. Centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Simple homes, from which there is nothing to take away, require no policing; the palaces of the rich must have strong guards to protect them against dacoity. So must huge factories. Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well equipped with military, naval and air forces.' ‡ (*Ibid*, p. 582).

V. G. D.

### NOTES

#### Constructive Suggestions

My note on the election of the Congress President has brought me several letters. One of the questions I have been asked is that if the Congress Organization has so much morally deteriorated, that honest persons should abandon it, what is my constructive suggestion for them? Should they retire from politics, and leave Government administration in the hands of a company of unscrupulous people? By no means. Unfortunately my previous writings on this subject have been overlooked by my readers. I am not just now in a position to restate my views at length. But I would request them to read the following articles: "Question Box—Congress Elections" (*Harijan*, 24-6-'50); "Congress in Office and Outside" (*Harijan*, 4-7-'48); "Rhetorics" (*Harijan*, 11-7-'48); "Abolition of Diarchy" (*Harijan*, 18-7-'48) and an article on the Congress Organization in *The Hindu* (Special Number) of 26th January 1950.

Wardha, 30-8-'50

#### Charges against Public Servants

I often receive letters giving detailed and specific charges of misbehaviour, dishonesty, corruption, shielding of criminals, insult of citizens, etc. against one or the other public servants

‡ Dr. David F. Martyn, an Australian radar expert, said that Britain was indefensible in atomic warfare, but the number of atomic bombs which could be made in the predictable future could not cripple either Russia or the U.S.A. 'Britain could easily be knocked out in atomic war. Radio-activity would prevent reconstruction of ports and Britain would be starved in a short period. But in Russia and the U.S.A. the industrial areas were so dispersed that an impossible number of bombs would be required to put them out of action. If Britain wanted to survive, she should arrange a mass migration of twenty million people to the Dominions.' (*Free Press Journal*, December 18, 1948, p. 1).

The British Association of Scientific Works also admit the impossibility of defending Britain against atomic bomb attack. Dispersion of key industries, the building of adequate shelters etc. would be too costly. A third world war would have fatal results, 'most of all for Britain'. 'The only way out is to insure that such a war does not in fact take place'. (*Present Truth*, Vol. 66, No. 14, p. 16).

holding responsible offices. Often an application to a higher authority becomes futile because a sort of convention prevails that a servant should protect a brother servant. Even the anti-corruption department becomes either itself corrupt or powerless against the brotherhood of servants. Some of the cases are obviously such as would enable the complainant to lodge a complaint before a competent magistrate if the accused were a private individual. Being a public servant this remedy is not generally available to him.

There should be a better and certain remedy against this in the interest both of the people and the Government.

There is a Public Services Commission in every State for the selection of Government servants. All servants are appointed on its recommendation. Cannot the same body be entrusted with the function of investigating into complaints made against a public servant by a member of the public with specific charges? There can be a special speedy procedure for such enquiries, and its recommendations should be acted upon by the Government concerned. If the Commission finds a complaint to be false and vexatious, it should have power to punish the complainant and if necessary, to award damages to the accused. If the complainant succeeds, the officer would receive his punishment. Like the High Court, the Public Services Commission should be a tribunal independent of the Executive Government. I request the Government to consider this point. If this is not practicable, it is imperative that the Government should find some other satisfactory machinery for speedy, proper and reliable investigation of serious charges against public officers. The institution of such machinery will relieve the Ministers also of much correspondence.

Wardha, 23-8-'50

K. G. M.

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