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INDUSTRIALIZE — AND PERISH!

BY
M. K. GANDHI

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INDUSTRIALIZE—AND PERISH!

BY
M. K. GANDHI

Compiled by
R. K. PRABHU



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

We are happy to publish this booklet compiled by Shri R. K. Prabhu. The title of the booklet conveys its contents. It may be recalled that a last solemn warning, so to say, to India and through India to the world was uttered by Mahatma Gandhi in a letter addressed by him to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in October, 1945. In this letter he declared that the reckless urbanization of civilization which is proceeding apace all over the world, including India, constitutes a serious menace to the progress of mankind, since in the crowded cities people will never be able to live in peace with one another without resort to violence and untruth, that non-violence and truth can be realized only in the simplicity of village life and that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. He maintained that it is possible for man's all real needs, material and spiritual, to be met in villages, suitably remodelled in the light of modern science. Such remodelling of villages, therefore, is the only means to avoid the menace of reckless industrialization and the modern cities which are its brood.

We hope the booklet will be appreciated.

30-1-1966

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
PUBLISHER'S NOTE	iii
1 THIS SATANIC CIVILIZATION	3
2 MODERN CITIES SPELL DOOM OF HUMANITY	8
3 DECLINE IN URBAN MORALS	12
4 WESTERN DEMOCRACIES ONLY IN NAME	15
5 THE CRAZE FOR MACHINERY	18
6 WARNINGS FROM HISTORY	25
7 IF INDIA BECOMES INDUSTRIALIZED	28
8 OUR CRIMINAL NEGLECT OF OUR VILLAGES	33
9 IF THE VILLAGE PERISHES INDIA WILL PERISH TOO	37
10 WHY THE VILLAGE INDUSTRIES MOVEMENT	42
11 MASS PRODUCTION <i>v.</i> PRODUCTION BY THE MASSES	48
12 HUMANITARIAN INDUSTRIAL POLICY FOR INDIA	56
13 THE MACHINE NO ONE CAN OUST	62
14 A SACRED LAW OF OUR BEING	66
15 RURAL DEMOCRACY IN ACTION	70
16 MY IDEAL VILLAGE	73
17 ECONOMIC <i>v.</i> MORAL PROGRESS	79
18 THE RICH AND THE POOR	84
19 ECONOMIC EQUALITY	87
20 IS CLASS WAR INEVITABLE?	91
21 RIGHTS OR DUTIES?	95
22 LABOUR SHOULD KNOW ITS STRENGTH	97
23 LAND TO THE TILLER	100
24 THE WEAPON OF SATYAGRAHA	104
25 BREAD LABOUR	105
26 TRUSTEESHIP THE ONLY SAFE SOLUTION	109
27 A CALL TO YOUTH	111
28 OUR FUTURE FROM OUR PAST	114
29 THE WORLD OF TOMORROW	117

INDUSTRIALIZE — AND PERISH!

TO THE READER

I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

M. K. GANDHI

Harijan, 29-4-1933, p. 2.

CHAPTER 1

THIS SATANIC CIVILIZATION

It is my firm opinion that Europe today represents not the spirit of God or Christianity but the spirit of Satan. And Satan's successes are the greatest when he appears with the name of God on his lips. Europe is today only nominally Christian. It is really worshipping Mammon. 'It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom.' Thus really spoke Jesus Christ. His so-called followers measure their moral progress by their material possessions.

Young India, 8-9-1920, p. 237

Formerly, when people wanted to fight with one another, they measured between them their bodily strength; now it is possible to take away thousands of lives by one man working behind a gun from a hill. This is civilization. Formerly, men worked in open air only as much as they liked. Now thousands of workmen meet together and for the sake of maintenance work in factories or mines. Their condition is worse than that of beasts. They are obliged to work, at the risk of their lives, at most dangerous occupations, for the sake of millionaires. . . . This civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed.

Hind Swaraj (1962), pp. 36-37

I am not aiming at destroying railways or hospitals, though I would certainly welcome their natural

destruction. Neither railways nor hospitals are a test of a high and pure civilization. At best they are a necessary evil. Neither adds one inch to the moral stature of a nation. Nor am I aiming at a permanent destruction of law courts much as I regard it as a 'consummation devoutly to be wished for'. Still less am I trying to destroy all machinery and mills. It requires a higher simplicity and renunciation than the people are today prepared for.

Young India, 26-1-1921, p. 27

✓ If I preach against the modern artificial life of sensual enjoyment, and ask men and women to go back to the simple life epitomized in the Charkha, I do so because I know, that without an intelligent return to simplicity, there is no escape from our descent to a state lower than brutality.

Young India, 21-7-1921, p. 228

I do want growth, I do want self-determination, I do want freedom, but I want all these for the soul. I doubt if the steel age is an advance upon the flint age. I am indifferent. It is the evolution of the soul to which the intellect and all our faculties have to be devoted.

Young India, 13-10-1921, p. 325

Is the world any the better for those quick instruments of locomotion? How do these instruments advance man's spiritual progress? Do they not in the last resort hamper it? And is there any limit to man's ambition? Once we were satisfied with travelling a few miles an hour; today we want to negotiate hundreds of miles an hour; one day we might desire to fly through space. What will be the result? Chaos.

Young India, 21-1-1926, p. 31

I wholeheartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distance and time, to increase animal appetites, and go to the ends of the earth in search of their satisfaction. If modern civilization stands for all this, and I have understood it to do so, I call it satanic.

Young India, 17-3-1927, p. 85

A time is coming when those, who are in the mad rush today of multiplying their wants, vainly thinking that they add to the real substance, real knowledge of the world, will retrace their steps and say: 'What have we done?' Civilizations have come and gone, and in spite of all our vaunted progress I am tempted to ask again and again 'To what purpose?' Wallace, a contemporary of Darwin, has said the same thing. Fifty years of brilliant inventions and discoveries, he has said, has not added one inch to the moral height of mankind. So said a dreamer and visionary if you will—Tolstoy. So said Jesus, and Buddha, and Muhammad, whose religion is being denied and falsified in my own country today.

Young India, 8-12-1927, p. 414

By all means drink deep of the fountains that are given to you in the Sermon on the Mount, but then you will have to take sackcloth and ashes. The teaching of the Sermon was meant for each and every one of us. You cannot serve both God and Mammon. God the Compassionate and the Merciful, Tolerance incarnate, allows Mammon to have his nine days' wonder. But I say to you . . . fly from that self-destroying but destructive show of Mammon.

Young India, 8-12-1927, p. 414

The fact is that this industrial civilization is a disease because it is *all* evil. Let us not be deceived by catchwords and phrases. I have no quarrel with steamships or telegraphs. They may stay, if they can, without the support of industrialism and all it connotes. They are not an end. We must not suffer exploitation for the sake of steamships and telegraphs. They are in no way indispensable for the permanent welfare of the human race. . . . India has withstood the onslaughts of other civilizations because she has stood firm on her own ground. Not that she has not made changes. But the changes she has made have promoted her growth. To change to industrialism is to court disaster. . . . Our concern is, therefore, to destroy industrialism at any cost. The present distress is undoubtedly insufferable. Pauperism must go. But industrialism is no remedy. . . .

Young India, 7-10-1926, p. 348

India's destiny lies not along the bloody way of the West, of which she shows signs of tiredness, but along the bloodless way of peace that comes from a simple and godly life. India is in danger of losing her soul. She cannot lose it and live. She must not therefore lazily and helplessly say, 'I cannot escape the onrush from the West.' She must be strong enough to resist it for her own sake and that of the world.

Young India, 7-10-1926, p. 348

What is the cause of the present chaos? It is exploitation, I will not say, of the weaker nations by the stronger, but of sister nations by sister nations. And my fundamental objection to machinery rests on the fact that it is machinery that has enabled these nations to exploit others. In itself it is a wooden thing and

can be turned to good purpose or bad. But it is easily turned to a bad purpose as we know.

Young India, 22-10-1931, p. 318

Machinery is like a snake-hole which may contain from one to a hundred snakes. Where there is machinery, there are large cities; and where there are large cities, there are tram-cars and railways; and there only does one see electric light. Honest physicians will tell you that where means of artificial locomotion have increased, the health of the people has suffered. I remember that when in a European town there was scarcity of money, the receipts of the tramway company, of the lawyers and of the doctors went down, and the people were less unhealthy. I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery.

Hind Swaraj (1962), p. 96

European civilization is no doubt suited for the Europeans, but it will mean ruin for India, if we endeavour to copy it. This is not to say that we may not adopt and assimilate whatever may be good and capable of assimilation by us, as it does not also mean that even the Europeans will not have to part with whatever evil might have crept into it. The incessant search for material comforts and their multiplication is such an evil; and I make bold to say that the Europeans themselves will have to remodel their outlook, if they are not to perish under the weight of the comforts to which they are becoming slaves. It may be that my reading is wrong, but I know that for India to run after the Golden Fleece is to court certain death. Let us engrave on our hearts the motto of a Western philosopher, 'Plain living and high thinking'.

Young India, 30-4-1931, p. 83

Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service.

From Yeravda Mandir (1935), Chap. 6

CHAPTER 2

MODERN CITIES SPELL DOOM OF HUMANITY

[From a letter to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, dated 5-10-1945]

I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognized that people will have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live at peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth.

I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realize truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life and this simplicity can best be found in the Charkha and all that the Charkha connotes. I must not fear if the world today is going the wrong way. It may be that India too will go that way and like the proverbial moth burn itself eventually in the flame round which it dances more and more fiercely. But it is my bounden duty up to my last breath to try to protect India and through India the entire world from such a doom.

The essence of what I have said is that man should rest content with what are his real needs and

become self-sufficient. If he does not have this control, he cannot save himself. After all, the world is made up of individuals just as it is the drops that constitute the ocean. . . . This is a well known truth. . . .

While I admire modern science, I find that it is the old looked at in the true light of modern science which should be reclothed and refashioned aright. You must not imagine that I am envisaging our village life as it is today. The village of my dreams is still in my mind. After all, every man lives in the world of his dreams. My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague, nor cholera, nor small-pox; no-one will be idle, no-one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour. . . . It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph . . . and the like. . . .

Towards New Horizons, (1959), pp. 4-5

There are two schools of thought current in the world. One wants to divide the world into cities and the other into villages. The village civilization and the city civilization are totally different things. One depended on machinery and industrialization, the other rested on handicraft. We have given preference to the latter.

After all, this industrialization and large-scale production was only of comparatively recent growth. We do not know how far it has contributed to our development and happiness, but we know this much that it has brought in its wake recent world wars.

This second world war is not still over and even before it comes to an end we are hearing of a third world war. Our country was never so unhappy and miserable as it is at present. In the cities people may be getting big profits and good wages but all that has become possible by sucking the blood of the villages.

Hindustan Standard, 6-12-1944

It is the city man who is responsible for war all over the world, never the villager.

Gleanings, (1949), p. 17

I regard the growth of cities as an evil thing, unfortunate for mankind and the world, unfortunate for England and certainly unfortunate for India. The British have exploited India through its cities. The latter have exploited the villages. The blood of the villages is the cement with which the edifice of the cities is built. I want the blood that is today inflating the arteries of the cities to run once again in the blood vessels of the villages.

Harijan, 23-6-1946, p. 198

The half a dozen modern cities are an excrescence and serve at the present moment the evil purpose of draining the life-blood of the villages. . . . The cities with their insolent torts are a constant menace to the life and liberty of the villagers.

Young India, 17-3-1927, p. 86

We may not be deceived by the wealth to be seen in the cities of India. It does not come from England or America. It comes from the blood of the poorest. There are said to be seven lakhs of villages in India. Some of them have simply been wiped out. No one has any record of those thousands who have

died of starvation and disease, in Bengal, Karnatak and elsewhere. The Government registers can give no idea of what the village folk are going through. But being a villager myself, I know the condition in the villages. I know village economics. I tell you that the pressure from the top crushes those at the bottom.

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 30-6-1934

The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of the women working in the mills is shocking. When there were no mills, these women were not starving. If the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become an unhappy land. It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth we only waste our money; but by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped, and I call in support of my statement the very mill-hands as witnesses. And those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men. It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller would be better than the American Rockefeller. Impoverished India can become free, but it will be hard for any India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom. . . . Money renders a man helpless. The other thing which is equally harmful is sexual vice. Both are poison. A snake-bite is a lesser poison than these two, because the former merely destroys the body but the latter destroy body, mind and soul. We need not,

therefore, be pleased with the prospect of the growth of the mill-industry.

Hind Swaraj, (1962), p. 94

You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages. Even if Hitler was so minded, he could not devastate seven hundred thousand non-violent villages. He would himself become non-violent in the process. Rural economy, as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have, therefore, to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent, and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning wheel.

Harijan, 4-11-1939, p. 331

CHAPTER 3

DECLINE IN URBAN MORALS

[From a lecture delivered by Gandhiji at a meeting of the Muir Central College Economic Society, held at Allahabad on 22-12-1916.]

That you cannot serve God and Mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. We have to make our choice. Western nations are today groaning under the heel of the monster god of materialism. They measure their progress in £.s.d. American wealth has become the standard. She is the envy of the other nations. I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt, if it were made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be 'wise, temperate and furious' in a

moment. I would have our leaders teach us to be morally supreme in the world. This land of ours was once, we are told, the abode of the Gods. It is not possible to conceive Gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the din of mill chimneys and factories and whose roadways are traversed by rushing engines, dragging numerous cars crowded with men who know not for the most part what they are after, who are often absent-minded, and whose tempers do not improve by being uncomfortably packed like sardines in boxes and finding themselves in the midst of utter strangers, who would oust them if they could and whom they would, in their turn, oust similarly. I refer to these things because they are held to be symbolical of material progress. But they add not an atom to our happiness. This is what Wallace, the great scientist, has said as his deliberate judgment:

"In the earliest records which have come down to us from the past, we find ample indications that general ethical considerations and conceptions, the accepted standard of morality, and the conduct resulting from these, were in no degree inferior to those which prevail today."

In a series of chapters he then proceeds to examine the position of the English nation under the advance in wealth it has made. He says: "This rapid growth of wealth and increase of our power over Nature put too great a strain upon our crude civilization, on our superficial Christianity, and it was accompanied by various forms of social immorality almost as amazing and unprecedented." He then shows how factories have risen on the corpses of men, women and children, how, as the country has rapidly

advanced in riches, it has gone down in morality. He shows this by dealing with insanitation, life-destroying trades, adulteration, bribery and gambling. He shows how with the advance of wealth, justice has become immoral, deaths from alcoholism and suicide have increased, the average of premature births and congenital defects has increased and prostitution has become an institution. He concludes his examination with these pregnant remarks:

“The proceedings of the divorce courts show other aspects of the result of wealth and lesiure, while a friend who had been a good deal in London society assured me that, both in country houses and in London, various kinds of orgies were occasionally to be met with, which would hardly have been surpassed in the period of the most dissolute emperors. Of war, too, I need say nothing. It has always been more or less chronic since the rise of the Roman Empire; but there is now undoubtedly a disinclination for war among all civilized peoples. Yet the vast burden of armaments, taken together with the most pious declarations in favour of peace, must be held to show an almost total absence of morality as a guiding principle among the governing classes.”

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Natesan, pp. 353-56

‘You have called cities boils or abscesses on the body politic. What should be done with these boils?’

If you ask a doctor he will tell you what to do with a boil. It has to be cured either by lancing or by the application of plasters and poultices. Edward Carpenter called civilization a malady which needed a cure. The growth of big cities is only a symptom of that malady. Being a nature curist, I am naturally in favour of nature’s way of cure by a general purification of the system. If the hearts of the city-dwellers

remain rooted in the villages, if they become truly village-minded, all other things will automatically follow and the boil will quickly heal.

Harijan, 28-5-1946, p. 282

CHAPTER 4

WESTERN DEMOCRACIES ONLY IN NAME

Democracy of the West is, in my opinion, only so-called. It has germs in it, certainly, of the true type. But it can only come when all violence is eschewed and malpractices disappear. The two go hand in hand. Indeed, malpractice is a species of violence. If India is to evolve the true type, there should be no compromise with violence or untruth.

Harijan, 3-9-1938, p. 242

There is no escape from the impending doom save through a bold and unconditional acceptance of the non-violent method with all its glorious implications. Democracy and violence can ill go together. The States that are today nominally democratic have either to become frankly totalitarian or, if they are to become truly democratic, they must become courageously non-violent. It is a blasphemy to say that non-violence can only be practised by individuals and never by nations which are composed of individuals.

Harijan, 12-11-1938, p. 328

I feel that fundamentally the disease is the same in Europe as it is in India, in spite of the fact that in the former country the people enjoy political self-government. . . .

Asian and African races are exploited for their partial benefit, and they, on their part, are being exploited by the ruling class or caste under the sacred name of democracy. At the root, therefore, the disease appears to be the same as in India. The same remedy is, therefore, likely to be applicable. Shorn of all camouflage, the exploitation of the masses of Europe is sustained by violence.

Violence on the part of the masses will never remove the disease. Anyway up to now experience shows that success of violence has been short-lived. It has led to greater violence. What has been tried hitherto has been a variety of violence and artificial checks dependent mainly upon the will of the violent. At the crucial moment these checks have naturally broken down. It seems to me, therefore, that sooner or later, the European masses will have to take to non-violence if they are to find their deliverance. That there is no hope of their taking to it in a body and at once does not baffle me. A few thousand years are but a speck in the vast time circle. Someone has to make a beginning with a faith that will not flinch. I doubt not that the masses, even of Europe, will respond, but what is more emergent in point of time is not so much a large experiment in non-violence as a precise grasp of the meaning of deliverance. From what will the masses be delivered? It will not do to have a vague generalization and to answer 'from exploitation and degradation'. Is not the answer this that they want to occupy the status that capital does today? If so, it can be attained only by violence. But if they want to shun the evils of capital, in other words, if they would revise the view-point of capital, they would strive to attain a juster distribution of the

products of labour. This immediately takes us to contentment and simplicity, voluntarily adopted. Under the new outlook multiplicity of material wants will not be the aim of life, the aim will be rather restriction consistently with comfort. We shall cease to think of getting what we can but we shall decline to receive what all cannot get. It occurs to me that it ought not to be difficult to make successful appeal to the masses of Europe in terms of economics and a fairly successful working of such an experiment must lead to immense and unconscious spiritual results. I do not believe that the spiritual law works in a field of its own. On the contrary, it expresses itself only through the ordinary activities of life. It thus affects the economic, the social and the political fields.

If the masses of Europe can be persuaded to adopt the view I have suggested, it will be found that violence will be wholly unnecessary to attain the aim and they can easily come to their own by following out the obvious corollaries of non-violence. It may even be that what seems to me to be so natural and feasible for India, may take longer to permeate the inert Indian masses than the active European masses. But I must reiterate my confession that all my argument is based on suppositions and assumptions and must, therefore, be taken for what it is worth.

Young India, 3-9-1925, p. 304

I believe that in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuinely democratic struggle for freedom than ours. I read Carlyle's *History of the French Revolution* while I was in prison, and Pandit Jawaharlal has told me something about the Russian revolution. But it is my conviction that inasmuch as these struggles were fought with the weapon of violence,

they failed to realize the democratic ideal. In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by non-violence, there will be equal freedom for all. Everybody will be his own master.

Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government,—1942-44, (Edn. 1945), pp. 173-74

A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilizing the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

Harijan, 23-9-1939, p. 278

CHAPTER 5

THE CRAZE FOR MACHINERY

'Are you against all machinery?'

My answer is emphatically, 'No'. But, I am against its indiscriminate multiplication. I refuse to be dazzled by the seeming triumph of machinery. I am uncompromisingly against all destructive machinery. But simple tools and instruments and such machinery as saves individual labour and lightens the burden of the millions of cottages, I should welcome.

Young India, 17-6-1926, p. 218

What I object to, is the *craze* for machinery, not machinery as such. The *craze* is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour', till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time

and labour, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all; I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the back of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might.

‘Then you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today.’

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 over-worked and machinery, instead of becoming a hindrance, will be a help. I am aiming, not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation.

‘When logically argued out, that would seem to imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go.’

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 Sewing Machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is a romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the Sewing Machine in order to save her from unnecessary labour. He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of everyone who could purchase a sewing machine.

‘But in that case there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Sewing Machines, and it would have to contain power-driven machinery of ordinary type.’

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 the motive. It is an alteration in the condition of labour that I want. This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery. The machine will, under these conditions, be as much a help to the man working it as the State, or the man who owns it. The present mad rush will cease, and the labourer will work (as I have said) under attractive and ideal conditions. This is but one of the exceptions I have in mind. The Sewing Machine had love at its back. The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of labour of the individual should be the object, and honest humanitarian consideration, and not greed, the motive. Replace greed by love and everything will come right.

Young India, 13-11-1924, p. 378

Organization of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few and for the exploitation of many I hold to be altogether wrong. Much of the organization of machinery of the present age is of that type. The movement of the spinning-wheel is an organized attempt to displace machinery from that state of exclusiveness and exploitation and to place it in its proper state. Under

my scheme, therefore, men in charge of machinery will think not of themselves or even of the nation to which they belong, but of the whole human race.

Young India, 17-9-1925, p. 321

Machinery has its place; it has come to stay. But it must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour. An improved plough is a good thing. But if by some chances, one man could plough up by some mechanical invention of his the whole of the land of India and control all the agricultural produce and if the millions had no other occupation, they would starve, and being idle, they would become dunces, as many have already become. There is hourly danger of man being reduced to that unenviable state.

I would welcome every improvement in the cottage machine, but I know that it is criminal to displace the hand-labour by power-driven spindles unless one is at the same time ready to give millions of farmers some other occupation in their homes.

Young India, 5-11-1925, p. 377

Ours has been described as the machine age because the machine dominates our economy. Now, what is a machine? One may ask. In a sense, man is the most wonderful machine in creation. It can neither be duplicated nor copied. I have, however, used the word not in its wider sense, but in the sense of an appliance that tends to displace human or animal labour instead of supplementing it or merely increasing its efficiency.

This is the first differential characteristic of the machine. The second characteristic is that there is no limit to its growth or evolution. This cannot be said of human labour. There is a limit beyond which its capacity or mechanical efficiency cannot go. Out of

this circumstance arises the characteristic of the machine.

It seems to be possessed of a will or genius of its own. It is antagonistic to man's labour. Thus it tends more to displace man, one machine doing the work of hundred, if not a thousand, who go to swell the army of the unemployed and the under-employed, not because it is desirable but because that is its law. In America it has perhaps reached the extreme limit.

Harijan, 25-8-1946, p. 281

I know that man cannot live without industry. Therefore, I cannot be opposed to industrialization. But I have a great concern about introducing machine industry. The machine produces much too fast, and brings with it a sort of economic system which I cannot grasp. I do not want to accept something when I see its evil effects which outweigh whatever good it brings with it. I want the dumb millions of our land to be healthy and happy and I want them to grow spiritually. As yet for this purpose we do not need the machine. There are many, too many idle hands. But as we grow in understanding, if we feel the need of machines, we certainly will have them. We want industry, let us become industrious. Let us become more self-dependent, then we will not follow the other people's lead so much. We shall introduce machines if and when we need them. Once we shall have shaped our life on Ahimsa, we shall know how to control the machine.

Towards New Horizons, (1959), pp. 45-46

I hold that the machinery method is harmful when the same thing can be done easily by millions of hands not otherwise occupied. It is any day better and safer for the millions, spread in the seven hundred

thousand villages of India scattered over an area nineteen hundred miles' long and fifteen hundred broad, that they manufacture their clothing in their own villages even as they prepare their own food. These villages cannot retain the freedom they have enjoyed from time immemorial, if they do not control the production of prime necessities of life. Western observers hastily argue from Western conditions that what may be true of them must be true of India where conditions are different in so many material respects. Application of the laws of economics must vary with varying conditions.

The machinery method is no doubt easy. But it is not necessarily a blessing on that account. The descent to a certain place is easy but dangerous. The method of the hand is a blessing, in the present case at any rate, because it is hard. If the craze for the machinery method continues, it is highly likely that a time will come when we shall be so incapacitated and weak that we shall begin to curse ourselves for having forgotten the use of the living machines given to us by God. Millions cannot keep fit by games and athletics. And why should they exchange the useful, productive, hardy occupations for the useless, unproductive and expensive games and exercises? They are all right today for a change and recreation. They will jar upon us when they become a necessary occupation in order that we may have the appetite for eating the food in the production of which we had no hand or part.

When India becomes self-supporting, self-reliant and proof against temptations and exploitation, she will cease to be the object of greedy attraction for any power in the West or the East, and will then feel secure

without having to carry the burden of expensive armament. Her internal economy will be India's strongest bulwark against aggression.

Young India, 2-7-1931, p. 161

Dead machinery must not be pitted against the millions of living machines represented by the villagers scattered in the seven hundred thousand villages of India. Machinery to be well used has to help and ease human effort. The present use of machinery tends more and more to concentrate wealth in the hands of a few in total disregard of millions of men and women whose bread is snatched by it out of their mouths. The movement represented by the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. has been conceived so as to minimize the evil wrought by the craze for amassing large fortunes through the use of dead tools in order to avoid having to deal with very sensitive human tools.

Harijan, 14-9-1935, p. 244

I am not fighting machinery as such, but the madness of thinking that machinery saves labour. Men 'save' labour until thousands of them are without work and die of hunger on the streets. I want to secure employment and livelihood not only to part of the human race, but for all. I will not have the enrichment of a few at the expense of the community. At present, the machine is helping a small minority to live on the exploitation of the masses. The motive force of this minority is not humanity and love of their kind, but greed and avarice. This state of things I am attacking with all my might.

Lead Kindly Light, by Vincent Sheen, Chap. IV, p. 65 at p. 171

WARNINGS FROM HISTORY

Of course, industrialism is like a force of nature, but it is given to man to control nature and to conquer her forces. His dignity demands from him resolution in the face of overwhelming odds. Our daily life is such a conquest. . . .

What is industrialism but a control of the majority by a small minority? There is nothing attractive about it nor is there anything inevitable in it. If the majority simply wills to say, 'No' to the blandishments of the minority, the latter is powerless for mischief.

It is good to have faith in human nature. I live because I have that faith. But that faith does not blind me to the fact of history that, whilst in the ultimate all is well, individuals and groups called nations have before now perished. Rome, Greece, Babylon, Egypt and many others are a standing testimony in proof of the fact that nations have perished before now because of their misdeeds. What may be hoped for is that Europe on account of her fine and scientific intellect will realize the obvious and retrace her steps, and from the demoralizing industrialism she will find a way out. It will not necessarily be a return to the old absolute simplicity. But it will have to be a reorganization in which village life will predominate, and in which brute and material force will be subordinated to the spiritual force.

Young India, 6-8-1925, p. 273

European writers are handicapped for want of experience and accurate information. They cannot

guide us beyond a certain measure if they have to generalize from European examples which cannot be on all fours with Indian conditions, because in Europe they have nothing like the conditions of India, not even excluding Russia. What may be, therefore, true of Europe is not necessarily true of India. We know, too, that each nation has its own characteristics and individuality. India has her own; and if we are to find out a true solution for her many ills, we shall have to take all the idiosyncracies of her constitution into account, and then prescribe a remedy. I claim that to industrialize India in the same sense as Europe is to attempt the impossible. India has stood many a storm. Each has left its own indelible mark it is true, but she has hitherto dauntlessly maintained her individuality. India is one of the few nations of the earth which have witnessed the fall of many civilizations, herself remaining scatheless. India is one of the few nations on the earth which have retained some of their ancient institutions although they have been overlaid with superstition and error. But she has hitherto shown an inherent capacity for purging herself of error and superstition. My faith in her ability to solve the economic problem that faces her millions has never been so bright as it is today, especially after my study of conditions in Bengal.

Young India, 6-8-1925, p. 273

To make India like England and America is to find some other races and places of the earth for exploitation. So far it appears that the Western nations have divided all the known races outside Europe for exploitation and that there are no new worlds to discover. What can be the fate of India trying to ape the West? Indeed the West has had a surfeit of in-

dustrialism and exploitation. If they who are suffering from the disease are unable to find a remedy to correct evils, how shall we, mere novices, be able to avoid them?

Young India, 7-10-1926, p. 348

I would destroy that system today, if I had the power. I would use the most deadly weapons, if I believed that they would destroy it. I refrain only because the use of such weapons would only perpetuate the system though it may destroy its present administrators. Those, who seek to destroy men rather than their manners, adopt the latter and become worse than those whom they destroy under the mistaken belief that the manners will die with the men. They do not know the root of the evil.

Young India, 17-3-1927, p. 85

As I look at Russia where the apotheosis of industrialization has been reached, the life there does not appeal to me. To use the language of the Bible, "What shall it avail a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" In modern terms, it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full-blooded, fully-developed member of society. The villages must become self-sufficient. I see no other solution if one has to work in terms of Ahimsa. Now I have that conviction.

Harijan, 28-1-1939, p. 438

There is a growing body of enlightened opinion which distrusts this civilization which has insatiable material ambition at one end and consequent war at the other. But whether good or bad, why must India become industrial in the Western sense? The Western civilization is urban. Small countries like England or

Italy may afford to urbanize their systems. A big country like America with a very sparse population, perhaps, cannot do otherwise. But one would think that a big country, with a teeming population with an ancient rural tradition which has hitherto answered its purpose, need not, must not copy the Western model. What is good for one nation situated in one condition is not necessarily good enough for another differently situated. One man's food is often another man's poison. Physical geography of a country has a predominant share in determining its culture. A fur coat may be a necessity for the dweller in the polar regions, it will smother those living in the equatorial regions.

Young India, 25-7-1929, p. 244

CHAPTER 7

IF INDIA BECOMES INDUSTRIALIZED

Industrialization is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. . . . India, when it begins to exploit other nations—as it must if it becomes industrialized—will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world. And why should I think of industrializing India to exploit other nations? Don't you see the tragedy of the situation, viz. that we can find work for our 300 million unemployed, but England can find none for its three million and is faced with a problem that baffles the greatest intellects of England? The

future of industrialism is dark. England has got successful competitors in America, France, Japan, and Germany. It has competitors in the handful of mills in India, and as there has been an awakening in India, even so there will be an awakening in South Africa with its vastly richer resources—natural, mineral and human. The mighty English look quite pigmies before the mighty races of Africa. They are noble savages after all, you will say. They are certainly noble, but no savages; and in the course of a few years the Western nations may cease to find in Africa a dumping ground for their wares. And if the future of industrialism is dark for the West, would it not be darker still for India?

Young India, 12-11-1931, p. 355

‘You would not industrialize India?’

I would indeed, in my sense of the term. The village communities should be revived. Indian villages produced and supplied to the Indian towns and cities all their wants. India became impoverished when our cities became foreign markets and began to drain the villages dry by dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands.

‘You would then go back to the natural economy?’

Yes. Otherwise I should go back to the city. I am quite capable of running a big enterprise, but I deliberately sacrificed the ambition, not as a sacrifice, but because my heart rebelled against it. For I should have no share in the spoliation of the nation which is going on from day to day. But I am industrializing the village in a different way.

Harijan, 27-2-1937, p. 18

I do not believe that industrialization is necessary in any case for any country. It is much less so for India. Indeed, I believe that Independent India

can only discharge her duty towards a groaning world by adopting a simple but ennobled life by developing her thousands of cottages and living at peace with the world. High thinking is inconsistent with complicated material life based on high speed imposed on us by Mammon worship. All the graces of life are possible only when we learn the art of living nobly.

There may be sensation in living dangerously. We must draw the distinction between living in the face of danger and living dangerously. A man who dares to live alone in a forest infested by wild beasts and wilder men without a gun and with God as his only help, lives in the face of danger. A man who lives perpetually in mid-air and dives to the earth below to the admiration of a gaping world lives dangerously. One is a purposeful, the other a purposeless life.

Whether such plain living is possible for an isolated nation, however large geographically and numerically, in the face of a world armed to the teeth and in the midst of pomp and circumstance is a question open to the doubt of a sceptic. The answer is straight and simple. If plain life is worth living, then the attempt is worth making even though only an individual or a group makes the effort.

At the same time I believe that some key industries are necessary. I do not believe in arm-chair or armed socialism. I believe in action according to my belief, without waiting for wholesale conversion. Hence, without having to enumerate key industries, I would have State ownership, where a large number of people have to work together. The ownership of the products of their labour, whether skilled or unskilled, will vest

in them through the State. But as I can conceive such a State only based on non-violence, I would not dispossess moneyed men by force but would invite their co-operation in the process of conversion to State ownership. There are no *pariahs* of society, whether they are millionaires or paupers. The two are sores of the same disease. And all are men "for a' that".

And I avow this belief in the face of the inhumanities we have witnessed and may still have to witness in India as elsewhere. Let us live in the face of danger.

Harijan, 1-9-1946, p. 285

A factory employs a few hundreds and renders thousands unemployed. I may produce tons of oil from an oil mill, but I also drive thousands of oilmen out of employment. I call this destructive energy, whereas production by the labour of millions of hands is constructive and conducive to the common good. Mass production through power-driven machinery, even when State-owned, will be of no avail.

But why not, it is asked, save the labour of millions, and give them more leisure for intellectual pursuits? Leisure is good and necessary up to a point only. God created man to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and I dread the prospect of our being able to produce all that we want, including our foodstuffs, out of a conjurer's hat.

Harijan, 16-5-1936, p. 111

God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic

exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.

Young India, 20-12-1928, p. 422

Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.

Harijan, 29-8-1936, p. 226

Pandit Nehru wants industrialization, because he thinks that if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them.

Harijan, 29-9-1940, p. 299

I have the conviction within me that when all these achievements of the machine age will have disappeared, these our handicrafts will remain; when all exploitations will have ceased, service and honest labour will remain. It is because this faith sustains me that I am going on with my work. . . . Indomitable faith in their work sustained men like Stephenson and Columbus. Faith in my work sustains me.

Harijan, 30-11-1935, p. 329

OUR CRIMINAL NEGLECT OF OUR VILLAGES

[From a summary of Gandhiji's address at a public gathering at Indore.]

The reason why our average life-rate is deplorably low, the reason why we are getting more and more impoverished is that we have neglected our 7,00,000 villages. We have indeed thought of them, but only to the extent of exploiting them. We read thrilling accounts of the 'glory that was Ind', and of the land that was flowing with milk and honey; but today it is a land of starving millions. We are sitting in this fine pandal under a blaze of electric lights, but we do not know that we are burning these lights at the expense of the poor. We have no right to use these lights if we forget that we owe these to them.

There is a difference between the civilization of the East—the civilization of India—and that of the West. It is not generally realized wherein the difference lies. Our geography is different, our history is different, our ways of living are different. Our continent, though vast, is a speck of the globe, but it is the most thickly populated, barring China. Well, now, the economics and civilization of a country where the pressure of population on land is greatest are and must be different from those of a country where the pressure is least. Sparsely populated, America may have need of machinery. India may not need it at all. Where there are millions and millions of units of idle labour, it is no use thinking of labour-saving devices. If someone devised a machine which saved us the trouble of

using our hands to eat, eating would cease to be a pleasure, it would become a torture. The reason of our poverty is the extinction of our industries and our consequent unemployment. Some years ago India's agricultural population was said to be 70 per cent. Today it is said to be 90 per cent. It does not mean that 90 per cent are agriculturists, but that, instead of 70 per cent who depended on land, 90 per cent are now driven to depend on land. In other words, whereas there were industries and crafts enough to feed the 20 per cent, some time ago, these are no longer there and the people have thus been thrown on land. They thus steal their living, not because they want to, but because there is no more land.

Not that there is not enough land to feed our 35 crores. It is absurd to say that India is overpopulated and that the surplus population must die. I am sure that if all the land that is available was properly utilized and made to yield up to its capacity, it would surely maintain the whole population. Only we have got to be industrious and to make two blades of grass grow where one grows today.

Throw off Your Inertia

The remedy is to identify ourselves with the poor villager and to help him make the land yield its plenty, help him produce what we need, and confine ourselves to use what he produces, live as he lives, and persuade him to take to more rational ways of diet and living.

We eat mill-ground flour, and even the poor villager walks with a head-load of half a maund grain to have it ground in the nearest flour mill. Do you know that in spite of the plenty of foodstuffs we produce we import wheat from outside and we eat the

'superfine' flour from Australia? We will not use our hand-ground flour, and the poor villager also foolishly copies us. We thus turn our wealth into waste, nectar into poison. For whole meal is the proper meal. Mill-ground flour is vitaminless flour, mill-ground flour kept for days is not only vitaminless, but poison. But we will not exert ourselves to produce flour which we must eat fresh every day, and will pay for less nutritious things and purchase ill-health in the bargain. This is not any abstruse economic truth, it is a fact which is daily happening before our eyes. The same is the case with rice and *gur* and oil. We will eat rice, polished of its substance, and eat less nutritious sugar and pay more for it than more nutritious *gur*. We have suffered the village oilman to be driven to extinction and we eat adulterated oils. We idolize the cow, but kill her by slow degrees. We eat honey and kill the honey-bee, with the result that honey is such a rare commodity today that it is only available to a 'Mahatma' like me or to those who must have it from the physician as a vehicle for the drugs he prescribes. If we took the trouble of learning scientific and harmless bee-keeping, we should get it cheaper and our children would get out of it all the carbohydrates they need. In all our dietetics we mistake the shadow for the substance, preferring bone-white sugar to rich brown *gur* and pale white bread to rich brown bran-bread.

We are said to be a nation of daily bathers. That we are, to be sure, but we are none the better for it. For we bathe with unclean water, we foul our tanks and rivers with filth and use that water for drinking and bath. We lawyers and degree-holders and doctors will not learn the elementary principles of

sanitation and hygiene. We have not yet devised the most economical method of disposal of our evacuations and we turn our open healthy spaces into breeding grounds of disease.

I implore you to throw off your inertia, to bestir yourselves to study these elementary facts and live more rational lives and learn how to turn waste into wealth. I have told you simple truths which we would soon realize and act up to if we threw off the inertia of ages. But we have shunned body-labour to the detriment of our brains, and thus rest content with the irrational ways of diet and living. Let us pull ourselves together, and resolve to make our bodies and brains more active.

Harijan, 11-5-1935, p. 103

I have found that the town-dweller has generally exploited the villager, in fact he has lived on the poor villager's subsistence. Many a British official has written about the conditions of the people of India. No one has, to my knowledge, said that the Indian villager has enough to keep body and soul together. On the contrary they have admitted that the bulk of the population live on the verge of starvation and ten per cent are semi-starved, and that millions have to rest content with a pinch of dirty salt and chillies and polished rice or parched grain. You may be sure that if any one of us were to be asked to live on that diet, we should not expect to survive it longer than a month or should be afraid of losing our mental faculties. And yet our villagers go through that state from day to day.

Harijan, 4-4-1936, pp. 63-64

CHAPTER 9

IF THE VILLAGE PERISHES INDIA WILL PERISH TOO

In reply to a question by Maurice Frydman, viz., "What then is the secret of your concentration on the village?" Gandhiji said:

"I have been saying that if untouchability stays, Hinduism goes; even so I would say that if the village perishes, India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others."

"I have been trying to understand your village industries movement," said Mr. Frydman, "for the last two years, but I have learnt today in a few minutes what I had not learnt during these two years. . . . You are more radical than Socialists. They are against the worker being exploited; you are not only against this, but also against the worker exploiting others."

Q. But comforts may be necessary even for man's spiritual advancement. One could not advance

himself by identifying himself with the discomfort and squalor of the villager.

A. A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary, but above a certain level, it becomes a hindrance instead of help. Therefore, the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare. The satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must meet at a certain point a dead stop, before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness. A man must arrange his physical and cultural circumstances so that they do not hinder him in his service of humanity, on which all his energies should be concentrated.

Harijan, 29-8-1936, pp. 225-26

The more I penetrate the villages, the greater is the shock delivered as I perceive the blank stare in the eyes of the villagers I meet. Having nothing else to do but to work as labourers side by side with their bullocks, they have become almost like them. It is a tragedy of the first magnitude that millions have ceased to use their hands as hands. Nature is revenging herself upon us with terrible effect for this criminal waste of the gift she has bestowed upon us human beings. We refuse to make full use of the gift. And it is the exquisite mechanism of the hands that among a few other things separates us from the beast. Millions of us use them merely as feet. The result is that she starves both the body and the mind.

The spinning wheel alone can stop this reckless waste. It can do that now and without any extraordinary outlay of money or intelligence. Owing to this waste, we are living in a state almost of sus-

pended animation. It can be revived if only every home is again turned into a spinning mill and every village into a weaving mill. With it will at once revive the ancient rustic art and the rustic song. A semi-starved nation can have neither religion nor art nor organization.

Young India, 17-2-1927, p. 52

The moment you talk to them [the Indian peasants] and they begin to speak, you will find wisdom drops from their lips. Behind the crude exterior you will find a deep reservoir of spirituality. I call this culture—you will not find such a thing in the West. You try to engage a European peasant in conversation and you will find that he is uninterested in things spiritual.

Harijan, 28-1-1939, p. 439

In the case of the Indian villager, an age-old culture is hidden under an encrustment of crudeness. Take away the encrustation, remove his chronic poverty and his illiteracy and you have the finest specimen of what a cultured, cultivated, free citizen should be.

Harijan, 28-1-1939, p. 439

Any country that exposes itself to unlimited foreign competition can be reduced to starvation and therefore, subjection if the foreigners desire it. This is known as peaceful penetration. One has to go only a step further to understand that the result would be the same as between hand-made goods and those made by power-driven machinery. We are seeing the process going on before our eyes. Little flour mills are ousting the *chakki*, oil mills the village *ghani*, rice mills the village *dhenki*, sugar mills the village *gur-pans*, etc. This displacement of village labour

is impoverishing the villagers and enriching the moneyed men. If the process continues sufficiently long, the villagers will be destroyed without any further effort. No Chengis Khan could devise a more ingenious or more profitable method of destroying these villages. And the tragedy of it all is that the villagers are unconsciously but none the less surely contributing to their own destruction. To complete the tale of their woe, let the reader know that even cultivation has ceased to be profitable. For some crops, the villager does not cover even the cost of seed.

Harijan, 20-6-1936, p. 145

It is only when the cities realize the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive from them, instead of selfishly exploiting them, that a healthy and moral relationship between the two will spring up. And if the city children are to play their part in this great and noble work of social reconstruction, the vocations through which they are to receive their education ought to be directly related to the requirements of the villages.

Harijan, 9-10-1937, p. 293

Imagine a nation working only five hours per day on an average, and this not by choice but by force of circumstances, and you have a realistic picture of India. If the reader would visualize the picture, he must dismiss from his mind the busy fuss of the city life or the grinding fatigue of the factory life or the slavery of the plantation. These are but drops in the ocean of Indian humanity. If he would visualize the picture of the Indian skeleton, he must think of the eighty per cent of the population which is working its own fields, and which has practically no

occupation for at least four months in the year, and which therefore lives on the borderland of starvation. This is the normal condition. The ever recurring famines make a large addition to this enforced idleness.

Young India, 3-11-1921, p. 350

I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its few cities but in its, 7,00,000 villages. But we town-dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns and the villages were created to minister to our needs. We have hardly ever paused to inquire if those poor folk get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves with and whether they have a roof to shelter themselves from sun and rain.

Harijan, 4-4-1936, p. 63

What India needs is not the concentration of capital in a few hands, but its distribution so as to be within easy reach of the 7½ lakhs of villages that make this continent 1900 miles long and 1500 miles broad.

Young India, 23-3-1921, p. 93

I suggest that if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralize 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.

Harijan, 30-12-1939, p. 391

CHAPTER 10

WHY THE VILLAGE INDUSTRIES MOVEMENT

The idea behind the village industries scheme is that we should look to the villages for the supply of our daily needs and that, when we find that some needs are not so supplied, we should see whether with a little trouble and organization, they cannot be profitably supplied by the villagers. In estimating the profit, we should think of the villager, not of ourselves. It may be that, in the initial stages, we might have to pay a little more than the ordinary price and get an inferior article in the bargain. Things will improve, if we will interest ourselves in the supplier of our needs and insist on his doing better and take the trouble of helping to do better.

Harijan, 23-11-1934, p. 324

A fair friend, who was enthused over the contemplated formation of the All-India Village Industries Association, on reading my press message on preliminary programme, writes:

“The very idea of the revival or encouragement of the hand-husking of rice and *chakki*-grinding even for villages has scared me from, and abated my enthusiasm for, village work. It seems to me an enormous waste of one's time and energy not to take advantage of labour-saving devices in the uplift scheme. If the villagers, and along with them the uplift workers, have to husk and grind, there will hardly be leisure left for them to attend to anything else for their improvement. Besides, if the primitive methods were revived, the men will take up the work in the first flush

of enthusiasm; but ultimately the brunt of the whole work, I mean husking and grinding, will fall on us, women, and there will be a setback to the little progress we have already made."

Underlying this argument is a fallacy. There is no question of refusing to take advantage of labour-saving devices. If the villagers had enough to eat and to clothe themselves with, there would be no cause for home-grinding or home-husking, assuming that the question of health was not of any importance or, if it was, there was no difference between home-ground flour and mill-ground, or home-husked rice and mill-husked. But the problem is that the villagers became idle when they left off husking and grinding even for their own use, and made no good use of their idle hours, whether for uplift or otherwise. A starving man or woman who has time on his or her hand will surely be glad to earn an honest anna during that time, for, he or she will resent being advised to save his or her labour when either can turn it into a few pice to alleviate starvation. My correspondent is wrong in thinking that the uplift worker has either to grind or husk. He has certainly to learn the art and know the tools, so that he can suggest improvements and understand the limitations of the tools. She is wrong, again, in thinking that in the first flush of enthusiasm men will be called upon to grind or husk or will perform these tasks of their own accord and ultimately let the brunt fall on the shoulders of women. The fact is that husking and grinding was the prerogative of women, and tens of thousands made a living out of this task, which was both dignified and invigorative. Now they are perforce idle, because the vast majority of them have not

been able to find another employment in the place of these two, which we have snatched away from them.

When the fair friend writes about the "little progress" that the women have already made, she has undoubtedly the city-dwellers in mind, for the village life is entirely untouched by uplift workers. The majority of them do not even know how the women or men live in the 7,00,000 villages of this vast land. We little know how they have deteriorated for want of nourishing food and protective clothing. And we little know how, being fed on un-nutritious rice or flour, which are their staple, they and their children lose stamina and what little vitality they have.

I have no partiality for return to the primitive method of grinding, and husking for the sake of them. I suggest the return, because there is no other way of giving employment to the millions of villagers who are living in idleness. In my opinion, village uplift is impossible, unless we solve the pressing economic distress. Therefore, to induce the villagers to utilize their idle hours is in itself solid uplift work. I invite the fair correspondent and those who feel like her to go to some villages, live there for some time in the midst of the villagers and try to live like them, and they will soon perceive the soundness of my argument.

Harijan, 30-11-1934, p. 330

"To my unaided mind you appear to be opening the first campaign of an endless and quixotic war against modern civilization. Long ago you proclaimed yourself its sleepless enemy, and now you would, if you could, turn it back on the course it has pursued for some millennia. I reel at the mere thought."

This is from an intimate letter from a dear friend who wrote in reply to my letter, inquiring if he could extend his co-operation in the effort. As the view expressed so frankly by the friend is, I know, shared by quite a number of friends, it is well for me to explain my position. It would be impertinent for me to do so, if my position was not also that of the A.I.V.I.A.

In seeking to revive such village industries as are capable of being revived, I am making no such attempt as the friend ascribes to me. I am trying to do what every lover of village life, everyone who realizes the tragic meaning of the disintegration of villages is doing or trying to do. Why am I turning back the course of modern civilization, when I ask the villager to grind his own meal, eat it whole, including the nourishing bran, or when I ask him to turn sugarcane into *gud* for his own requirements, if not for sale? Am I turning back the course of modern civilization, when I ask the villagers not merely to grow raw produce, but to turn it into marketable products and thereby add a few more pies to their daily income?

And surely modern civilization is not millennia old. We can almost give its birth an exact date. If I could do it, I would most assuredly destroy or radically change much that goes under the name of modern civilization. But that is an old story of life. The attempt is undoubtedly there. Its success depends upon God. But the attempt to revive and encourage the remunerative village industries is not part of such an attempt, except in so far as every one of my activities, including the propagation of non-violence, can be described as such an attempt. The revival of village industries is but an extension of the Khadi

effort. Hand-spun cloth, hand-made paper, hand-pounded rice, home-made bread and jam, are not uncommon in the West. Only there they do not have one-hundredth of the importance they have in India. For, with us, their revival means life, their destruction means death, to the villagers, as he who runs may see. Whatever the machine age may do, it will never give employment to the millions whom the wholesale introduction of power machinery must displace.

Harijan, 4-1-1935, p. 372

Key Industries

Q. Do you think that cottage industries and big industries can be harmonized?

A. Yes, if they are planned so as to help the villages. Key industries, industries which the nation needs, may be centralized. But then I would not choose anything as a 'Key industry' that can be taken up by the villages with a little organizing. For instance, I did not know the possibilities of hand-made paper. Now I am so hopeful that I believe that every village can produce its own paper, though not for newspapers, etc. Supposing the State controlled paper-making and centralized it, I would expect it to protect all the paper that villages can make.

Q. What is meant by protecting the villages?

A. Protecting them against the inroads of the cities. At one time cities were dependent on the villages. Now, it is the reverse. There is no interdependence. Villages are being exploited and drained by the cities.

Q. Don't the villages need a lot of things that the cities produce?

A. I wonder. In any case, under my scheme, nothing will be allowed to be produced by cities which can be equally well produced by the villages. The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing houses for village products.

Harijan, 28-1-1939, p. 438

A friend asked me whether I proposed to replace the railways with country carts, and if I did not, how I expected to replace mills with wheels. I told him that I did not propose to replace railways with carts because I could not do so even if I wished. Three hundred million carts could not destroy distance. But I could replace mills with wheels. For railways solved the question of speed. With mills it was a question of production in which the wheel could easily compete if there were enough hands to work as there were in India. I told him that as a matter of fact a villager could manufacture for himself sufficient cloth cheaper than mills if he did not count the value of his labour. And he did not need to do so as he would spin or even weave during his spare hours. It is remarkable how false or incomplete analogies deceive people.

Another argument advanced was that the spinning wheel was a waste of effort. It was an astounding argument advanced without any thought given to it. I showed that anything done with a purpose could not be regarded as waste of effort. The spinning wheel was presented to the nation for giving occupation to the millions who had, at least for four months in the year, nothing to do. I told the objector too that, seeing that the wheel produced at least 100 yards of yarn per every half hour, it could not be regarded

as waste of effort. Moreover, it not only was not a waste of effort, but a sound economic proposition. For, what was required for the millions was a universal productive occupation which could be taken up during odd moments and which did not require any special talent or long course of training to learn. Such an occupation was only hand-spinning and no other.

Young India, 28-5-1925, p. 186

CHAPTER 11

MASS PRODUCTION *v.* PRODUCTION BY THE MASSES

(BY PYARELAL)

“Revival of village industries and handicrafts is all right,” remarked a young friend the other day, with the air of one making a big concession to the earnestness of his adversary’s conviction rather than its correctness. “It will beautify life which our poor villagers badly need. But I very much doubt, sir, whether our ‘expanding universe’, as Mr. Jeans has put it, can do without mass production. No, sir, in ‘mass production’ coupled with mass control lies the only hope of the toiling millions. What has Gandhiji to offer in its place?”

The poser put me in mind of a conversation on the question of machinery that Gandhiji had with an American press correspondent in London during the Second Round Table Conference. “Production by the Masses”, I replied, repeating an expression that Gandhiji had used on that occasion.

About a year prior to the meeting, the American friend in question had met Mr. Ford in America, and, in the course of his talk, with him, had among other things mentioned to him his view that the current European conditions were opposed to the continuance of mass production. Mr. Ford had replied that those conditions were bound to pass away in a short time and that a demand for cheaper things would soon spring up. "It is a question of raising the standard of living of the people," had concluded Mr. Ford.

"Do you feel, Gandhiji," asked the friend, "that mass production will raise the standard of living of the people?"

"I do not believe in it at all," replied Gandhiji. "There is a tremendous fallacy behind Mr. Ford's reasoning. Without simultaneous distribution on an equally mass scale, the production can result only in a great world tragedy. Take Mr. Ford's cars. The saturation point is bound to be reached soon or late. Beyond that point the production of cars cannot be pushed. What will happen then?"

"Mass production takes no note of the real requirement of the consumer. If mass production were in itself a virtue, it should be capable of indefinite multiplication. But it can be definitely shown that mass production carries within it its own limitations. If all countries adopted the system of mass production, there would not be a big enough market for their products. Mass production must then come to a stop."

The Problem of Distribution

"I wonder," proceeded the interlocutor, "whether you feel that this saturation point has already

arrived in the Western world. Mr. Ford says that there never can be too many articles of quality, that the needs of the world are constantly increasing and that, therefore, while there might be saturation in the market for a given commodity, the general saturation would never be reached."

Without entering upon an elaborate argument, replied Gandhiji:

"I would categorically state my conviction that the mania for mass production is responsible for the world crisis. Granting for the moment that machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still, it would concentrate production in particular areas, so that you would have to go in a round-about way to regulate distribution, whereas, if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where things are required, it is automatically regulated, and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation."

The American friend mentioned Mr. Ford's favourite plan of decentralization of industry by the use of electric power conveyed on wires to the remotest corner, instead of coal and steam, as a possible remedy, and drew up the picture of hundreds and thousands of small, neat, smokeless villages, dotted with factories, run by village communities. "Assuming all that to be possible," he finally asked Gandhiji, "how far will it meet your objection?" "My objection won't be met by that," replied Gandhiji, "because while it is true that you will be producing things in innumerable areas, the power will come from one selected centre. That, in the end, I think, would be found to be disastrous. It would place such

a limitless power in one human agency that I dread to think of it. The consequence, for instance, of such a control of power would be that I would be dependent on that power for light, water, even air, and so on. That, I think, would be terrible."

When Masses Wake Up

The friend was struck by the argument. "Mr. Gandhi," he remarked, "this is a particularly appropriate moment, it seems to me, for you to be visiting London, because, apart from the political questions, it seems to me to be a time when the Western world is disillusioned in regard to machinery in general, in regard to the mass production system we have built up in Germany and America in particular, and people are feeling somewhat bewildered and doubtful as to their value and asking themselves whether we have not, after all, overdone it. Have you any idea as to what Europe and America should do to solve the problem presented by too much machinery?"

"You see," answered Gandhiji, "that these nations are able to exploit the so-called weaker or unorganized races of the world. Once those races gain this elementary knowledge and decide that they are no more going to be exploited, they will simply be satisfied with what they can provide themselves. Mass production, then, at least where the vital necessities are concerned, will disappear."

"As a world organization?"

"Yes."

"But even these races will require more and more goods as their needs multiply."

"They will then produce for themselves. And when that happens, mass production, in the technical sense in which it is understood in the West, ceases."

"You mean to say it becomes local?"

"When production and consumption both become localized, the temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears. All the endless difficulties and problems that our present-day economic system presents, too, would then come to an end. Take a concrete instance. England today is the cloth shop of the world. It, therefore, needs to hold a world in bondage to secure its market. But under the change that I have envisaged, she would limit her production to the actual needs of her 45 million of population. When that need is satisfied, the production would necessarily stop. It won't be continued for the sake of bringing in more gold irrespective of the needs of a people and at the risk of their impoverishment. There would be no unnatural accumulation of hoards in the pockets of the few, and want in the midst of plenty in regard to the rest, as is happening today, for instance, in America. America is today able to hold the world in fee by selling all kinds of trinkets, or by selling her unrivalled skill, which she has a right to do. She has reached the acme of mass production, and yet she has not been able to abolish unemployment or want. There are still thousands, perhaps millions of people in America who live in misery, in spite of the phenomenal riches of the few. The whole of the American nation is not benefited by this mass production."

Mass Production v. Production by Masses

"The fault lies in distribution," observed the journalist friend. "It means that, whilst our system

of production has reached a high pitch of perfection, the distribution is still defective. If distribution could be equalized, would not mass production be sterilized of its evils?"

"No," replied Gandhiji, "the evil is inherent in the system. Distribution can be equalized when production is localized; in other words, when the distribution is simultaneous with production. Distribution will never be equal so long as you want to tap other markets of the world to dispose of your goods. That does not mean that the world has no use for the marvellous advances in science and organization that the Western nations have made. It only means that the Western nations have to use their skill. If they want to use their skill abroad, from philanthropic motives, America would say, 'Well, we know how to make bridges, we won't keep it a secret, but we say to the whole world, we will teach you how to make bridges and will charge you nothing.' America says, 'Where other nations can grow one blade of wheat, we can grow two thousand.' Then, America should teach that art free of charge to those who will learn it, but not aspire to grow wheat for the whole world, which would spell a sorry day for the world indeed."

The American friend next asked Gandhiji, referring to Russia, whether it was not a country that had developed mass production without exploiting, in Gandhiji's sense, the less industrialized nations, or without falling into the pit of unequal distribution. "In other words," replied Gandhiji, "you want me to express opinion of State-controlled industry, i.e., an economic order in which both production and

distribution are controlled and regulated by the State as is being today done in Soviet Russia. Well, it is a new experiment. How far it will ultimately succeed, I do not know. If it were not based on force, I would dote on it. But today since it is based on force, I do not know how far and where it will take us."

Mass Production Minus Force

"Then, you do not envisage mass production as an ideal future of India," questioned the American friend.

"Oh yes, mass production, certainly," replied Gandhiji, "but not based on force. After all, the message of the spinning wheel is that. It is mass production, but mass production in people's own homes. If you multiply individual production to millions of times, would it not give you mass production on a tremendous scale? But I quite understand that your 'mass production' is a technical term for production by the fewest possible number through the aid of highly complicated machinery. I have said to myself that that is wrong. My machinery must be of the most elementary type which I can put in the homes of the millions. Under my system, again, it is labour which is the current coin, not metal. Any person who can use his labour has that coin, has wealth. He converts his labour into cloth, he converts his labour into grain. If he wants paraffin oil, which he cannot himself produce, he uses his surplus grain for getting the oil. It is exchange of labour on free, fair and equal terms—hence it is no robbery. You may object that this is a reversion to the primitive system of barter. But is not all international trade based on the barter system?"

"Look, again, at another advantage that this system affords. You can multiply it to any extent. But concentration of production *ad infinitum* can only lead to unemployment. You may say that workers thrown out of work by the introduction of improved machinery will find occupations in other jobs. But in an organized country, where there are only fixed and limited avenues of employment, where the worker has become highly skilled in the use of one particular kind of machinery, you know from your own experience that this is hardly possible. Are there not over three millions unemployed in England today? A question was put to me only the other day: 'What are we doing with these three million unemployed?' They cannot shift from factory to field in a day. It is a tremendous problem."

Machinery and Agriculture

This brought the discussion to the employment of machinery in agriculture.

"Would not machine agriculture make a great difference to India, as it has to America and Canada?" asked the American friend.

"Probably," replied Gandhiji. "But that is a question I do not consider myself fit to answer. We in India have not been able to use complicated machinery in agriculture with profit so far. We do not exclude machinery. We are making cautious experiments. But we have not found power-driven agricultural machinery to be necessary."

The American friend, in common with the rest, had come imbued with the belief that Gandhiji was a sworn enemy of all machinery. "Some people have

the impression," he remarked, "that you are opposed to machinery in general. That is not true, I believe."

"That is quite wrong," answered Gandhiji. "The spinning wheel is also machinery. It is a beautiful work of art. It typifies the use of machinery on a universal scale. It is machinery reduced to the terms of the masses."

"So you are opposed to machinery, only because and when it concentrates production and distribution in the hands of the few," finally summed up the American friend.

"You are right. I hate privilege and monopoly. Whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me. That is all," answered Gandhiji.

Harijan, 2-11-1934, pp. 301-02

CHAPTER 12

HUMANITARIAN INDUSTRIAL POLICY FOR INDIA

A humanitarian industrial policy for India means to me a glorified revival of hand-spinning, for through it alone can pauperism, which is blighting the lives of millions of human beings in their own cottages in this land, be immediately removed. Everything else may thereafter be added, so as to increase the productive capacity of this country. I would, therefore, have all young men with a scientific training to utilize their skill in making the spinning wheel, if it is possible, a more efficient instrument of production in India's cottages. I am not opposed to the progress of science

as such. On the contrary the scientific spirit of the West commands my admiration.

Young India, 17-12-1925, p. 440

Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. . . . The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year. Strange as it may appear, every mill generally is a menace to the villagers. I have not worked out the figures, but I am quite safe in saying that every mill-hand does the work of at least ten labourers doing the same work in their villages. In other words, he earns more than he did in his village at the expense of ten fellow-villagers. Thus spinning and weaving mills have deprived the villagers of a substantial means of livelihood. It is no answer in reply to say that they turn out cheaper, better cloth, if they do so at all. For, if they have displaced thousands of workers, the cheaper mill cloth is dearer than the dearest Khadi woven in the villages. Coal is not dear for the coal miner who can use it there and then nor is Khadi dear for the villager who manufactures his own Khadi. But if the cloth manufactured in mills displaces village hands, rice mills and flour mills not only displace thousands of poor women workers, but damage the health of the whole population in the bargain. Where people have no objection to taking flesh diet and can afford it, white flour and polished rice may do no harm, but in India, where millions can get no flesh diet even where they have no objection to eating it, if they can get it, it is sinful

to deprive them of nutritious and vital elements contained in whole wheat meal and unpolished rice. It is time medical men and others combined to instruct the people on the danger attendant upon the use of white flour and polished rice. . . .

Hence the function of the All-India Village Industries Association must, in my opinion be to encourage the existing industries and to revive, where it is possible and desirable, the dying or dead industries of villages according to the village methods, i.e., the villagers working in their own cottages as may have done from times immemorial. These simple methods can be considerably improved as they have been in hand-ginning, hand-carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving.

A critic objects that the ancient plan is purely individualistic and can never bring about corporate effort. This view appears to me to be very superficial. Though articles may be manufactured by villagers in their cottages, they can be pooled together and profits divided. The villagers may work under supervision and according to plan. The raw material may be supplied from common stock. If the will to co-operative effort is created, there is surely ample opportunity for co-operation, division of labour, saving of time and efficiency of work. All these things are today being done by the All-India Spinners' Association in over 5,000 villages.

Harijan, 16-11-1934, p. 316

Our clear duty is . . . to investigate the possibility of keeping in existence the village wheel, the village crusher and the village pounder, and, by advertising their products, discovering their qualities,

ascertaining the condition of the workers and the number displaced by the power-driven machinery and discovering the methods of improving them, whilst retaining their village character, to enable them to stand the competition of the mills. How terribly and criminally we have neglected them! Here there is no antagonism to the textile or the sugar or the rice mills. Their products must be preferred to the corresponding foreign products. If they were in danger of extinction from foreign competition, they should receive the needed support. But they stand in no such need. They are flourishing in spite of foreign competition. What is needed is protection of the village crafts and the workers behind them from the crushing competition of the power-driven machinery, whether it is worked in India or in foreign lands.

Harijan, 10-8-1934, p. 204

In a nutshell, of the things we use, we should restrict our purchases to the articles which villages manufacture. Their manufactures may be crude. We must try to induce them to improve their workmanship, and not dismiss them because foreign articles or even articles produced in cities, that is big factories, are superior. In other words, we should evoke the artistic talent of the villager. In this manner shall we repay somewhat the debt we owe to them. We need not be frightened by the thought whether we shall ever succeed in such an effort. Within our own times we can recall instances where we have not been baffled by the difficulty of our tasks when we have known that they were essential for the nation's progress. If, therefore, we as individuals believe that revivification of India's villages is a necessity of our existence, if we believe that thereby only can we root out

untouchability and feel one with all, no matter to what community or religion they may belong, we must mentally go back to the villages and treat them as our pattern, instead of putting the city life before them for imitation. If this is the correct attitude, then, naturally, we begin with ourselves and thus use, say, hand-made paper instead of mill-made, use village reed, wherever possible, instead of the fountain pen or the penholder, ink made in the villages instead of the big factories, etc. I can multiply instances of this nature. There is hardly anything of daily use in the home which the villagers have not made before and cannot make even now. If we perform the mental trick and fix our gaze upon them, we immediately put millions of rupees into the pockets of the villagers, whereas at the present moment we are exploiting the villagers without making any return worth the name. It is time we arrested the progress of the tragedy.

Harijan, 30-11-1934, p. 332

In my writing on cent per cent Swadeshi, I have shown some aspects of it can be tackled immediately with benefit to the starving millions both economically and hygienically. The richest in the land can share in the benefit. Thus if the rice can be pounded in the villages after the old fashion, the wages will fill the pockets of the rice-pounding sisters and the rice-eating millions will get some sustenance from the unpolished rice instead of pure starch which the polished rice provides.

Human greed, which takes no heed of the health or the wealth of the people who come under its heels, is responsible for the hideous rice-mills one sees in all

the rice-producing tracts. If public opinion was strong, it will make rice-mills an impossibility by simply insisting on unpolished rice and appealing to the owners of rice-mills to stop a traffic that undermines the health of a whole nation and robs the poor of an honest means of livelihood.

Harijan, 26-10-1934, p. 292

I regard the existence of power wheels for the grinding of corn in thousands of villages as the limit of our helplessness. I suppose India does not produce all the engines or grinding machines. . . . The planting of such machinery and engines on a large scale in villages is also a sign of greed. Is it proper to fill one's pockets in this manner at the expense of the poor? Every such machinery puts thousands of hand-*chakkis* out of work and takes away employment from thousands of housewives and artisans who make these *chakkis*. Moreover, the process is infective and will spread to every village industry. The decay of the latter spells too the decay of art. If it meant replacement of old crafts by new ones, one might not have much to say against it. But this is not what is happening. In the thousands of villages where power machinery exists, one misses the sweet music in the early morning of the grinders at work.

Harijan, 10-3-1946, p. 34

THE MACHINE NO ONE CAN OUST

Do I want to put back the hand of the clock of progress? Do I want to replace the mills by hand-spinning and hand-weaving? Do I want to replace the railway by the country cart? Do I want to destroy machinery altogether? These questions have been asked by some journalists and public men. My answer is : I would not weep over the disappearance of machinery or consider it a calamity. But I have no design upon machinery as such. What I want to do at the present moment is to supplement the production of yarn and cloth through our mills, save the millions we send out of India, and distribute them in our cottages.

Young India, 19-1-1921, p. 20

A socialist holding a brief for machinery asked Gandhiji if the village industries movement was not meant to oust all machinery.

'Is not this wheel a machine?' was the counter-question that Gandhiji, who was just then spinning, gave in reply.

'I do not mean this machine, but I mean bigger machinery.'

'Do you mean Singer's sewing machine? That too is protected by the village industries movement, and for that matter any machinery which does not deprive masses of men of the opportunity to labour, but which helps the individual and adds to his efficiency, and which a man can handle at will without being its slave.'

‘But what about the great inventions? You would have nothing to do with electricity?’

‘Who said so? If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or 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 would you have their owners cut them down for want of work?’

‘I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all. There is a difference between invention and invention. I should not care for the 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 labour has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the State and used entirely 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 useful labour of 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 one make them with one’s hands? Heavy machinery would be needed for them. But there is no machinery for the cure of idleness but this,’ said Gandhiji pointing to his spinning wheel. ‘I can work it whilst I am carrying on this conversation with you, and am adding a little to the wealth of the country. This machine no one can oust.’

Harijan, 22-6-1935, p. 146

The spinning wheel represents to me the hope of the masses. The masses lost their freedom such as it was, with the loss of the Charkha. The Charkha supplemented the agriculture of the villagers and gave it dignity. It was the friend and solace of the widow. It kept the villagers from idleness. For the Charkha included all the anterior and posterior industries—ginning, carding, warping, sizing, dyeing and weaving. These in their turn kept the village carpenter and blacksmith busy. The Charkha enabled the seven hundred thousand villages to become self-contained. With the exit of the Charkha went the other village industries, such as the oil press. Nothing took place of these industries. Therefore the villages were drained of their varied occupations and their creative talent and what little wealth these brought them.

The analogy of the other countries in which too village handicrafts were destroyed will not serve us because, whereas the villagers there had some compensating advantages, India's villagers had practically none. The industrialized countries of the West were exploiting other nations. India is herself an exploited country. Hence, if the villagers are to come into their own, the most natural thing that suggests itself is the revival of the Charkha and all it means.

This revival cannot take place without an army of selfless Indians of intelligence and patriotism working with a single mind in the villages to spread the message of the Charkha and bring a ray of hope and light into their lustreless eyes. This is a mighty effort at co-operation and adult education of the correct type. It brings about a silent and sure revolution like the silent but sure and life-giving revolution of the Charkha.

Harijan, 13-4-1940, p. 85

I think of the poor of India every time that I draw a thread on the wheel. For a person suffering from the pangs of hunger, and desiring nothing but to fill his belly, his belly is his God. To him anyone who gives him bread is his master. Through him he may even see God. To give alms to such persons, who are sound in all their limbs, is to debase oneself and them. What they need is some kind of occupation, and the occupation that will give employment to millions can only be hand-spinning. But I can instil my faith in the potency of hand-spinning in the minds of the toilers of India not by making speeches but only by spinning myself. Therefore I have described my spinning as a penance or sacrament. And since I believe that where there is pure and active love for the poor there is God also, I see God in every thread that I draw on the spinning wheel.

Young India, 20-5-1926

I have often said that Khadi is the central sun round which the other village industries revolve like so many planets. They have no independent existence. Nor will Khadi exist without the other industries. They are absolutely interdependent. The fact is that we have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination. Today the cities dominate and drain the villages so that they are crumbling to ruin. My Khadi mentality tells me that cities must subserve villages when that domination goes. Exploiting of villages is itself organized violence. If we want Swaraj to be built on non-violence, we will have to give the villages their proper place. This we will never do unless we revive village industries by using the products thereof in place of

things produced in city factories, foreign or indigenous. Perhaps it is now clear why I identify Khadi with non-violence. Khadi is the chief village handicraft. Kill Khadi and you must kill the villages and with them non-violence. I cannot prove this by statistics. The proof is before our eyes.

Harijan, 20-1-1940, p. 423

CHAPTER 14

A SACRED LAW OF OUR BEING

A man's first duty is to his neighbour. This does not imply hatred for the foreigner or partiality for the fellow-countryman. Our capacity for service has obvious limits. We can serve even our neighbour with some difficulty. If everyone of us duly performed his duty to his neighbour, no one in the world who needed assistance would be left unattended. Therefore one who serves his neighbour serves all the world. As a matter of fact there is in Swadeshi no room for distinction between one's own and other people. To serve one's neighbour is to serve the world. Indeed it is the only way open to us of serving the world. One to whom the whole world is as his family should have the power of serving the universe without moving from his place. He can exercise this power only through service rendered to his neighbour. Tolstoy goes further and says that at present we are riding on other people's backs; it is enough only if we get down. This is another way of putting the same thing. No one can serve others without serving himself. And whoever tries to achieve his private ends without serving others harms himself as well as the

world at large. The reason is obvious. All living beings are members one of another so that a person's every act has a beneficial or harmful influence on the whole world. We cannot see this, near-sighted as we are. The influence of a single act of an individual on the world may be negligible. But that influence is there all the same and an awareness of this truth should make us realize our responsibility.

Swadeshi therefore does not involve any disservice to the foreigner. Still Swadeshi does not reach everywhere, for that is impossible in the very nature of things. In trying to serve the world, one does not serve the world and fails to serve even the neighbour. In serving the neighbour one in effect serves the world. Only he who has performed his duty to his neighbour has the right to say, 'All are akin to me'. But if a person says, 'All are akin to me,' and neglecting his neighbour gives himself up to self-indulgence, he lives to himself alone.

We find some good men who leave their own place and move all over the world serving non-neighbours. They do nothing wrong, and their activity is not an exception to the law of Swadeshi. Only their capacity for service is greater. To one man only he who lives next door to him is his neighbour. For a second man his neighbourhood is co-extensive with his village and for a third with ten surrounding villages. Thus everyone serves according to his capacity. A common man cannot do uncommon work. Definitions are framed with an eye to him alone, and imply everything which is not contrary to their spirit. When he observes the law of Swadeshi, the ordinary man does not think that he is doing service to any others. He deals with the neighbouring producer, as it is convenient for him.

But an occasion may arise when this is inconvenient. One who knows that Swadeshi is the law of life will observe it even on such occasions. Many of us at present are not satisfied with the quality of goods made in India, and are tempted to buy foreign goods. It is, therefore, necessary to point out that Swadeshi does not simply minister to our convenience but is a rule of life. Swadeshi has nothing to do with hatred of the foreigner. It can never be one's duty to wish or do ill to others.

Ashram Observances in Action (Edn. 1959), pp. 67-70

The vow of Swadeshi is a necessary vow. . . . I suggest to you we are departing from one of the sacred laws of our being when we leave our neighbour and go out somewhere else in order to satisfy our wants. If a man comes from Bombay here and offers you wares, you are not justified in supporting the Bombay merchant or trader so long as you have got a merchant at your very door, born and bred in Madras. That is my view of Swadeshi. In your village barber, you are bound to support him to the exclusion of the finished barber who may come to you from Madras. If you find it necessary that your village barber should reach the attainments of the barber from Madras, you may train him to that. Send him to Madras by all means, if you wish, in order that he may learn his calling. Until you do that, you are not justified in going to another barber. That is Swadeshi. So, when we find that there are many things that we cannot get in India, we must try to do without them. We may have to do without many things which we may consider necessary; but believe me, when you have that frame of mind, you will find a great burden taken off your shoulders, even as the Pilgrim did in that

inimitable book, *Pilgrim's Progress*. There came a time when the mighty burden that the Pilgrim was carrying on his shoulders unconsciously dropped from him, and he felt a freer man than he was when he started on the journey. So will you feel freer men than you are now immediately you adopt this Swadeshi life.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Natesan, (4th edn.), pp. 385-86

If we follow the Swadeshi doctrine, it would be your duty and mine to find out neighbours who can supply our wants and to teach them to supply them where they do not know how to proceed, assuming that there are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit, exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages as are not locally producible. This may all sound nonsensical. Well, India is a country of nonsense. It is nonsensical to parch one's throat with thirst when a kindly Mohammedan is ready to offer pure water to drink. And yet thousands of Hindus would rather die of thirst than drink water from a Mohammedan household. These nonsensical men can also, once they are convinced that their religion demands that they should wear garments manufactured in India only and eat food only grown in India, decline to wear any other clothing or eat any other food.

Supposing that every one followed this mode of life, we should have at once an ideal state. All will not reach that state at the same time. But those of us who, realizing its truth, enforce it in practice, will clearly anticipate and accelerate the coming of that happy day. Under this plan of life, in seeming to

serve India to the exclusion of every other country, I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature. *Sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas* is not merely a legal maxim, but it is a grand doctrine of life. It is the key to a proper practice of Ahimsa or love.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Natesan, (4th edn.), pp. 341-44

CHAPTER 15

RURAL DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without. Thus, ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world. It will be free and voluntary play of mutual forces. Such a society is necessarily highly cultured in which every man and woman knows what he or she wants and, what is more, knows that no one should want anything that others cannot have with equal labour.

This society must naturally be based on truth and non-violence which, in my opinion, are not possible without a living belief in God meaning a self-existent,

all-knowing Living Force which inheres every other force known to the world, and which depends on none and which will live when all other forces may conceivably perish or cease to act. I am unable to account for my life without belief in this all-embracing Living Light.

In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.

Therefore, the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it. I may be taunted with the retort that this is all Utopian and, therefore, not worth a single thought. If Euclid's point, though incapable of being drawn by human agency, has an imperishable value, my picture has its own for mankind to live. Let India live for this true picture, though never realizable in its completeness. We must have a proper picture of what we want, before we can have something approaching it. If there ever is to be a republic of every village in India, then I claim verity for my picture in which the last is equal to the first or, in other words, no one is to be the first and none the last.

In this picture every religion has its full and equal place. We are all leaves of a majestic tree whose trunk cannot be shaken off its roots which are

deep down in the bowels of the earth. The mightiest wind cannot move it.

In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labour and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place. But I must confess that I have never sat down to think out what that machine can be. I have thought of Singer's sewing machine. But even that is perfunctory. I do not need it to fill in my picture.

Harijan, 28-7-1946, p. 236

When Panchayatraj is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the rajas can hold sway only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of *zamindari* or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In Panchayatraj only the Panchayat will be obeyed and the Panchayat can only work through the law of their making.

Harijan, 1-6-1947, p. 172

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.

Harijan, 13-1-1940, pp. 410-11

Distinguished travellers from the world came to India in the days of yore from China and other countries. They came in quest of knowledge and put up with great hardships in travelling. They had reported that in India there was no theft, people were honest and industrious. They needed no locks for their doors. In those days there was no multiplicity of

castes as at present. It is the function of Panchayats to revive honesty and industry. It is the function of the Panchayats to teach the villagers to avoid disputes, if they have to settle them. That would ensure speedy justice without any expenditure. They would need neither the police nor the military.

Harijan, 4-1-1948, pp. 499-500

CHAPTER 16

MY IDEAL VILLAGE

An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation, built of a material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all avoidable dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a co-operative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central fact, and it will have Panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own Khadi. This is roughly my idea of a model village. . . . I am convinced that the villagers can, under intelligent guidance, double the village income as distinguished from individual income. There are in our villages inexhaustible resources not for commercial purposes in every case but certainly for local purposes in almost every case. The greatest tragedy is

the hopeless unwillingness of the villagers to better their lot.

Harijan, 9-1-1937, p. 383

My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague, nor cholera, nor smallpox; no one will be idle, no one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour. . . . It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph . . . and the like. . . .

Bunch of Old Letters, (1948), pp. 506-07 (5-10-1945)

The villagers should develop such a high degree of skill that articles prepared by them should command a ready market outside. When our villages are fully developed there will be no dearth in them of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In short, there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the villages. Today the villages are dung heaps. Tomorrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden where dwell highly intelligent folk whom no one can deceive or exploit.

The reconstruction of villages along these lines should begin now. The reconstruction of the villages should not be organized on a temporary but permanent basis.

Craft, art, health and education should all be integrated into one scheme. Nai Talim is a beautiful blend of all the four and covers the whole education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death. Therefore, I would not divide

village uplift work into water-tight compartments from the very beginning but undertake an activity which will combine all four. Instead of regarding craft industry as different from education, I will regard the former as the medium for the latter. Nai Talim, therefore, ought to be integrated into the scheme.

Harijan, 10-11-1946, p. 394

A village unit as conceived by me is as strong as the strongest. My imaginary village consists of 1,000 souls. Such a unit can give a good account of itself, if it is well organized on a basis of self-sufficiency.

Harijan, 4-8-1946, p. 252

Each village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world.

Harijan, 28-7-1946, p. 236

I know that the work (of shaping the ideal village) is as difficult as to make of India an ideal country. . . . But if one can produce one ideal village, he will have provided a pattern not only for the whole country but perhaps for the whole world. More than this a seeker may not aspire after.

Towards New Horizons, (1959), p. 99

To model such a village may be the work of a life time. Any lover of true democracy and village life can take up a village, treat it as his world and sole work, and he will find good results. He begins by being the village scavenger, spinner, watchman, medicineman and school master all at once. If nobody comes near him, he will be satisfied with scavenging and spinning.

Harijan, 26-7-1942, p. 238

We have to tackle the triple malady which holds our villages fast in its grip: (i) want of corporate

sanitation; (ii) deficient diet; (iii) inertia. . . . They are not interested in their own welfare. They don't appreciate modern sanitary methods. They don't want to exert themselves beyond scratching their farms or doing such labour as they are used to. These difficulties are real and serious. But they must not baffle us.

Harijan, 16-5-1936, p. 111

We stand today in danger of forgetting how to use our hands. To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves. To think that your occupation of the Ministerial chair will be vindicated, if you serve the cities only, would be to forget that India really resides in her 7,00,000 village units. What would it profit a man if he gained the world but lost his soul into the bargain?

Harijan, 25-8-1946, p. 282

The government of the village will be conducted by the Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications.

Harijan, 26-7-1942, p. 238

Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office.

Harijan, 26-7-1942, p. 238

Every Panchayat of five adult men or women being villagers or village-minded shall form a unit.

Two such contiguous Panchayats shall form a working party under a leader elected from among themselves.

When there are one hundred such Panchayats, the fifty first grade leaders shall elect from among

themselves a second grade leader and so on, the first grade leaders meanwhile working under the second grade leader. Parallel groups of two hundred Panchayats shall continue to be formed till they cover the whole of India, each succeeding group of Panchayats electing second grade leader after the manner of the first. All second grade leaders shall serve jointly for the whole of India and severally for their respective areas. The second grade leaders may elect, whenever they deem necessary, from among themselves a chief who will, during pleasure, regulate and command all the groups.

Towards New Horizons, (1959), p. 194

Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-co-operation will be the sanction of the village community.

Harijan, 26-7-1942, p. 238

My idea of self-sufficiency is that villages must be self-sufficient in regard to food, cloth and other basic necessities. But even this can be overdone. Therefore you must grasp my idea properly. Self-sufficiency does not mean narrowness. To be self-sufficient is not to be altogether self-contained. In no circumstances would we be able to produce all the things we need. So though our aim is complete self-sufficiency, we shall have to get from outside the village what we cannot produce in the village; we shall have to produce more of what we can in order thereby to obtain in exchange what we are unable to produce.

Khadi—Why and How, (1959), p. 166

Villages will be swept away, if they are not self-sufficient as to their primary wants and self-reliant as to their protection against internal disruption by dissensions and disease and external danger from thieves

and dacoits. Self-sufficiency, therefore, means all the cotton processes and growing of seasonal food crops and fodder for cattle. Unless this is done there will be starvation. And self-reliance means corporate organization ensuring adjustment of internal differences through arbitration by the wise men of villages and cleanliness by corporate attention to sanitation and common diseases. No mere individual effort is going to suffice. And above all, villagers must be taught to feel their own strength by combined effort to make their villages proof against thieves and dacoits. This is best done by corporate non-violence. But if the way to non-violence does not seem clear to workers, they will not hesitate to organize corporate defence through violence.

Harijan, 5-4-1942, p. 107

There will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drinks or drugs. There will be the same respect for women as vouchsafed to men and the chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded. Where every woman except one's wife, will be treated by men of all religions, as mother, sister or daughter according to her age. Where there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths. They will be all proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread labourers. I hope everyone who listens to me or reads these lines will forgive me if stretched on my bed and basking in the sun, inhaling life-giving sunshine, I allow myself to indulge in this ecstasy.

Harijan, 18-1-1948, p. 526

CHAPTER 17

ECONOMIC *v.* MORAL PROGRESS

[From a lecture delivered by Gandhiji at a meeting of the Muir Central College Economic Society, held at Allahabad on 22nd December, 1916.]

Does economic progress clash with real progress? By economic progress, I take it, we mean material advancement without limit, and by real progress we mean moral progress, which again is the same thing as progress of the permanent element in us. The subject may, therefore, be stated thus: Does not moral progress increase in the same proportion as material progress? I know that this is a wider proposition than the one before us. But I venture to think that we always mean the large one even when we lay down the smaller. For we know enough of science to realize that there is no such thing as perfect rest or repose in this visible universe of ours. If, therefore, material progress does not clash with moral progress, it must necessarily advance the latter. Nor can we be satisfied with the clumsy way in which sometimes those who cannot defend the large proposition put their case. They seem to be obsessed with the concrete case of thirty millions of India, stated by the late Sir William Wilson Hunter to be living on one meal a day. They say that, before we can think or talk of their moral welfare, we must satisfy their daily wants. With these, they say, material progress spells moral progress. And then is taken a sudden jump; what is true of thirty millions is true of the universe. They forget that hard cases make bad law. I need hardly

say to you how ludicrously absurd this deduction would be. No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation. Every human being has a right to live and therefore to find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary to clothe and house himself. But for this very simple performance we need no assistance from economists or their laws.

'Take no thought for the morrow' is an injunction which finds an echo in almost all the religious scriptures of the world. In a well-ordered society the securing of one's livelihood should be and is found to be the easiest thing in the world. Indeed, the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it owns, but the absence of starvation among its masses. The only statement that has to be examined is, whether it can be laid down as a law of universal application that material advancement means moral progress.

Now let us take a few illustrations. Rome suffered a moral fall when it attained high material affluence. So did Egypt and so perhaps most countries of which we have any historical record. The descendants and kinsmen of the royal and divine Krishna too fell when they were rolling in riches. We do not deny to the Rockefellers and Carnegies possession of an ordinary measure of morality but we gladly judge them indulgently. I mean that we do not even expect them to satisfy the highest standard of morality. With them material gain has not necessarily meant moral gain. In South Africa, where I had the privilege of associating with thousands of our countrymen on most intimate terms, I observed almost invariably that the greater the possession of riches, the greater

was their moral turpitude. Our rich men, to say the least, did not advance the moral struggle of passive resistance as did the poor. The rich men's sense of self-respect was not so much injured as that of the poorest.

If I were not afraid of treading on dangerous ground, I would even come nearer home and show how that possession of riches has been a hindrance to real growth. I venture to think that the scriptures of the world are far safer and sounder treatises on the laws of economics than many of the modern textbooks. The question we are asking ourselves . . . is not a new one. It was addressed of Jesus two thousand years ago. St. Mark has vividly described the scene. Jesus is in his solemn mood. He is earnest. He talks of eternity. He knows the world about him. He is himself the greatest economist of his time. He succeeded in economizing time and space—he transcended them. It is to him at his best that one comes running, kneels down, and asks: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said unto him: 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery. Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness. Defraud not, Honour thy Father and Mother.' And he answered and said unto him: 'Master, all these have I observed from my youth.' Then Jesus beholding him loved him and said unto him: 'One thing thou lackest. Go thy way, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven—come, take up the cross and follow me.' And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved—for he had great possession. And Jesus

looked round about and said unto the disciples: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.' And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again and said unto them: 'Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!' Here you have an eternal rule of life stated in the noblest words the English language is capable of producing. But the disciples nodded unbelief as we do even to this day. To him they said as we say today: "But look how the law fails in practice. If we sell all and have nothing, we shall have nothing to eat. We must have money or we cannot even be reasonably moral." So they state their case thus: "And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves: 'Who then can be saved.' And Jesus looking upon them said: 'With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God, all things are possible.' Then Peter began to say unto him: 'Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee.' And Jesus answered and said: 'Verily I say unto you, there is no man that has left house or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children or lands for my sake and Gospel's but he shall receive one hundredfold, now in this time houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and land, and in the world to come, eternal life. But many that are first shall be last and the last, first.' " You have here the result or reward, if you prefer the term, of following the law.

I have not taken the trouble of copying similar passages from the other non-Hindu scriptures and I

will not insult you by quoting, in support of the law stated by Jesus, passages from the writings and sayings of our own sages, passages even stronger, if possible, than the Biblical extracts I have drawn your attention to. Perhaps the strongest of all the testimonies in favour of the affirmative answer to the question before us are the lives of the greatest teachers of the world. Jesus, Mahomed, Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Shankara, Dayanand, Ramakrishna were men who exercised an immense influence over, and moulded the character of, thousands of men. The world is the richer for their having lived in it. And they were all men who deliberately embraced poverty as their lot.

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I should not have laboured my point as I have done, if I did not believe that, in so far as we have made the modern materialistic craze our goal, so far are we going down-hill in the path of progress. I hold that economic progress in the sense I have put it is antagonistic to real progress. Hence the ancient ideal has been the limitation of activities promoting wealth. This does not put an end to all material ambition. We should still have, as we have always had, in our midst people who make the pursuit of wealth their aim in life. But we have always recognized that it is a fall from the ideal. It is a beautiful thing to know that the wealthiest among us have often felt that to have remained voluntarily poor would have been a higher state for them. . . . We need not be afraid of ideals or of reducing them to practice even to the uttermost. Ours will only then be a truly spiritual nation when we shall show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self. If we will

but cleanse our houses, our palaces and temples of the attributes of wealth and show in them the attributes of morality, we can offer battle to any combinations of hostile forces without having to carry the burden of a heavy militia. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the irrevocable promise is that everything will be added unto us. These are real economics. May you and I treasure them and enforce them in our daily life.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Natesan, pp. 349-55

CHAPTER 18

THE RICH AND THE POOR

I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use and keep it, I thieve it from somebody else. . . . It is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day; and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. . . . I am no socialist, and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions; but I do say that personally those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody; I should then be departing from the rule of Ahimsa. If somebody else possesses more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated . . . I dare not possess anything which I do not want. In India we have got many millions of people who have to be satisfied with one meal a day, and that meal

consisting of a *chapati* containing no fat in it and a pinch of salt. You and I have no right to anything that we really have until these many millions are clothed and fed. You and I, who ought to know better, must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation in order that they may be nursed, fed, and clothed.

Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Natesan, pp. 384-85

Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon them. The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are, therefore, neglected and wasted; while millions are starved to death for want of sustenance. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The poor man would fain become a millionaire, and the millionaire a multi-millionaire. . . . The poor are often not satisfied when they get just enough to fill their stomachs; but they are clearly entitled to it and society should make it a point to see that they get it. The rich should take the initiative in the dispossession with a view to a universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the starving will be easily fed, and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich.

From Terada Mandir, (1935), Chap. VI

The golden rule to apply . . . is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot. This ability to refuse will not descend upon us all of a sudden. The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that

will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to rearrange our lives as far as possible in accordance with that mentality.

Young India, 24-6-1926, p. 226

The rich should ponder well as to what is their duty today. They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them. The moneyed classes have got to learn how to fight either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence. For those who wish to follow the latter way, the best and most effective *mantram* is: तेन व्यक्तेन भुंजीयाः (Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it). Expanded it means: "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society." This truth has hitherto not been acted upon; but, if the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who overpower them.

I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence. Let it be remembered that physical force is transitory even as the body is transitory. But the power of the spirit is permanent, even as the spirit is everlasting.

Harijan, 1-2-1942, p. 20

I have no hesitation in endorsing the opinion that generally rich men and for that matter most men are not particular as to the way they make money. In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person,

however depraved, being reformed under humane and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response. Is it not conducive to the well-being of society that every member uses all his talents, only not for personal aggrandizement but for the good of all? We do not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish. I therefore suggest that my advice that moneyed men may earn their crores (honestly only, of course) but so as to dedicate them to the service of all is perfectly sound. “तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः” is a *mantra* based on uncommon knowledge. It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbour.

Harijan, 22-2-1942, p. 49

CHAPTER 19

ECONOMIC EQUALITY

My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence, etc.; therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more, and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State.

Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father go to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees.

Young India, 26-11-1931, p. 363

I want to bring about an equalization of status. The working classes have all these centuries been isolated and relegated to a lower status. They have been *shoodras*, and the word has been interpreted to mean an inferior status. I want to allow no differentiation between the son of a weaver, of an agriculturist and of a schoolmaster.

Harijan, 15-1-1938, p. 416

Economic equality is the master key to non-violent independence. Working for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and a levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good. I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has

been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate that steep ascent. . . .

It (non-violent Swaraj) will not drop from heaven all of a sudden one fine morning. But it has to be built up brick by brick by corporate self-effort. We have travelled a fair way in that direction. But a much longer and weary distance has to be covered before we can behold Swaraj (Sarvodaya) in its glorious majesty.

Constructive Programme, (1948), pp. 21-22

Since all service here ranks the same and carries equal wages, hereditary skills are conserved and developed from generation to generation instead of being sacrificed to the lure of personal gain. The principle of community service replaces unrestricted, soulless competition. Everybody is a toiler with ample leisure, opportunity, and facilities for education and culture. It is a fascinating world of cottage crafts and intensive, small-scale farming co-operatives, a world in which there is no room for communalism or caste. Finally, it is the world of Swadeshi in which the economic frontiers are drawn closer but the bounds of individual freedom are enlarged to the maximum limit; everybody is responsible for his immediate environment and all are responsible for society. Rights and duties are regulated by the principle of interdependence and reciprocity; there is no conflict between the part and the whole; no danger of nationalism becoming narrow, selfish or aggressive or internationalism becoming an abstraction where the concrete is lost in a nebulous haze of vague generalities.

Mahatma Gandhi—The Last Phase, Vol. I, (1956), pp. 539-40

I have no doubt that if India is to live an exemplary life of independence which would be the envy of the world, all the *bhangis*, doctors, lawyers, teachers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work. Indian society may never reach the goal but it is the duty of every Indian to set his sail towards that goal and no other if India is to be a happy land.

Harijan, 16-3-1947, p. 67

A votary of Ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula (of the greatest good of the greatest number). He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realize the ideal. He will, therefore, be willing to die, so that the others may live. He will serve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greatest number, and therefore, he and the utilitarian will converge in many points in their career, but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist will even sacrifice himself.

Young India, 9-12-1926, p. 432

According to me the economic constitution of India and for the matter of that of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And this ideal can be universally utilized only if the means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be; they should not be made a vehicle of traffic for the exploitation

of others. Their monopolization by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust. The neglect of this simple principle is the cause of the destitution that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the world too.

Young India, 15-11-1928, p. 381

CHAPTER 20

IS CLASS WAR INEVITABLE?

I have always said that my ideal is that capital and labour should supplement and help each other. They should be a great family living in unity and harmony, capital not only looking to the material welfare of the labourers, but their moral welfare also—capitalists being trustees for the welfare of the labouring classes under them.

Young India, 20-8-1925, p. 285

I do not fight shy of capital. I fight capitalism. The West teaches one to avoid concentration of capital, to avoid a racial war in another and deadlier form. Capital and labour need not be antagonistic to each other. I cannot picture to myself a time when no man shall be richer than another. But I do picture to myself a time when the rich will spurn to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor and the poor will cease to envy the rich. Even in a most perfect world, we shall fail to avoid inequalities, but we can and must avoid strife and bitterness.

Young India, 7-10-1926, p. 348

The dream I want to realize is not spoliation of the property of private owners, but to restrict its enjoyment so as to avoid all pauperism, consequent

discontent and the hideously ugly contrast that exists today between the lives and surroundings of the rich and the poor. The latter must be enabled to feel that they are co-partners with their zamindars and not their slaves, to be made to labour at the latter's sweet will and to be made to pay all kinds of exactions on all conceivable occasions.

Young India, 21-11-1929, p. 384

The problem is not to set class against class, but to educate labour to a sense of its dignity. Moneyed men after all form a microscopic minority in the world. They will act on the square, immediately labour realizes its power and yet acts on the square. To inflame labour against moneyed men is to perpetuate class hatred and all the evil consequences flowing from it. The strife is a vicious circle to be avoided at any cost. It is an admission of weakness, a sign of inferiority complex. The moment labour recognizes its own dignity, money will find its rightful place, i.e. it will be held in trust for labour. For labour is more than money.

Harijan, 19-10-1945, p. 285

Root Cause of Strikes

Strikes have today become a universal plague. There are strikes everywhere, America and England not excepted. But in India, they have a special significance. We are living under an unnatural condition. As soon as the lid is removed and there is a crevice letting in the fresh air of freedom, there will be an increasing number of strikes. The fundamental reason for this spreading strike fever is that life here as elsewhere, is today uprooted from its basis, the basis of religion and what an English writer has called

'cash nexus' has taken its place. And that is a precarious bond. But even when the religious basis is there, there will be strikes, because it is scarcely conceivable that religion will have become for all the basis of life. So, there will be attempts at exploitation on the one hand, and strikes on the other. But these strikes will then be of a purely non-violent character. Such strikes never do harm to any one.

Harijan, 22-9-1946, p. 32

In my opinion, employers and employed are equal partners even if employees are not considered superior. But what we see today is the reverse. The reason is that the employers harness intelligence on their side. They have the superior advantage which concentration of capital brings with it and they know how to make use of it. One individual rupee has very little potency but when money combines as capital, the combine derives a power different from and far in excess of the mere sum total of the individual rupees. A million drops individually are negligible. But in combination, they make the ocean carrying on its bosom a fleet of ocean hounds. Whilst capital in India is fairly organized, labour is still in a more or less disorganized condition in spite of unions and their federation. Therefore, it lacks the power that true combination gives.

Moreover, it lacks intelligence, so much so that individuals fight against individuals, unions against unions. Lack of intelligence leads to its exploitation by selfish and unscrupulous men even to the point of creating and promoting mischief. They know no better, being ignorant of the secret of non-violence. The net result is that the workers suffer. If labour were to understand the working of non-violence, the

power generated by combination would any day exceed the power of dead metal in the hands of a few capitalists.

Hence my advice to the employers would be that they should willingly regard workers as the real owners of the concerns which they fancy they have created. They should further regard it as their duty to equip the employees with sound education that would draw out the intelligence dormant in them and gladly promote and welcome the power that this combination of the workers gives them.

This noble work cannot be done in a day by the employers. Meanwhile, what should those do who have to face the destruction wrought by strikers in their concerns? I would unhesitatingly advise such employers that they should at once offer the strikers full control of the concern which is as much the strikers' as theirs. They will vacate their premises not in a huff but because it is right, and to show their good-will, they would offer the employees the assistance of their engineers and other skilled staff. The employers will find in the end that they will lose nothing. Indeed, their right action will disarm opposition and they will earn the blessings of their men. They will have made proper use of their capital. I would not consider such action as benevolent. It would be an intelligent use by the capitalists of their resources and honest dealing in regard to the employees whom they would have converted into honourable partners.

Harijan, 31-3-1946, p. 60

RIGHTS OR DUTIES?

The true source of rights is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights, they escape us like a will-o'-the-wisp. The more we pursue them, the farther they fly. The same teaching has been embodied by Krishna in the immortal words: 'Action alone is thine. Leave thou the fruit severely alone.' Action is duty; fruit is the right.

Young India, 8-1-1925, pp. 15-16

Every man has an equal right to the necessities of life even as birds and beasts have. And since every right carries with it a corresponding duty and the corresponding remedy for resisting any attack upon it, it is merely a matter of finding out the corresponding duties and remedies to vindicate the elementary fundamental equality. The corresponding duty is to labour with my limbs and the corresponding remedy is to non-co-operate with him who deprives me of the fruit of my labour.

Young India, 26-3-1931, p. 49

If instead of insisting on rights everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. There is no such thing as the divine right of kings to rule and the humble duty of the ryots to pay respectful obedience to their masters. Whilst it is true that these hereditary inequalities must go as being injurious to the wellbeing of society, the unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions is equally injurious, if not more so

to the same wellbeing. The latter behaviour is probably calculated to injure the millions rather than the few claimants of divine or other rights. They could but die a brave or cowardly death but those few dead would not bring in the orderly life of blissful contentment. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the correlation of rights and duties. I venture to suggest that rights that do not flow directly from duty well performed are not worth having. They will be usurpations sooner discarded the better. A wretched parent who claims obedience from his children without doing his duty by them excites nothing but contempt. It is distortion of religious precept for a dissolute husband to expect compliance in every respect from his dutiful wife. But the children who flout their parent who is ever ready to do his duty towards them would be considered ungrateful and would harm themselves more than their parent. The same can be said about husband and wife. If you apply this simple and universal rule to employers and labourers, landlords and tenants, the princes and their subjects or the Hindus and the Muslims, you will find that the happiest relations can be established in all walks of life without creating disturbance in and dislocation of life and business which you see in India as in other parts of the world. What I call the law of Satyagraha is to be deduced from an appreciation of duties and rights flowing therefrom.

Harijan, 6-7-1947, p. 217

LABOUR SHOULD KNOW ITS STRENGTH

In my humble opinion labour can always vindicate itself if labour is sufficiently united and self-sacrificing. No matter how oppressive the capitalists may be, I am convinced that those who are connected with labour and guide the labour movement have themselves no idea of the resources that labour can command and which capital can never command. If labour would only understand and recognize that capital is perfectly helpless without labour, labour will immediately come to its own.

We have unfortunately come under the hypnotic suggestion and the hypnotic influence of capital, so that we have come to believe that capital is all in all on this earth. But a moment's thought would show that labour has at its disposal capital which the capitalists will never possess. Ruskin taught in his age that labour had unrivalled opportunities. But he spoke above our heads. At the present moment there is an Englishman, Sir Daniel Hamilton who is really making that very experiment. He is an economist. He is a capitalist also, but through his economic research and experiments he has come to the same conclusions as Ruskin had arrived at intuitively, and he has brought to labour a vital message. He says it is wrong to think that a piece of metal constitutes capital. He says it is wrong even to think that so much produce is capital, but he adds that if we go to the very source, it is labour that is capital, and that living capital is inexhaustible. It is upon that law

that we have been working in the Labour Union at Ahmedabad. It has been that law under which we have been working in our fight against the Government. It is that law, the recognition of which delivered 1,700,000 people in Champaran inside six months from a century-long tyranny. I must not tarry to tell you what that tyranny was, but those who are interested in that problem will be able to study every one of the facts that I have put before them.

Now I will tell you what we have done. There is in English a very potent word, and you have it in French also, all the languages of the world have it—it is “No”, and the secret that we have hit upon is that when capital wants labour to say “Yes”, labour roars out “No”, if it means “No”. And immediately labour comes to recognize that it has got the choice before it of saying “Yes”, when it wants to say “Yes” and “No”, when it wants to say “No”, labour is free of capital and capital has to woo labour. And it would not matter in the slightest degree that capital has guns and even poison gas at its disposal. Capital would still be perfectly helpless if labour would assert its dignity by making good its “No”. Then labour does not need to retaliate but labour stands defiant receiving the bullets and poison gas and still insists upon its “No”. /

The whole reason why labour so often fails is that instead of sterilizing capital as I have suggested, labour, (I am speaking as a labourer myself) wants to seize that capital and become capitalist itself in the worst sense of the term. And the capitalist therefore who is properly entrenched and organized, finding among the labourers also candidates for the same office, makes use of a portion of these to suppress

labour. If we really were not under this hypnotic spell, everyone of us, men and women, would recognize this rock-bottom truth without the slightest difficulty. Having proved it for myself, through a series of experiments carried on in different departments of life, I am speaking to you with authority (you will pardon me for saying so) that when I put this scheme before you, it was not as something superhuman but as something within the grasp of every labourer, man or woman.

Again, you will see that what labour is called upon to do under this scheme of non-violence is nothing more than the Swiss soldier does under gun-fire or the ordinary soldier who is armed from top to toe is called upon to do. While he undoubtedly seeks to inflict death and destruction upon his adversary, he also carries his own life in his pocket. I want labour, then, to copy the courage of the soldier without copying the brute in the soldier, namely the ability to inflict death, and I suggest to you that a labourer who courts death and has the courage to die without even carrying arms, with no weapons of self-defence, shows a courage of a much higher degree than a man who is armed from top to toe.

Young India, 14-1-1932, pp. 17-18

There is conflict of interest between capital and labour, but we have to resolve it by doing our own duty. Just as pure blood is proof against poisonous germs, so will labour, when it is pure, be proof against exploitation. The labourer has but to realize that labour is also capital. As soon as the labourers are properly educated and organized and they realize their strength, no amount of capital can subdue them. Organized and enlightened labour can

dictate its own terms. It is no use vowing vengeance against a party because we are weak. We have to get strong. Strong hearts, enlightened minds and willing hands can brave all odds and remove all obstacles. No, 'love thy neighbour as thyself' is no counsel of perfection. The capitalist is as much a neighbour of the labourer as the latter is a neighbour of the former, and one has to seek and win the willing co-operation of the other. Nor does the principle mean that we should accept exploitation lying down. Our internal strength will render all exploitation impossible.

Harijan, 1-3-1935, p. 23

CHAPTER 23

LAND TO THE TILLER

If Indian society is to make real progress along peaceful lines there must be a definite recognition on the part of the moneyed class that a ryot possesses the same soul that they do and that their wealth gives them no superiority over the poor. They must regard themselves even as the Japanese nobles did, as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their wards, the ryots. Then they would take no more than a reasonable amount as commission for their labours.

At present there is no proportion between the wholly unnecessary pomp and extravagance of the moneyed class and the squalid surroundings and the grinding pauperism of the ryots in whose midst the former are living. A model Zamindar would at once therefore reduce much of the burden the ryot is now bearing. He would come in intimate touch with the

ryots and know their wants and inject hope into them in the place of despair which is killing the very life out of them. He will not be satisfied with the ryots' ignorance of the laws of sanitation and hygiene. He would reduce himself to poverty in order that the ryot may have the necessities of life. He will study the economic condition of the ryots under his care, establish schools in which he will educate his own children side by side with those of the ryots. He will purify the village well and the village tank. He will teach the ryot to sweep his roads and clean his latrines by himself doing this necessary labour. He will throw open without reserve his own gardens for the unrestricted use of the ryot. He will use as hospital, school, or the like most of the unnecessary buildings which he keeps for his pleasure.

If only the capitalist class will read the signs of the times, revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps which today pass muster as villages can be turned into abodes of peace, health and comfort. I am convinced that the capitalist, if he follows the Samurai of Japan, has nothing really to lose and everything to gain. There is no other choice than between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist of superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and on the other, the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which, not even the armed force that a powerful government can bring into play, can avert. I have hoped that India will successfully avert the disaster.

Young India, 5-12-1929, p. 396

Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: "All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can therefore unmake it." Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language it means the State, i.e. the People. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it.

I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence. The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the wheel with all its implications. Land and all property is his who will work it. Unfortunately the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact.

Harijan, 2-1-1937, p. 375

No man should have more land than he needs for dignified sustenance. Who can dispute the fact that the grinding poverty of the masses is due to their having no land that they can call their own?

But it must be realized that the reform cannot be rushed, if it is to be brought about by non-violent means, it can only be done by education both of the haves and have-nots. . . . If the end in view is to be achieved, the education I have adumbrated has to be commenced now. An atmosphere of mutual respect and trust has to be established as the preliminary step. There can then be no violent conflict between the classes and the masses.

Young India, 20-4-1940, p. 97

The Kisan or the peasant, whether as a landless labourer or a labouring proprietor, comes first. He is the salt of the earth which rightly belongs or should

belong to him, not to the absentee landlord or Zamin-dar. But in the non-violent way the labourer cannot forcibly eject the absentee landlord. He has so to work as to make it impossible for the landlord to exploit him. Closest co-operation amongst the peasants is absolutely necessary. To this end, special organizing bodies or committees should be formed where there are none and those already in existence should be reformed where necessary. The Kisans are for the most part illiterate. Both adults and young persons of school-going age should be educated. This applies to men and women. Where they are landless labourers their wages should be brought to a level that would ensure a decent living which should mean balanced food, dwelling houses and clothing, which should satisfy health requirements.

The Bombay Chronicle, 28-10-1944

Co-operative Farming

I firmly believe too that we shall not derive the full benefits of agriculture until we take to co-operative farming. Does it not stand to reason that it is far better for a hundred families in a village to cultivate their lands collectively and divide the income therefrom than to divide the land anyhow into a hundred portions? And what applied to land applied equally to cattle.

Harijan, 15-2-1942, p. 39

My notion of co-operation is that the land would be held in co-operation by the owners and tilled and cultivated also in co-operation. This would cause a saving of labour, capital, tools, etc. The owners would work in co-operation and own capital, tools, animals, seeds etc. in co-operation. Co-operative

farming of my conception would change the face of the land and banish poverty and idleness from their midst. All this is only possible if people become friends of one another and as one family. When that happy event takes place there would be no ugly sore in the form of a communal problem.

Harijan, 9-3-1947, p. 59

CHAPTER 24

THE WEAPON OF SATYAGRAHA

Supposing a landowner exploits his tenants and mulcts them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him he does not listen and raises objection that he requires so much for his wife, so much for his children and so on. The tenants or those who have espoused their cause and have influence will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. She would probably say that for herself she does not need his exploited money. The children will say likewise that they would earn for themselves what they need.

Supposing further that he listens to nobody or that his wife and children combine against the tenants, they will not submit. They will quit if asked to do so but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may, however, be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue till the replacing tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants. Thus Satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion,

such that it covers all the elements of society and in the end makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure.

The conditions necessary for the success of Satyagraha are : (1) The *satyagrahi* should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent; (2) The issue must be true and substantial; (3) The *satyagrahi* must be prepared to suffer till the end for his cause.

Harijan, 31-3-1946, p. 64

This I do say, fearlessly and firmly, that every worthy object can be achieved by the use of Satyagraha. It is the highest and infallible means, the greatest force. Socialism will not be reached by any other means. Satyagraha can rid society of all evils, political, economic and moral.

Harijan, 20-7-1947, p. 240

CHAPTER 25

BREAD LABOUR

The law, that to live man must work, first came home to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing on Bread labour. But before that I had begun to pay homage to it after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The divine law, that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands, was first stressed by a Russian writer named T. M. Bondaref. Tolstoy advertised it, and gave it wider publicity. In my view, the same principle has been set forth in the third chapter of the Gita, where we are told, that he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only mean Bread labour.

Reason too leads us to an identical conclusion. How can a man, who does not do body labour, have the right to eat? 'In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread,' says the Bible. A millionaire cannot carry on for long, and will soon get tired of his life, if he rolls in his bed all day long, and is even helped to his food. He, therefore, induces hunger by exercise, and helps himself to the food he eats. If every one, whether rich or poor, has thus to take exercise in some shape or form, why should it not assume the form of productive, i.e. Bread labour? No one asks the cultivator to take breathing exercise or to work his muscles. And more than nine-tenths of humanity lives by tilling the soil. How much happier, healthier and more peaceful would the world become, if the remaining tenth followed the example of the overwhelming majority, at least to the extent of labouring enough for their food! And many hardships, connected with agriculture, would be easily redressed, if such people took a hand in it. Again invidious distinctions of rank would be abolished, when every one without exception acknowledged the obligation of Bread labour. It is common to all the *varnas*. There is a world-wide conflict between capital and labour, and the poor envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated; the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest.

Bread labour is a veritable blessing to one who would observe non-violence, worship truth, and make the observance of *brahmacharya* a natural act. This labour can truly be related to agriculture alone. But at present at any rate, everybody is not in a

position to take to it. A person can, therefore, spin or weave, or take up carpentry or smithery, instead of tilling the soil, always regarding agriculture, however, to be the ideal. Every one must be his own scavenger. Evacuation is as necessary as eating; and the best thing would be for every one to dispose of his own waste. If this is impossible, each family should see to its own scavenging. I have felt for years, that there must be something radically wrong, where scavenging has been made the concern of a separate class in society. We have no historical record of the man, who first assigned the lowest status in this essential sanitary service. Whoever he was, he by no means did us a good. We should, from our very childhood, have the idea impressed upon our minds that we are all scavengers, and the easiest way of doing so is, for every one who has realized this, to commence Bread labour as a scavenger. Scavenging, thus intelligently taken up, will help one to a true appreciation of the equality of man.

From Yeravda Mandir, Chap. ix

If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Then there would be no cry of over-population, no disease, and no such misery as we see around. Such labour will be the highest form of sacrifice. Men will no doubt do many other things either through their bodies or through their minds, but all this will be labour of love, for the common good. There will then be no rich and no poor, none high and none low, no touchable and no untouchable.

This may be an unattainable ideal. But we need not, therefore, cease to strive for it. Even if without fulfilling the whole law of sacrifice, that is, the law of

our being, we performed physical labour enough for our daily bread, we should go a long way towards the ideal.

If we did so, our wants would be minimized, our food will be simple. We should then eat to live, not live to eat. Let anyone who doubts the accuracy of this proposition try to sweat for his bread, he will derive the greatest relish from the productions of his labour, improve his health and discover that many things he took, were superfluities.

May not men earn their bread by intellectual labour? No. The needs of the body must be supplied by the body. "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's" perhaps applies here well.

Mere mental, that is, intellectual labour is for the soul and is its own satisfaction. It should never demand payment. In the ideal state, doctors, lawyers and the like will work solely for the benefit of society, not for self. Obedience to the law of Bread labour will bring about a silent revolution in the structure of society. Man's triumph will consist in substituting the struggle for existence by the struggle for mutual service. The law of the brute will be replaced by the law of man.

Return to the villages means a definite voluntary recognition of the duty of Bread labour and all it connotes. But says the critic, "Millions of India's children are today living in the villages and yet they are living a life of semi-starvation." This, alas, is but too true. Fortunately we know that theirs is not voluntary obedience. They would perhaps shirk body labour if they could, and even rush to the nearest city if they could be accommodated in it. Compulsory obedience to a master is a state of slavery, willing

obedience to one's father is the glory of sonship. Similarly compulsory obedience to the law of Bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. And it is health which is real wealth, not pieces of silver and gold. The Village Industries Association is an experiment in willing Bread labour.

Harijan, 29-6-1935, p. 156

CHAPTER 26

TRUSTEESHIP THE ONLY SAFE SOLUTION

Suppose I have come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry, I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me, what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. I enunciated this theory when the socialist theory was placed before the country in respect to the possession held by zamindars and ruling chiefs. They would do away with these privileged classes. I want them to out-grow their greed and sense of possession, and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour. The labourer has to realize that the wealthy man is less owner of his wealth than the labourer is owner of *his* own, viz. the power to work.

The question how many can be real trustees according to this definition is beside the point. If the theory is true, it is immaterial whether many live up to

it or only one man lives up to it. The question is of conviction, if you accept the principle of Ahimsa, you have to strive to live up to it, no matter whether you succeed or fail. There is nothing in this theory which can be said to be beyond the grasp of intellect, though you may say it is difficult of practice.

Harijan, 3-6-1939, p. 145

Practical Trusteeship Formula

(BY PYARELAL)

On our release from prison, we took up the question where we had left it in the Aga Khan Palace Detention Camp. Kishorlalbhai and Naraharibhai joined in drawing up a simple, practical trusteeship formula. It was placed before Bapu who made a few changes in it. The final draft read as follows:

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except so far as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.

3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.

4. Thus under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of society.

5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed

to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

6. Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.

Harijan, 25-10-1952, p. 301

CHAPTER 27

A CALL TO YOUTH

The village work frightens us. We who are town-bred find it trying to take to the village life. Our bodies in many cases do not respond to the hard life. But it is a difficulty which we have to face boldly, even heroically, if our desire is to establish Swaraj for the people, not substitute one class rule by another, which may be even worse. Hitherto the villagers have died in their thousands so that we might live. Now we might have to die so that they may live. The difference will be fundamental. The former have died unknowingly and involuntarily. Their enforced sacrifice had degraded us. If now we die knowingly and willingly, our sacrifice will ennoble us and the whole nation. Let us not flinch from the necessary sacrifice, if we will live as an independent self-respecting nation.

Young India, 17-4-1924, p. 130

The cities are capable of taking care of themselves. It is the village we have to turn to. We have to disabuse them of their prejudices, their superstitions, their narrow outlook and we can do so in no other manner than that of staying amongst them, and sharing their joys and sorrows and spreading education and intelligent information amongst them.

Young India, 30-4-1931, p. 94

I ask you (young men) to go to the villages and bury yourselves there, not as their masters or benefactors but as their humble servants. Let them know what to do and how to change their modes of living from your daily conduct and way of living. Only feeling will be of no use, just like steam which by itself is of no account unless it is kept under proper control when it becomes a mighty force. I ask you to go forth as messengers of God carrying balm for the wounded soul of India.

Young India, 29-12-1927, p. 443

We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have, in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilization. Its defects are well known, but not one of them is irremediable. To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilization seems to me an impossibility, unless we are prepared by some drastic means to reduce the population from three hundred million to three or say even thirty. I can, therefore, suggest remedies on the assumption that we must perpetuate the present rural civilization and endeavour to rid it of its acknowledged defects. This can only be done if the youth of the country will settle down to village life. And if they will do this, they must reconstruct their life and pass

every day of their vacation in the villages surrounding their colleges or high schools, and those who have finished their education or are not receiving any should think of settling down in villages.

Young India, 7-11-1929, p. 364

We have got to be ideal villagers, not the villagers with their queer ideals about sanitation and giving no thought to how they eat and what they eat. Let us not, like most of them, cook anyhow, eat anyhow, live anyhow. Let us show them the ideal diet. Let us not go by mere likes and dislikes, but get at the root of those likes and dislikes.

Harijan, 1-3-1935, p. 21

We must identify ourselves with the villagers who toil under the hot sun beating on their bent backs and see how we would like to drink water from the pool in which the villagers bathe, wash their clothes and pots and in which their cattle drink and roll. Then and not till then shall we truly represent the masses and they will, as surely as I am writing this, respond to every call.

Young India, 11-9-1924, p. 300

It is profitless to find out whether the villages of India were always what they are today. If they were never better it is a reflection upon the ancient culture in which we take so much pride. But if they were never better, how is it that they have survived centuries of decay which we see going on around us. . . . The task before every lover of the country is how to prevent this decay or, which is the same thing, how to reconstruct the villages of India so that it may be as easy for anyone to live in them as it is supposed to be in the cities. Indeed, it is the task before every patriot. It may be that the villagers are beyond

redemption, that rural civilization has had its day and that the seven hundred thousand villages have to give place to seven hundred well-ordered cities supporting a population not of three hundred millions but thirty. If such is to be India's fate, even that won't come in a day. It must take time to wipe out a number of villages and villagers and transform the remainder into cities and citizens.

Harijan, 7-3-1936, p. 30

CHAPTER 28

OUR FUTURE FROM OUR PAST

I believe that the civilization India has evolved is not to be beaten in the world. Nothing can equal the seeds sown by our ancestors. Rome went, Greece shared the same fate; the might of the Pharaohs was broken; Japan has become westernized; of China nothing can be said; but India is still, somehow or other, sound at the foundation. The people of Europe learn their lessons from the writings of the men of Greece or Rome, which exist no longer in their former glory. In trying to learn from them, the Europeans imagine that they will avoid the mistakes of Greece and Rome. Such is their pitiable condition. In the midst of all this India remains immovable and that is her glory. It is a charge against India that her people are so uncivilized, ignorant and stolid, that it is not possible to induce them to adopt any changes. It is a charge really against our merit. What we have tested and found true on the anvil of experience, we dare not change. Many thrust their advice upon

India and she remains steady. This is her beauty; it is the sheet-anchor of our hope.

Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. . . .

We notice that the mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants, and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions the more unbridled they become. Our ancestors, therefore, set a limit to our indulgences. They saw that happiness was largely a mental condition. A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich, or unhappy because he is poor. The rich are often seen to be unhappy, the poor to be happy. Millions will always remain poor. Observing all this, our ancestors dissuaded us from luxuries and pleasures. We have managed with the same kind of plough as existed thousands of years ago. We have retained the same kind of cottages that we had in former times, and our indigenous education remains the same as before. We have had no system of life-corroding competition. Each followed his own occupation or trade, and charged a regulation wage. It is not that we did not know how to invent machinery, but our forefathers knew that, if we set our hearts after such things, we would become slaves and lose our moral fibre. They, therefore, after due deliberation decided that we should only do what we could with our hands and feet. They saw that our real happiness and health consisted in a proper use of our hands and feet. They further reasoned that large cities were a snare and a useless encumbrance and that people would not be

happy in them, that there would be gangs of thieves and robbers, prostitution and vice flourishing in them, and that poor men would be robbed by rich men. They were, therefore, satisfied with small villages. They saw that kings and their swords were inferior to the sword of ethics and they, therefore, held the sovereigns of the earth to be inferior to the *rishis* and the *fakirs*. A nation with a constitution like this is fitter to teach others than to learn from them. This nation had courts, lawyers and doctors but they were all within bounds. Everybody knew that these professions were not particularly superior; moreover, these *vakils* and *vaids* did not rob people; they were considered people's dependents, not their masters. Justice was tolerably fair. The ordinary rule was to avoid courts. There were no touts to lure people into them. This evil, too, was noticeable only in and around capitals. The common people lived independently and followed their agricultural occupation. They enjoyed true Home Rule.

Hind Swaraj, (1962), pp. 61-62

Our civilization, our culture, our Swaraj depend not upon multiplying our wants—self-indulgence, but upon restricting our wants—self-denial.

Young India, 6-10-1921, p. 314

I am humble enough to admit, that there is much that we can profitably assimilate from the West. Wisdom is no monopoly of one continent or one race. My resistance to Western civilization is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption that Asiatics are fit only to copy everything that comes from the West. I do believe, that if India has patience enough to go through the fire of suffering and to resist any unlawful en-

croachment upon her own civilization which, imperfect though it undoubtedly is, has hitherto stood the ravages of time, she can make a lasting contribution to the peace and solid progress of the world.

Young India, 11-8-1927, p. 253

My ambition is much higher than independence. Through the deliverance of India, I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of Western exploitation.

Young India, 12-1-1928, p. 13

CHAPTER 29

THE WORLD OF TOMORROW

Perhaps never before has there been so much speculation about the future as there is today. Will the world always be one of violence? Will there always be poverty, starvation, misery? Will we have a firmer and wide belief in religion, or will the world be godless? If there is to be a great change in society, how will that change be wrought? By war, or revolution? Or will it come peacefully?

Different men give different answers to these questions, each man drawing the plan of tomorrow's world as he hopes and wishes it to be. I answer not only out of belief but out of conviction. The world of tomorrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence. That is the first law; out of it all other blessings will flow. It may seem a distant goal, and impractical Utopia. But it is not in the least unobtainable, since it can be worked for here and now. An individual can adopt the way of life of the future—

the non-violent way—without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can do it, cannot whole groups of individuals? Whole nations? Men often hesitate to make a beginning, because they feel that the objective cannot be achieved in its entirety. This attitude of mind is precisely our greatest obstacle to progress—an obstacle that each man, if he only wills it, can clear away.

Equal distribution—the second great law of tomorrow's world as I see it—grows out of non-violence. It implies not that the world's goods shall be arbitrarily divided up but that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply his natural needs, no more. As a crude example, if one man requires a quarter-pound of flour per week and another needs five pounds, each should not be given arbitrarily a quarter-pound, or five pounds; both should be able to satisfy their wants.

Here we come to perhaps the most vital question connected with the shaping to tomorrow's world. How is this equal distribution to be brought about? Must the wealthy be dispossessed of all their holdings?

Non-violence answers no. Nothing that is violent can be of lasting benefit to mankind. Forcible dispossession would deprive society of many great gifts; the wealthy man knows how to create and build, his abilities must not be lost. Instead, he must be left in possession of his wealth so that he may use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and act as trustee for the remainder, to be expended for the benefit of society. There have been and are such men. To my mind, as soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its

sake, then his earnings are good and his business venture is constructive.

But does not this whole idea of non-violence imply a change in human nature? And does history at any time record such a change? Emphatically it does. Many an individual has turned from the mean, personal, acquisitive point of view to one that sees society as a whole and works for its benefit. If there has been such a change in one man, there can be the same change in many.

I see no poverty in the world of tomorrow, no wars, no revolutions, no bloodshed. And in that world there will be a faith in God greater and deeper than ever in the past. The very existence of the world, in a broad sense, depends on religion. All attempts to root it out will fail.

Condensed from the *Liberty*

Independence is and ought to be as much the ideal of man as self-sufficiency. Man is a social being. Without inter-relation with society he cannot realize his oneness with the universe or suppress his egotism. His social interdependence enables him to test his faith and to prove himself on the touchstone of reality. If man were so placed or could so place himself as to be absolutely above all dependence on his fellow-beings he would become so proud and arrogant as to be a veritable burden and nuisance to the world. Dependence on society teaches him the lesson of humility. That a man ought to be able to satisfy most of his essential needs himself is obvious; but it is no less obvious to me that when self-sufficiency is carried to the length of isolating oneself from society it almost amounts to sin. A man cannot become self-sufficient

even in respect of all the various operations from the growing of cotton to the spinning of the yarn. He has at some stage or other to take the aid of the members of his family. And if one may take help from one's own family why not from one's neighbours? Or otherwise what is the significance of the great saying, 'The world is my family'?

✓ *Young India*, 21-3-1929, p. 93



