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**CENT PER CENT SWADESHI**  
**OR**  
**THE ECONOMICS OF VILLAGE INDUSTRIES**

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**NAVAJIVAN PRESS**  
**AHMEDABAD**

### **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

The articles collected in this book are all, excepting the first one, reprints from 'Harijan'. They are published in the present form in the hope that they will help in creating a better understanding of the programme and principles of the movement for the revival and encouragement of village industries.

1-11-1938

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**Cent Per Cent Swadeshi**  
**or**  
**The Economics of Village Industries**

**PART I**  
**GANDHIJ'S WRITINGS**  
**AND UTTERANCES**

"Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for this exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history." — Gandhiji

March 18, 1923

\* \* \*

"I have been saying that if untouchability stays Hinduism goes; even so would I 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 villages 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." — Gandhiji

August 29, 1936



## I

### A NEW ORIENTATION

[During the last few months Gandhiji has been approached by several workers in Swadeshi for a comprehensive definition of Swadeshi for their guidance. In trying to prepare an exhaustive definition and in the course of discussion with co-workers in the extreme South, he discovered that such a definition was almost impossible and that Swadeshi was its own definition. It was a spirit that was daily growing and undergoing variations. Any attempt at a definition must fail and was likely to retard the evolution of the Swadeshi spirit. He therefore suggested the following workable formula for the guidance of the All India Swadeshi League and kindred organisations :

“For the purpose of the All India Swadeshi League Swadeshi covers useful articles manufactured in India through small industries which are in need of popular education for their support and which will accept the guidance of the All India Swadeshi League in regulating prices and in the matter of the wages and welfare of labour under their control. Swadeshi will, therefore, exclude articles manufactured through the large and organised industries which are in no need of the services of the All India Swadeshi League and which can or do command State aid.”

This formula created consternation among the workers. The result was a discussion between some members of the League and Gandhiji at Bombay during his visit in the course of the Harijan tour.

in June 1934. The following is the gist of what Gandhiji said. C. S.]

"My formula, as stated clearly, is for the guidance of the Swadeshi League. It does not purport to cover the whole field of Swadeshi. It is only by way of suggestion to the League to restrict the scope of its work to the encouragement and propagation of minor, particularly home, industries to the exclusion of major, organised ones. The object of making this suggestion is not to decry major industries or to ignore the benefit those industries have bestowed and in future may bestow on the country. But a body like the Swadeshi League need not become the self-appointed advertising agents of those industries as it has hitherto been. They have ample resources at their command, and they are well able to take care of themselves. The spirit of Swadeshi has been sufficiently generated, and it helps them without any effort of Swadeshi organisations. These, if they are to be useful, have to concentrate their attention on struggling industries. Any attempt to advertise the wares of large, organised industries can only result in sending up prices. This will be unjust to the consumer. It is waste of effort to bring into being a philanthropic organisation to help a successful business organisation. We may not delude ourselves with the belief that our efforts have helped the growth and advancement of those industries. It will be a cheap self-satisfaction not substantiated by facts. I recall a conversation I had with Fazalbai in 1920 when I was on the eve of launching the movement of Swadeshi. He characteristically said to me, 'If you, Congressmen, become advertising agents of ours, you will do no good to the country except to put a premium on our wares and to raise the prices of our manufactures.' His argument was sound. But he was nonplussed when I informed him that I was to encourage hand-

spun and handwoven khadi which had been woefully neglected and which needed to be revived if the starving and unemployed millions were to be served.

But khadi is not the only such struggling industry. I therefore suggest to you to direct your attention and effort to all the small-scale, minor, unorganised industries that are today in need of public support. They may be wiped out if no effort is made in their behalf. Some of these are being pushed back by large-scale industries which flood the markets with their manufactures. It is these that cry for your help.

Take the sugar industry. The largest major industry next to the textile is that of the manufacture of sugar. It stands in no need of our assistance. Sugar factories are fast multiplying. Popular agencies have done little to help the growth of this industry. It is indebted for its growth to favourable legislation. And today the industry is so prosperous and expanding that the production of jaggery is becoming a thing of the past. It is admittedly superior to refined sugar in nutritive value. It is this very valuable cottage industry that cries out for your help. This by itself furnishes large scope for research and substantial help. We have to investigate the ways and means of keeping it alive. This is but an illustration of what I mean.

I have no doubt in my mind that we add to the national wealth if we help the small-scale industries. I have no doubt also that true Swadeshi consists in encouraging and reviving these home industries. That alone can help the dumb millions. It also provides an outlet for the creative faculties and resourcefulness of the people. It can also usefully employ hundreds of youths in the country who are in need of employment. It may harness all the energy that at present runs to waste. I do not want

any one of those who are engaged in more remunerative occupations to leave them and take to the minor industries. Just as I did with regard to the spinning wheel, I would ask only those who suffer from unemployment and penury to take to some of these industries and, add a little to their slender resources.

It will thus be seen that the change in activity that I have suggested to you does in no way conflict with the interests of the major industries. I want to say only this much that you, national servants, will restrict your activities to the minor industries and let the major ones help themselves as they are doing today. The minor industries I conceive will not replace the major ones, but will supplement them. I aspire even to induce the owners of large industries to take interest in this work which is purely humanitarian. I am a well-wisher of the mill-owners too, and they will bear me out when I say that I have not failed to help them when I could."\*

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\* Published in the Press in July, 1934.

## II SWADESHI

Early in the year, if not immediately after my convalescence last year, I was called upon by those who were interested in Swadeshi to frame a definition so as to answer the many difficulties that faced them. I had to bear in mind the various shades of Swadeshi in textiles. I put together the definitions that were suggested. I had correspondence with Shri Shivarao and Shri Jalbhai Naoroji as well as others. I failed to frame a definition that would suit all cases and found that it was impossible to frame an exhaustive definition. As I was travelling far and wide, I had the opportunity of observing things and of seeing how Swadeshi organisations were functioning. I came to the conclusion that the existing practice was an unconscious fraud upon the public and that many workers of ability were wasting their energy in a vain effort. They were practising self-deception. This strong language, whilst it correctly describes my mental attitude, is not intended to cast any reflection whatsoever upon the workers in Swadeshi organisations. They were doing their best without realizing that they were moving in a vicious circle and labouring under self-deception.

Let me explain what I mean. We were holding exhibitions of things that were in no need of special help or of advertisement for their sale. In their case, our interposition can either stimulate the prices of their wares or set up unhealthy rivalries between flourishing but competing firms.

We may profess to gratuitously help textile, sugar and rice mills and, respectively, kill the village spinning wheel, the handloom and their product, khadi, the village cane crusher and its product, the vitamin-laden

and nourishing *gud* or molasses, and the hand-pounder and its product, unpolished rice, whose pericarp, which holds the vitamins, is left intact by these pounders. Our clear duty is, therefore, 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. It may be that khadi, *gud* and unpolished rice have no intrinsic quality and that they should die. But, except for khadi, not the slightest effort has been made, so far as I am aware, to know anything about the fate of the tens of thousands of villagers who were earning their livelihood through crushing cane and pounding rice. Surely, there is in this work enough for an army of patriots. The reader will say, 'But this is very difficult work.' I admit. But it is most important and equally interesting. I claim that this is true, fruitful and cent per cent Swadeshi.

But I have as yet merely touched the fringe of the question. I have merely sampled three big-organised industries and shown how voluntary

Swadeshi agencies need to concentrate their attention solely on the corresponding unorganised village industries that are dying for want of voluntary and intelligent, organised help.

There are numberless other village, and even town, crafts that need public support, if they are to live and thus maintain the thousands of poor artisans depending upon them for their daily bread. Every ounce of work in this direction tells. Every hour given to this work means the sustenance of some deserving workers.

It is my certain conviction that, if work is done on a systematic basis in this direction, the department doing it will become self-supporting, new talent will be stimulated, the educated as well as the uneducated unemployed will find honourable employment without displacing anyone, and crores will be added yearly to the wealth of this country which is getting progressively impoverished.

Here is enough profitable and entertaining work, and to spare, for all the Swadeshi Leagues put together. The recent resolution of the Working Committee on Swadeshi\* means all this and much

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\* The following resolution was passed by the Working Committee at Benares on 30th July 1934:

"Doubts having arisen on the Congress policy in regard to Swadeshi, it has become necessary to re-affirm the Congress position on it in unequivocal terms. Notwithstanding what was done during the Civil Resistance struggle, no competition is permissible on Congress platforms and in Congress exhibitions between mill-made cloth and handspun and handwoven khadi. Congressmen are expected to use and encourage the use of only handspun and handwoven khadi to the exclusion of any other cloth.

In regard to articles other than cloth, the Working Committee adopts the following formula for the:

more. It provides limitless work for the creative genius in the country.

10-8-1984

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guidance of all Congress organizations :

'The Working Committee is of opinion that the activities of Congress organizations relating to Swadeshi shall be restricted to useful articles manufactured in India through cottage and other small industries which are in need of popular education for their support and which will accept the guidance of the Congress organizations in regulating prices and in the matter of the wages and welfare of labour under their control.'

The formula must not be interpreted to mean any modification of the unbroken policy of the Congress to promote the Swadeshi spirit in the country and to encourage the personal use of only Swadeshi articles. The formula is a recognition of the fact that the large and organized industries which can or do command State aid are in no need of the services of Congress organizations or any Congress effort on their behalf."



### III

#### MORE ON SWADESHI

I would like to resume the thread of my remarks on Swadeshi in the *Harijan* of 10th August. Take the special occupations of Harijans. There is a meaning behind the over two thousand Harijan castes. Most of them denote their respective occupations—basket-making, broom-making, rope-weaving, durri-weaving, etc. If a complete list was made of them, they would make an imposing list. They are occupations which either need encouragement, or should be deliberately destroyed if they are useless or unprofitable. But who is to decide whether they are profitable or unprofitable, useless or otherwise? If there was a true Swadeshi organisation, it would be its duty to find out the truth about all these innumerable handicrafts and interest itself in these craftsmen. The ink with which I am writing comes from Tenali. It supports about 12 workers. It is making headway against odds. I had three more specimens sent to me by different makers, all no doubt struggling like the Tenali group. They interested me. I entered into correspondence with them. But I could do no more for them. A Swadeshi organisation will examine the samples of these inks in a scientific manner and guide them and encourage the most promising ones. It is a good and growing industry, requiring expert chemical knowledge.

In Cawnpore, a man sent me samples of the paper his friend was manufacturing in a village near by. I enquired into the concern. It supports about nine men. The paper was stout and glossy. However, it was not good enough for writing. Men engaged in the manufacture are eking out the barest livelihood. The skill is supplied by an old man.

neering the crematorium. The whole concern may perish with him, if it is not properly guided. I was told that, if there were enough orders, the paper could be supplied at the same cost as the mill-made article. I know that handmade paper can never supply the daily growing demand for paper. But lovers of the seven hundred thousand villages and their handicrafts will always want to use handmade paper, if it is easily procurable. Those who use handmade paper know that it has a charm of its own. Who does not know the famous Ahmedabad paper? What mill-made paper can beat it in durability or polish?

The account books of the old style are still made of that paper. But it is probably a perishing industry like many such others. With a little encouragement, it ought never to perish. If there was supervision, the processes might be improved and the defects that are to be noticed with some of this handmade paper may be easily removed. The economic condition of the numberless people engaged in these little known trades is well worth investigating. They will surely allow themselves to be guided and advised and feel thankful to those who would take interest in them.

I hope I have given enough illustrations to show how best and uncultivated this field of true Swadeshi is. It is capable of limitless expansion and of producing, without any capital outlay, new wealth in the country and providing honourable employment to those who are today starving for want of it.

14-9-1934

#### IV

#### MORE TALKS ON SWADESHI

[Gandhiji's articles on Swadeshi have stimulated quite a lot of independent thinking and must continue to do so until we have had an organisation after Gandhiji's heart. A number of friends have seen him on the question, and I should like to summarise the discussion in order to make Gandhiji's position still clearer. M. D.]

Q. How does this NEW Swadeshi differ from the OLD?

A. The old emphasised the indigenous nature of the products, irrespective of the method of production or the prospects of the products. I have ruled out organised industries, not because they are NOT Swadeshi, but because they do not need special support. They can stand on their own legs and, in the present state of our awakening, can easily command a market. According to the new orientation, if it is new, I would certainly have our Swadeshi organisation to seek out all village industries and find how they are faring. We will have experts and chemists who will be prepared to place their knowledge at the disposal of villagers. We will, through our experts, offer to test the articles manufactured by village handicraftsmen and make them suggestions to improve their wares, and would sell them if they would accept our conditions.

Q. Would you take up any and every handicraft?

A. Not necessarily. I should examine each one of them, find out their place in the economy of the village life and, if I see that they must be encouraged because of inherent merit, I should do so. Now, for

instance, I should be loath to allow the village broom to be replaced by the modern broomstick or brush. I would ask Mrs. Gandhi and other women of the household to tell me about the relative merits of both. Mind you, I would consider the advantages from all points of view. Thus, the village broom, I should think, must be preferred because it indicates tenderness and kindness to small life, whereas the brush makes a clean sweep of those things. Thus, I should see a whole philosophy behind the broom, for I do not think the Creator makes any distinction between minute insects and (in His estimation) minute men.

Thus I should pick up all kinds of village crafts and industries which are about to die and deserve revival, both because of their intrinsic merit and their other useful aspects, and I should thus go on making discoveries. Take our trifling tooth-sticks, for instance. I am quite sure, if you were to deprive the bulk of the Bombay citizens of their tooth-sticks, their teeth would suffer. I cannot contemplate with equanimity the modern tooth-brush replacing the tooth-stick. These brushes are unhygienic. Once used, they deserve to be thrown away. However much disinfectants you may use to sterilise them; they can never be as good as fresh ones. But the *babul* or *neem* tooth-stick is used once for all and has highly astringent properties. Again, it serves the purpose of a tongue scraper. The West has yet to discover anything so hygienic as the Indian tooth-stick. You may not know that a doctor in South Africa claimed to have controlled tuberculosis among the Bantu miners by insisting on the regular use by them of these tooth-sticks. I would be no party to the advertisement of modern tooth-brushes even when they are made in India. I should declare my preference for the tooth-stick. This is cent per cent Swadeshi. If I take care of it, the rest will take

care of itself. Ask me to define the right angle and I should do it easily, but do not ask me to define the angles between the acutest and the most obtuse you can make. If I have the definition of a right angle, I can make whatever angle I need. Though Swadeshi is eloquent enough as its own definition, I have called mine cent per cent Swadeshi, because Swadeshi is in danger of being watered down. Cent per cent Swadeshi gives sufficient scope for the most insatiable ambition for service and can satisfy every kind of talent.

Q. You see Swaraj at the end of it ?

A. Why not ? Once I said in spinning wheel lies Swaraj, next I said in prohibition lies Swaraj. In the same way I would say in cent per cent Swadeshi lies Swaraj. Of course, it is like the blind men describing the elephant. All of them are right and yet not wholly right.

If we tap all our resources, I am quite sure we can be again the richest country in the world, which we were, I suppose, at one time. We can repeat the phenomenon, if we cease to be idle and profitably occupy the idle hours of the millions. All we need is to be industrious, not like a machine, but like the busy bee. You know I am now advertising what I call 'innocent honey' ?

Q. What is that ?

A. Honey scientifically drawn by scientific bee-keepers. They keep the bees and make them collect honey without killing them. That is why I call it innocent or non-violent honey. That is an industry which admits of great expansion.

Q. But can you call it absolutely non-violent ? You deprive the bee of its honey, as you deprive the calf of its milk.

A. You are right, but the world is not governed entirely by logic. Life itself involves some kind of

violence, and we have to choose the path of least violence. There is violence even in vegetarianism, is there not? Similarly, if I must have honey, I must be friendly to the bee and get it to yield as much honey as it will. Moreover, in the scientific bee culture, the bee is never deprived of its honey altogether.

## V

### WHAT IS IT ?

An esteemed friend wrote the other day saying, among other things, that he had not before his mind's eye a full picture of what I meant by village industries work. It was a good question. It must have occurred to many people. This is the purport of what I wrote to him :

✓ 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. To me, the campaign against untouchability has begun to imply ever so much more than the eradication of the ceremonial untouchability of those who are labelled untouchables. For the city-dweller, the villages have become untouchable. He does not know them, he will not live in them, and if he finds himself in a village, he will want to reproduce the city life there. This would be tolerable, if we could bring into being cities which would accommodate 30 crores of human beings. This is much more impossible than the one of reviving the village industries and stopping the progressive poverty, which is due as much to enforced unemployment as to any other cause.



## VI

### VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

As the author of the Congress resolution on village industries\* and as the sole guide of the Association that is being formed for their promotion, it is but meet that I should, as far as possible, share

\* The following resolution was passed by the Congress at its session in Bombay on 27th October 1934 :

"Whereas organisations claiming to advance Swadeshi have sprung up all over the country with and without the assistance of Congressmen and whereas much confusion has arisen in the public mind as to the true nature of Swadeshi, and whereas the aim of the Congress has been from its inception progressive identification with the masses, and whereas village reorganisation and reconstruction is one of the items of the constructive programme of the Congress, and whereas such reconstruction necessarily implies revival and encouragement of dead or dying village industries besides the central industry of hand-spinning, and whereas this work like the reorganisation of hand-spinning, is possible only through concentrated and special effort unaffected by and independent of the political activities of the Congress, Shri J. C. Kumarappa is hereby authorised to form, under the advice and guidance of Gandhiji, an Association called The All India Village Industries Association as part of the activities of the Congress. The said Association shall work for the revival and encouragement of the said industries and for the moral and physical advancement of the villages, and shall have power to frame its own constitution, to raise funds, and to perform such acts as may be necessary for the fulfilment of its objects."

with the public the ideas that are uppermost in my mind regarding these industries and the moral and hygienic uplift that is intimately associated with them.

The idea of forming the Association took definite shape during the Harijan tour as early as when I entered Malabar. A casual talk with a khadi worker showed to me how necessary it was to have a body that would make an honest attempt to return to the villagers what has been cruelly and thoughtlessly snatched away from them by the city-dwellers. The hardest hit among the villagers are the Harijans. They have but a limited choice of the industries that are open to the villagers in general. Therefore, when their industries slip away from their hands, they become like the beasts of burden with whom their lot is cast.

But the villagers in general are not much better off today. Bit by bit they are being confined only to the hand-to-mouth business of scratching the earth. Few know today that agriculture in the small and irregular holdings of India is not a paying proposition. The villagers live a lifeless life. Their life is a process of slow starvation. They are burdened with debts. The moneylender lends, because he can do no otherwise. He will lose all if he does not. This system of village lending baffles investigation. Our knowledge of it is superficial, in spite of elaborate inquiries.

Extinction of village industries would complete the ruin of the 700,000 villages in India.

I have seen in the daily press criticism of the proposals I have adumbrated. Advice has been given to me that I must look for salvation in the direction of using the powers of nature that the inventive brain of man has brought under subjection. The critics say that water, air, oil and electricity should be fully utilised as they are being utilised in the

go-ahead West. They say that control over these hidden powers of nature enables every American to have 33 slaves.

Repeat the process in India and I dare say that it will thirtythree times enslave every inhabitant of this land, instead of giving everyone thirtythree slaves.

(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.) I may not use a plough for digging a few square yards of a plot of land. The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages. The problem is how to utilise 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 cheapest 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.

I have drawn attention to some broad glaring facts to show that the way to take work to the villagers is not through mechanization but that it lies through revival of the industries they have hitherto followed.

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 they 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.

But khadi is the sun of the village solar system. The planets are the various industries which can support khadi in return for the heat and the

sustenance they derive from it. Without it, the other industries cannot grow. But during my last tour I discovered that, without the revival of the other industries, khadi could not make further progress. For villagers to be able to occupy their spare time profitably, the village life must be touched at all points. That is what the two Associations are expected to do.

Naturally they can have nothing to do with politics or political parties. The Congress, in my opinion, did well in making both the Associations autonomous and wholly non-political. All parties and all communities can combine to uplift the villages economically, morally and hygienically.

I know that there is a school of thought that does not regard khadi as an economic proposition at all. I hope that they will not be scared by my having mentioned khadi as the centre of village activities. I could not complete the picture of my mind without showing the inter-relation between khadi and the other village industries. Those who do not see it are welcome only to concentrate their effort on the other industries. But this, too, they will be able to do through the new Association, if they appreciate the background I have endeavoured to give in this article.

16-11-1984

## VII

### A. I. V. I. A.— ITS MEANING AND SCOPE

[The last was the busiest week that Gandhiji had since the Congress. His mind is wholly occupied with the thought of the Village Industries Association, and his post on the subject is already more than he can cope with. But the last week was made even fuller because of the annual session of the Gandhi Seva Sangh. The Sangh contains some of the picked workers in the country who are giving all their time to constructive work, and the third talk that Gandhiji gave them during the week was on the meaning and scope of the new Association. Here is a brief resume. M. D.]

✓ Some of you here perhaps know how the Village Industries Association came into being. During my extensive Harijan tour last year it was clearly borne in upon me that the way in which we were carrying on our khadi work was hardly enough either to universalise khadi or to rejuvenate the villages. I saw that it was confined to a very few, and that even those who used khadi exclusively were under the impression that they need do nothing else and that they might use other things irrespective of how and where they were made. Khadi was thus becoming a lifeless symbol, and I saw that, if the state of things were allowed to go on, khadi might even die of sheer inanition. It is not that a concentrated, intensive effort devoted exclusively to khadi would not be conducive to success, but there was neither that concentration nor intensity. All did not give ALL their spare time to the *charkha* or the *takli*, and all had not taken to the exclusive use of khadi— though their number was larger than that of the spinners. But the rest were all idle. There were

multitudes of men with quantities of enforced leisure on their hands. That I saw was a state which could lead only to our undoing. 'These people,' I said to myself, 'could never win Swaraj. For, their involuntary and voluntary idleness made them a perpetual prey of exploiters, foreign and indigenous. Whether the exploiter was from outside or from the Indian cities, their state would be the same, they would have no Swaraj.' So I said to myself, 'Let these people be asked to do something else; if they will not interest themselves in khadi, let them take up some work which used to be done by their ancestors but which has of late died out.' There were numerous things of daily use which they used to produce themselves not many years ago, but for which they now depend on the outer world. There were numerous things of daily use to the town-dweller for which he depended on the villagers, but which he now imports from cities. The moment the villagers decided to devote all their spare time to doing something useful and town-dwellers to use those village products, the snapped link between the villagers and the town-dwellers would be restored.

✓ As to which of the extinct or moribund village industries and crafts could be revived, we could not be sure until we sat down in the midst of the villages to investigate, to tabulate and classify. But I picked up two things of the most vital importance: articles of diet and articles of dress. Khadi was there. In the matter of articles of diet, we were fast losing our self-sufficiency. Only a few years ago, we pounded our own paddy and ground our own flour. Put aside for the time being the question of health. It is an indisputable fact that the flour mill and the rice mill have driven millions of women out of employment and deprived them of the means of eking out their income. Sugar is fast taking the place of jaggery, and readymade articles of diet like biscuits and sweetmeats are freely being imported.

into our villages. This means that all the village industries are gradually slipping out of the hands of the villager, who has become a producer of raw materials for the exploiter. He continually gives, and gets little in return. Even the little he gets for the raw material he produces he gives back to the sugar merchant and the cloth merchant. His mind and body have become very much like those of the animals, his constant companions. When we come to think of it, we find that the villager of today is not even half so intelligent or resourceful as the villager of fifty years ago. For, whereas the former is reduced to a state of miserable dependence and idleness, the latter used his mind and body for all he needed and produced them at home. Even the village artisan today partakes of the resourcelessness that has overtaken the rest of the village. Go to the village carpenter and ask him to make a spinning wheel for you, go to the village smith and ask him to make a spindle for you, you will be disappointed. This is a deplorable state of things. It is as a remedy for it that the Village Industries Association has been conceived.

This cry of 'back to the village', some critics say, is putting back the hands of the clock of progress. But is it really so? Is it going back to the village, or rendering back to it what belongs to it? I am not asking the city-dwellers to go to and live in the villages. But I am asking them to render unto the villagers what is due to them. Is there any single raw material that the city-dwellers can obtain except from the villager? If they cannot, why not teach him to work on it himself, as he used to before and as he would do now but for our exploiting inroads?

But this reinstating the villager in what was once his natural position is no easy task. I had thought that I should be able to frame a constitution and set



the Association going with the help of Sjt. Kumarappa within a short time. But the more I dive into it, the more I find myself out of my depth. In a sense, the work is much more difficult than khadi which does not in any way offer a complicated problem. You have simply to exclude all foreign and machine-made cloth, and you have established khadi on a secure foundation. But here the field is so vast, there is such an infinite variety of industries to handle and organise, that it will tax all our business talent, expert knowledge and scientific training. It cannot be achieved without hard toil, incessant endeavour and application of all our business and scientific abilities to this supreme purpose. Thus, I sent a questionnaire to several of our well-known doctors and chemists, asking them to enlighten me on the chemical analysis and different food values of polished and unpolished rice, jaggery and sugar, and so on. Many friends, I am thankful to say, have immediately responded, but only to confess that there has been no research in some of the directions I had inquired about. Is it not a tragedy that no scientist should be able to give me the chemical analysis of such a simple article as *gud*? The reason is that we have not thought of the villager. Take the case of honey. I am told that in foreign countries such a careful analysis of honey is made that no sample which fails to satisfy a particular test is bottled for the market. In India we have got vast resources for the production of the finest honey, but we have not much expert knowledge in the matter. An esteemed doctor friend writes to say that in his hospital, at any rate, polished rice is taboo and that it has been proved after experiments on rats and other animals that polished rice is harmful. But why have not all the medical men published the results of their investigation and experiment and joined in declaring the use of such rice as positively harmful?

I have just by one or two instances indicated my difficulty. What sort of an organisation should we have? What kinds of laboratory research shall we have to go in for? We shall need a number of scientists and chemists prepared to lay not only their expert knowledge at our disposal, but to sit down in our laboratories and to devote hours of time, free of charge, to experiments in the directions I have indicated. We shall have not only to publish the results from time to time, but we shall have to inspect and certify various products. Also we shall have to find out whether the villager who produces an article or foodstuff rests content with exporting it and with using a cheap substitute imported from outside. We shall have to see that the villagers become first of all self-contained and then cater for the needs of the city-dwellers. For this purpose we shall have to form district organisations, and, where districts are too big to handle, we may have to divide the districts into sub-districts. Each of these — some 250 — should have an agent who will carry out a survey and submit a report in the terms of the instructions issued to him from the head office. These agents shall have to be full-timers and whole-hoggers, with a live faith in the programme and prepared immediately to make the necessary adjustment in their daily life. This work will certainly need money, but, more than money, it will need men of strong faith and willing hands.

Q. Will not this programme swamp the khadi programme which has yet to be fulfilled?

A. No. Khadi cannot be moved from its central place. Khadi will be the sun of the whole industrial solar system. All the other industries will receive warmth and sustenance from the khadi industry.

Q. What exactly are the industries we must revive or promote?

A. I have indicated the lines. We must promote every useful industry that was existent a short while ago and the extinction of which has now resulted in unemployment.

Q. Have we to declare a boycott of the rice and the flour mills?

A. We have to declare no boycott, but we shall ask the people to husk their own rice and to grind their own flour, and we shall carry on persistent propaganda in favour of hand-pounded rice and hand-ground flour as better articles of diet from the point of view of health. Let us declare a boycott of idleness.

Q. Shall we use the Congress Committees for this purpose?

A. Of course. We shall use and take help from any source. We have no politics as such and no party.

✓ Q. The formation of the Central Board means centralisation?

A. Not quite. The districts will be the working centres. The central office will be only a watch tower for the whole of India issuing instructions, but not a board of administration. It will be a sort of correspondence school through which the various agents will carry on mutual exchange of thought and compare notes. We want to avoid centralisation of administration; we want centralisation of thought, ideas and scientific knowledge.

## VIII

### ITS MEANING

To my unaided mind you appear to be opening the first campaign of an endless and quixotic war against modern civilisation. 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 millenia. 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 cooperation 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 realises the tragic meaning of the disintegration of villages is doing or trying to do. Why am I turning back the course of modern civilisation, when I ask the villager to grind his own meal, eat it whole, including the nourishing bran, or when I ask him to turn his sugarcane into *gud* for his own requirements, if not for sale? Am I turning back the course of modern civilisation, 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 civilisation is not millenia 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 civilisation. 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.

4-1-1935

## IX

### HOW TO BEGIN

#### I.

Correspondents have been writing, and friends have been seeing me, to ask me how to begin the village industries work and what to do first.

The obvious answer is: Begin with yourself and do first that which is easiest for you to do.

This answer, however, does not satisfy the enquirers. Let me, therefore, be more explicit.

Each person can examine all the articles of food, clothing and other things that he uses from day to day, and replace foreign makes or city makes by those produced by the villagers in their homes or fields with the simple inexpensive tools they can easily handle and mend. This replacement will be itself an education of great value and a solid beginning. The next step will be opened out to him of itself. For instance, say, the beginner has been hitherto using a tooth-brush made in a Bombay factory. He wants to replace it with a village brush. He is advised to use a babul twig. If he has weak teeth or is toothless, he has to crush one end of it, with a rounded stone or a hammer, on a hard surface. The other end he slits with a knife and uses the halves as tongue-scrapers. He will find these brushes to be cheaper and much cleaner than the very 'unhygienic' factory-made tooth-brush. The city-made tooth-powder he naturally replaces with equal parts of clean, finely ground wood-charcoal and clean salt. He will replace mill cloth with village-spun khadi, and mill-husked rice with hand-husked, unpolished rice, and white sugar with village-made *gud*. These I have taken merely as samples already

mentioned in these columns. I have mentioned them again to deal with the difficulties that have been mentioned by those who have been discussing the question with me. Some say with reference to rice, for instance, 'Hand-husked rice is much dearer than mill-husked rice.' Others say, 'The art of hand-husking is forgotten, and there are no huskers to be found.' Yet others say, 'We never get mill-husked rice in our parts. We can supply hand-husked rice at 19 seers to the rupee.' All these are right and all are wrong. They are right so far as their own experience in their own district is concerned. All are wrong because the real truth is unknown to them. I am daily gathering startling experiences. All this comes from beginning with oneself. The following is the result of my observations to date.

Whole, unpolished rice is unprocurable in the bazars. It is beautiful to look at and rich and sweet to the taste. Mills can never compete with this unpolished rice. It is husked in a simple manner. Most of the paddy can be husked in a light *chakki* without difficulty. There are some varieties the husk of which is not separated by grinding. The best way of treating such paddy is to boil it first and then separate the chaff from the grain. This rice, it is said, is most nutritious and, naturally, the cheapest. In the villages, if they husk their own paddy, it must always be cheaper for the peasants than the corresponding mill-husked rice, whether polished or unpolished. The majority of rice found ordinarily in the bazars is always more or less polished, whether hand-husked or mill-husked. Wholly unpolished rice is always hand-husked and is every time cheaper than the mill-husked rice, the variety being the same.

Subject to further research, the observations so far show that it is because of our criminal negligence that rice-eating millions eat deteriorated rice and pay a heavy price into the bargain. Let the village

worker test the truth of these observations for himself. It won't be a bad beginning.

Next week I must take up *gud* and other articles of diet and another part of village work.

25-1-1935

## II

Last week I dealt with rice. Let us now take up wheat. It is the second most important article of diet, if not the first. From the nutritive standpoint, it is the king of cereals. By itself, it is more perfect than rice. Flour bereft of the valuable bran is like polished rice. That branless flour is as bad as polished rice is the universal testimony of medical men. Whole-wheat flour ground in one's own *chakki* is any day superior to, and cheaper than, the fine flour to be had in the bazars. It is cheaper because the cost of grinding is saved. Again, in whole-wheat flour there is no loss of weight. In fine flour there is loss of weight. The richest part of wheat is contained in its bran. There is a terrible loss of nutrition when the bran of wheat is removed. The villagers and others who eat whole-wheat flour ground in their own *chakkis* save their money and, what is more important, their health. A large part of the millions that flour mills make will remain in and circulate among the deserving poor when village grinding is revived.

But the objection is taken that *chakki* grinding is a tedious process, that often wheat is indifferently ground, and that it does not pay the villagers to grind wheat themselves. If it paid the villagers formerly to grind their own corn, surely the advent of flour mills should make no difference. They may not plead want of time; and when intelligence is allied to labour there is every hope of improvement in the *chakki*. The argument of indifferent grinding



can have no practical value. If the *chakki* was such an indifferent grinder, it could not have stood the test of time immemorial. But to obviate the risk of using indifferently ground whole-wheat flour, I suggest that, wherever there is suspicion, the flour of uneven grinding may be passed through a sieve and the contents may be turned into thick porridge and eaten with or after *chapati*. If this plan is followed, grinding becomes incredibly simple, and much time and labour can be saved.

All this change can only be brought about by some previous preparation on the part of workers and instruction of villagers. This is a thankless task. But it is worth doing, if the villagers are to live in health and elementary comfort.

*Gud* is the next article that demands attention. According to the medical testimony I have reproduced in these columns, *gud* is any day superior to refined sugar in food value, and if the villagers cease to make *gud* as they are already beginning to do, they will be deprived of an important food adjunct for their children. They may do without *gud* themselves, but their children cannot without undermining their stamina. *Gud* is superior to bazar sweets and to refined sugar. Retention of *gud* and its use by the people in general means several crores of rupees retained by the villagers.

But some workers maintain that *gud* does not pay the cost of production. The growers who need money against their crops cannot afford to wait till they have turned cane-juice into *gud* and disposed of it. Though I have testimony to the contrary too, this argument is not without force. I have no ready-made answer for it. There must be something radically wrong when an article of use, made in the place where also its raw material is grown, does not pay the cost of labour. This is a subject that demands local investigation in each case. Workers

must not take the answer of villagers and despair of a remedy. National growth, identification of cities with villages, depend upon the solution of such knotty problems as are presented by *gud*. We must make up our mind that *gud* must not disappear from the villages, even if it means an additional pice to be paid for it by city people.

1-2-1935

### III

I have dealt with some chief articles of food, and shown what they mean to the villagers in health and wealth. There is, however, the equally important subject of sanitation and hygiene. Proper attention to these means increase in health, energy and wealth, directly and indirectly.

Some foreign observers have testified that, of all the nations of the earth, India comes, perhaps, to the top in the observance of personal cleanliness. But I fear that it is not possible to say the same of corporate, in other words village, cleanliness. In yet other words, we have not made much advance beyond the family interest. We would sacrifice everything for the family as distinguished from the village, i. e., in a sense, the nation.

Members of a family will keep their own home clean, but they will not be interested in the neighbour's. They will keep their courtyard clean of dirt, insects and reptiles, but will not hesitate to shove all into the neighbour's yard. As a result of this want of corporate responsibility, our villages are dung heaps. Though we are an unshod nation, we so dirty our streets and roads that for a sensitive person it is painful to walk along them barefoot. It is difficult to get clean, drinkable water in village wells, tanks and streams. The approaches to an ordinary village are heaped with muck and rubbish.

Village sanitation is, perhaps, the most difficult task before the All India Village Industries Association. No Government can change the habits of a people without their hearty co-operation. And if the latter is forthcoming, a Government will have little to do in the matter.

The intelligentsia—medical men and students—can deal with the problem successfully, if they would conscientiously, intelligently, zealously and regularly DO THE WORK in the villages. Attention to personal and corporate hygiene is the beginning of all education.

The things to attend to in the villages are cleaning tanks and wells and keeping them clean, getting rid of dung heaps. If the workers will begin the work themselves, working like paid bhangis from day to day and always letting the villagers know that they are expected to join them so as ultimately to do the whole work themselves, they may be sure that they will find that the villagers will sooner or later co-operate. At least such is my experience of South Africa and Champaran, and even during the quick walking tour in Orissa last year.

Lanes and streets have to be cleansed of all the rubbish, which should be classified. There are portions which can be turned into manure, portions which have simply to be buried, and portions which can be directly turned into wealth. Every bone picked up is valuable raw material from which useful articles can be made or which can be crushed into rich manure. Rags and waste paper can be turned into paper, and excreta picked up are golden manure for the village fields. The way to treat the excreta is to mix them, liquid as well as solid, with superficial earth in soil dug no deeper than one foot at the most. In his book on Rural Hygiene, Dr. Poore says that excreta should be buried in earth no deeper than nine to twelve inches (I am quoting from

memory). The author contends that the superficial earth is charged with minute life, which, together with light and air which easily penetrate it, turn the excreta into good soft sweet-smelling soil within a week. Any villager can test this for himself. The way to do it is either to have fixed latrines with earthen or iron buckets, and empty the contents in properly prepared places from day to day, or to perform the functions directly on the ground dug up in squares. The excreta can either be buried in a village common or in individual fields. This can only be done by the co-operation of the villagers. At the worst, an enterprising villager can collect the excreta and turn them into wealth for himself. At present, this rich manure, valued at lakhs of rupees, runs to waste every day, fouls the air and brings disease into the bargain.

Village tanks are promiscuously used for bathing, washing clothes, and drinking and cooking purposes. Many village tanks are also used by cattle. Buffaloes are often to be seen wallowing in them. The wonder is that, in spite of this sinful misuse of village tanks, villages have not been destroyed by epidemics. It is the universal medical evidence that this neglect to ensure purity of the water supply of villages is responsible for many of the diseases suffered by the villagers.

This, it will be admitted, is a gloriously interesting and instructive service, fraught with incalculable benefit to the suffering humanity of India. I hope it is clear from my description of the way in which the problem should be tackled, that, given willing workers who will wield the broom and the shovel with the same ease and pride as the pen and the pencil, the question of expense is almost wholly eliminated. All the outlay that will be required is confined to a broom, a basket, a shovel and a pick-axe, and possibly some disinfectant. Dry ashes are.

perhaps, as effective a disinfectant as any that a chemist can supply. But here let philanthropic chemists tell us what is the most effective and cheap village disinfectant that villagers can improvise in their villages.

8-2-1935

## X

### VILLAGE TANNING AND ITS POSSIBILITIES

Village tanning is as ancient as India itself. No one can say when tanning became a degraded calling. It could not have been so in ancient times. But we know today that one of the most useful and indispensable industries has consigned probably a million people to hereditary untouchability. An evil day dawned upon this unhappy country when labour began to be despised and therefore neglected. Millions of those who were the salt of the earth, on whose industry this country depended for its very existence, came to be regarded as low classes, and the microscopic leisured few became the privileged classes, with the tragic result that India suffered morally and materially. Which was the greater of the two losses it is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate. But the criminal neglect of the peasants and the artisans has reduced us to pauperism, dullness and habitual idleness. With her magnificent climate, lofty mountains, mighty rivers and an extensive seaboard, India has limitless resources, whose full exploitation in her villages should have prevented poverty and disease. But divorce of the intellect from body-labour has made of us perhaps the shortest-lived, most resourceless and most exploited nation on earth. The state of village tanning is, perhaps, the best proof of my indictment. It was the late Madhusudan Das who opened my eyes to the great crime against a part of humanity. He sought to make reparation by opening what might be called an educational tannery. His enterprise did not come up to his expectations, but he was

responsible for the livelihood of hundreds of shoemakers in Cuttack.

It is estimated that rupees nine crores worth of raw hide is annually exported from India and that much of it is returned to her in the shape of manufactured articles. This means not only a material, but also an intellectual, drain. We miss the training we should receive in tanning and preparing the innumerable articles of leather we need for daily use.

Tanning requires great technical skill. An army of chemists can find scope for their inventive talent in this great industry. There are two ways of developing it. One is the uplift of Harijans living in the villages and eking out a bare sustenance, living in filth and degradation and consigned to the village ghetto, isolated and away from the village proper. This way means part re-organisation of villages and taking art, education, cleanliness, prosperity and dignity to them. This means also the application of chemical talent to village uplift. Tanning chemists have to discover improved methods of tanning. The village chemist has to stoop to conquer. He has to learn and understand the crude village tanning, which is still in existence but which is fast dying owing to neglect, not to say want of support. But the crude method may not be summarily scrapped, at least not before a sympathetic examination. It has served well for centuries. It could not have done so, if it had no merit. The only research I know in this direction is being carried on in Santiniketan, and then it was started at the now defunct Ashram at Sabarmati. I have not been able to keep myself in touch with the progress of the experiment at Santiniketan. There is every prospect of its revival at the Harijan Ashram, which the Sabarmati Ashram has now become. These experiments are mere drops in the ocean of possible research.

Cow-preservation is an article of faith in Hinduism. No Harijan worth his salt will kill cattle for food. But, having become untouchable, he has learnt the evil habit of eating carrion. He will not kill a cow but will eat with the greatest relish the flesh of a dead cow. It may be physiologically harmless. But psychologically there is nothing, perhaps, so repulsive as carrion-eating. And yet, when a dead cow is brought to a Harijan tanner's house, it is a day of rejoicing for the whole household. Children dance round the carcass, and as the animal is flayed, they take hold of bones or pieces of flesh and throw them at one another. As a tanner, who is living at the Harijan Ashram, describing the scenes at his own now forsaken home, tells me the whole family is drunk with joy at the sight of the dead animal. I know how hard I have found it working among Harijans to wean them from the soul-destroying habit of eating carrion. Reformed tanning means the automatic disappearance of carrion-eating.

Well, here is the use for high intelligence and the art of dissection. Here is also a mighty step in the direction of cow-preservation. The cow must die at the hands of the butcher, unless we learn the art of increasing her capacity of milk-giving, unless we improve her stock and make her male progeny more useful for the field and carrying burdens, unless we make scientific use of all her excreta as manure, and unless, when she and hers die, we are prepared to make the wisest use of her hide, bone, flesh, entrails, etc.

I am just now concerned only with the carcass. It is well to remember here that the village tanner, thank God, has to deal only with the carcass, not the slaughtered animal. He has no means of bringing the dead animal in a decent way. He lifts it, drags it, and this injures the skin and reduces



the value of the hide. If the villagers and the public knew the priceless and noble service the tanner renders, they will provide easy and simple methods of carrying it, so as not to injure the skin at all.

The next process is flaying the animal. This requires great skill. I am told that none, not even surgeons, do this work better or more expeditiously than the village tanner does with his village knife. I have inquired of those who should know. They have not been able to show me an improvement upon the village tanner. This is not to say that there is none better. I merely give the reader the benefit of my own very limited experience. The village tanner has no use for the bone. He throws it away. Dogs hover round the carcass whilst it is flayed, and take away some, if not all, of the bones. This is a dead loss to the country. The bones, if powdered fine, apart from their other uses, make valuable manure. What remains after the dogs have taken away their share is transported to foreign countries and returns to us in the shape of handles, buttons, etc.

The second way is urbanising this great industry. There are several tanneries in India doing this work. Their examination is outside the scope of this article. This urbanisation can do little good to the Harijans, much less to the villages. It is a process of double drain from the villages. Urbanisation in India is slow but sure death for her villages and villagers. Urbanisation can never support ninety per cent of India's population, which is living in her 700,000 villages. To remove from these villages tanning and such other industries is to remove what little opportunity there still is for making skilled use of the hand and the head. And when the village handicrafts disappear, the villagers working only with their cattle on the field, with idleness for six or four months in the year, must, in the words of

Madhusudan Das, be reduced to the level of the beast and be without proper nourishment, either of the mind or the body, and, therefore, without joy and without hope.

Here is work for the cent per cent Swadeshi lover and scope for the harnessing of technical skill to the solution of a great problem. The work fells three apples with one throw. It serves the Harijans, it serves the villagers, and it means honourable employment for the middle class intelligentsia who are in search of employment. Add to this the fact that the intelligentsia have a proper opportunity of coming in direct touch with the villagers.

## XI

### “ WHY NOT LABOUR-SAVING DEVICES ”

A fair friend who was enthused over the contemplated formation of the All India Village Industries Association, on reading my press message on the 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 700,000 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 innutritious 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 utilise 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.

30-11-1934

## XII

### A. I. V. I. A. — WHAT IT IS

[The following questions put on 28-1-'35 by a U. P. interviewer and Gandhiji's answers to them are reproduced from the daily press. They were revised by Gandhiji before publication. M. D.]

Question: When do you think you will be able to give an actual start to the work of the Village Industries Association?

Gandhiji: It is difficult to say what is meant by "start". But if by it is meant actual work through different agencies in villages, I am unable to fix the exact date, because we are moving very cautiously — cautiously in the sense that we do not want to make any mistakes so long as it is possible to avoid them — because of the varied nature of the work to be done. This work is like sailing on an uncharted sea. The Central Board is meeting in Wardha on the 1st of the next month, when perhaps a definite step will be taken. Meanwhile, not a moment has been lost. We have been collecting valuable information, and we are having promises of support from many quarters.

Q: Do you intend to start branches of the Association in all the provinces simultaneously, or do you intend to make a beginning in a few selected places? Which will be the headquarters of the Association? Will a branch be established here before you leave?

G: We aim at having no branches, but agencies all over India, the ideal being to have as many agents as there are villages, so as to ensure perfect distribution of work. The secret of success of this effort lies in decentralization. I do not know if an

agency will be formally established in Delhi before I leave. But I am collecting all the information that is available. The final appointment will be made by the Central Board. The headquarters are in Wardha, where Seth Jamnalalji has given a valuable garden with a large bungalow in it, and he has promised more land, if it is required for subsequent arrangements.

Q: Is the Association likely to depend on its unaided strength for all information, statistical or otherwise, in respect of the dead or dying industries you seek to revive, or will it invite the co-operation of all official and non-official agencies operating in India at present?

G: The Association will do nothing unaided, so vast is the work to be done. Therefore it will invite and receive co-operation of all agencies, not excluding the official agencies.

Q: Will the Association seek to revive only those industries whose revival is not reasonably calculated to come in conflict with the various world economic and commercial forces now acting and reacting on India; or will the Association try to revive the dead industries, irrespective of such considerations and merely because in their ancient flourishing condition they used to give food to millions of villages?

G: The Association will certainly seek to revive and encourage as many industries as are necessary for the moral and material growth of village life. It will not be deterred by the so-called, conflicting world forces.

Q: It is generally agreed that the cotton mills of India have not taken very kindly to the khadi industry. If the Association attempts to resuscitate those dead, dying or unorganized industries which are likely to clash with the interests of more organized,

indigenous industries, is it not your apprehension that the Association will meet with opposition?

G: It is likely that the Association will meet with opposition from mechanised industries, such as sugar mills, rice mills and flour mills. It is for us to find a way out of the difficulty. I have every hope that we shall be able to overcome these difficulties.

Q: Take, for instance, the question of sugar v. *gud*. Sugar is a protected industry and is now fairly well-organized. It was stated in the Press some time ago that the Association would try to increase the consumption of *gud*. If it is true, do you not think that by doing so it will evoke the opposition of the sugar industry?

G: That may be so. If the consumption of *gud* increases and the consumption of sugar decreases, it would be a blessing for India, because medical testimony goes to show that *gud* is superior to sugar in nutritive value; and it is the business of the Association, as also of the public, to see to it that no mechanised industry is allowed to interfere with the health of the people.

Q: May I have your views on whether or not the Association should supplement the existing large scale industries, without antagonising them?

G: The answer to it has already been given.

Q: Am I wrong in suggesting that, from the resuscitation of dead village industries, such as you contemplate, to the industrialisation of India on human, rational and intelligent lines (as opposed to greedy capitalism), it is but a step?

G: I do not know if a vast country like India, with her millions of people having four months of enforced idleness on their hand, can afford to have large scale industries and yet live a life of tolerable comfort. Large scale, centralised industries in India, except such industries as cannot be possibly carried



on in villages, must mean starvation of millions, unless honourable employment is found for the displaced millions.

Q: If what the Press says about the Government circular forestalling the activities of the Village Industries Association is true, do you think there is any chance of the Association coming in conflict with the Government?

G: There is no possibility of the Association coming in conflict with Government, because the ideal that the Association has set before it appears to me to be different from that of the Government effort, if I have understood it rightly, except, perhaps, in the matter of sanitation. We should certainly not take up the work of sanitation in villages where the Government agencies might be doing it. There is no idea whatsoever to supplant the Government agency. It may be to supplement the work.

Q: You must have noticed that the Government suspect that through this Association you will have greater opportunities of coming in closer contact with the villages, which you will utilise to prepare for organising civil disobedience again in a far more gigantic scale.

G: It never crossed my mind. I have never worked in that indirect fashion. It would defeat the very end that I have in view. I want the material and moral growth of the villages for itself; and if it is achieved, it would be a full satisfaction of my ambition. Similarly, if ever I should have to organise civil disobedience, it would be organised independently of any other activity. If full effect is given to the word "civil", all this suspicion should be dispelled. But I have patience enough, and I am convinced that, if what I have said is true, all the suspicion will be dispelled without any further effort on my part.

Q: I would ask another question. You said that you could show a miracle, if Government understood the spirit of your village industries scheme and lent its help to you. What do you mean by help? Is it financial assistance?

G: I simply say that, if Government understand the secret of my methods and give me complete co-operation in the work I am doing, I undertake to show miracles. I do not want financial co-operation. I want moral, enthusiastic endorsement from Government.

### XIII

#### NO DISAPPOINTMENT

Sjt. Har Dayal Nag, probably the oldest leader at work in all India, writes :

“ I feel disappointed to notice want of sufficient rally round you in the work of, your All India Village Industries Association. If you charge me with neglect of duty in this connection, I have no other alternative than to plead guilty. I have been studying the economic aspect of the problem of village industries since the beginning of my public life. Your programme does not enthuse me much simply because I miss in it that economic aspect. It may be my fault, and I am badly in need of being enlightened.

The wolf of the foreign trade that devoured all the village industries throughout the length and breadth of India is still there. The siren of economic jugglery is still singing the slogan ‘buy at the cheapest market’ with remarkable effect. Imagine for a while that India is flooded with cottage-made goods; but manufacture of goods without consumers or purchasers is nothing but a loss. The handloom can produce khaddar but it cannot produce its buyer. My painful experience is that many of those who spin do not wear any cloth made out of their self-spun yarn. Most of the spinners do not even wear khaddar. Sale of yarn brings them almost nothing. Some do not even condescend to sell or donate their yarn. Such amateurs cannot continue to spin for long. Now, if the cottagers of all Indian villages produce goods by handicraft not

for their own use but for sale, wherefrom are their purchasers to come? No foreign country will buy them so long as India's political slavery lasts. The Indian consumers eschew Indian cottage-made rough goods, if they eschew anything at all. The *gud* producer may taste a bit of it for the sake of lip loyalty to the country, but will he mix it with his tea or milk? Will the owner of a village shoe factory use rough shoes of his own factory in preference to fine pleasurable cheap imported shoes? I have had the misfortune to witness failures of many small producing concerns in which goods were manufactured in terms of money and only for sale. Their only object was money-making, and failure was inevitable. The Indian cottagers will never eschew foreign goods unless and until they are taught to learn that no foreign goods can be cheaper than the goods which they can produce with their own raw materials and spare labour and for their own use. They have to borrow money for purchasing imported goods, but they need not borrow at all in producing their necessaries of life. So far as cottagers are concerned co-operative barter system is much preferable to the present money system. The Indian villagers are so demoralized by the wolf of foreign trade that they cannot even think except in terms of money."

Har Dayal Babu has earned his rest, and no one will complain if he retires from all public work. But like his three competitors, Pandit Malaviyaji, Abbas Tyabji\* and Vijayaraghavachariar, he insists on working. He can, therefore, expect no indulgence from critics on the ground of age. I know he wants

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\* Since deceased.

none. His body and his intellect remain unimpaired and are ever at the disposal of the nation.

Let me then tell him that those who are actually working have no sense of disappointment. The ground is so new that it takes long to prepare. The workers are not able to cope with what they have on their hands.

I suggest then that Har Dayal Babu has the sense of disappointment for the very reason he has given. He pleads guilty to the charge of neglect of duty. If he had, as is his wont, taken up the work, he would no doubt have found it very difficult but he would certainly not have been disappointed. He misses the economic aspect because he has not worked to see it.

Having been immersed in Harijan work, I discovered that if India was not to perish, we had to begin with the lowest rung of the ladder. If that was rotten, all work done at the top or at the intermediate rungs was bound ultimately to fail.

There is more than the economic aspect in the programme, before the country. To provide nourishing food for the nation in the manner sketched in the programme is to give it both money and health. For the villagers to pound their own rice and eat it unpolished whole, means saving at least thirty crores of rupees per year and promoting health. But the tragedy of it is that we have no such thing as unpolished whole rice to be had in the ordinary bazar. And the Association has to wait some days before it can give a clear lead to the nation. The nation requires education as to the food to be taken and the manner in which it has to be prepared.

This is no programme of preparing shoddy goods in the villages and forcing them on unwilling buyers. There is to be no competition, foredoomed to failure, with foreign or Swadeshi corresponding articles. The villagers are to be their own buyers. They will

primarily consume what they produce. For they are ninety per cent of the population. They will manufacture for the cities what the latter want and what they can usefully manufacture. Most undoubtedly people will be advised to use *gud* for their milk and tea. They will be told, as they are being told, that it is a superstition to think that *gud* taken in milk or tea is injurious to health. One correspondent says that on his wife beginning to take *gud* with her tea instead of sugar she lost her constipation. I am not surprised, because *gud* has a mild laxative effect which sugar certainly has not. The middle class people have exploited the villages. Some of them are now making reparation by making them realize their dignity and importance in the national evolution.

Then take the question of sanitation. Proper attention to it gives the country two rupees per year per head. That means sixty crores of rupees per annum in addition to better health and greater efficiency. The present programme is the foundation of an all-round improvement in the tottering condition of the seven lacs of India's villages. It is work that is long overdue. It has to be done, no matter what India's political condition is. It includes every class of villagers, from the scavenger to the sowcar. It is work in which all parties can whole-heartedly join. Its future is assured, if a supply of workers can be assured.

## XIV

### FALLACIES

A careful observer of events and things writes :

“I have no doubt that there is an enormous scope for work in the directions indicated by you in your letter under reply. Cottage industries have a place. But, to be quite frank, I do not think that these can replace industries on a big scale. Leaving aside the financial interests of those controlling such industries, I think that it will not be in the interest of the country to work for the ruin of such industries, which have been established and which can be established in this country. The greatest objection to machinery that has been urged is the growing tendency to reduce the number of men employed. This results in unemployment. The present method of distribution of profits may require readjustment. But leisure, if it can be well utilized, is more important than many other things. Merely to keep a large number employed at work I do not think it is necessary to discard economic and efficient machinery. It should be able to give leisure and food to many, and in this ‘many’ I include people not even distantly connected with the industry. With such a large population as in India and steadily increasing, I fear that at no time will it be possible to keep everyone in reasonable comfort. With improved education and sanitation life will be prolonged and death rate will come down. From the population point of view this will make the condition worse. So, you will forgive my saying that the first thing that requires to be done is to take measures to

restrict population, and it cannot be done without birth control. I know that you are against it. But, now that you are applying your mind solely to the problem of economic reconstruction by improvement in sanitation, food values, cottage industries, etc., I request you to consider if this is not also one of the things that should receive your attention."

The writer is an honest thinker and yet, as it seems to me, has missed the whole aim of the work being done by the two organizations he has in mind. Their aim is NOT to replace or to ruin the big industries, but it IS to revive the dead or dying industries and therethrough to find employment for the millions who are semi-starved because they are forced to live in complete or semi-idleness. This is a constructive, not a destructive, programme. The big industries can never, they don't hope to, overtake the unemployed millions. Their aim is primarily to make money for the few owners, never the direct one of finding employment for the unemployed millions. The organizers of khadi and other village industries don't hope in the near future to affect the big industries. They may hope to bring a ray of light into the dark dungeons, miscalled cottages, of the villagers. My esteemed correspondent seems to give up his whole case when he says 'leisure, if it can be well utilized, is more important than many other things.' The activities which he disapproves of are intended to accomplish the very end he has in view. They are designed to WELL UTILIZE the leisure hours of the idle millions.

In this there is NO war against the misuse and abuse of machinery, i.e. its use to the detriment of the millions. 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.

The writer fears that at no time will it be possible to keep everyone in reasonable comfort. This fear is not shared by those who are working in the villages. On the contrary closer contact with the villagers and closer knowledge of the villages fill them with the hope that if only the villagers can be induced to shed their traditional idleness they can all live in reasonable comfort, without causing any very great dislocation. Certain oppressive conditions have no doubt to be abated. But the process will almost be unfelt, if there is some co-operation from what are termed vested interests.

The correspondent's fear about the securing of reasonable comfort for the existing population leads naturally to the fear of over-population. The resort to birth control becomes then the logical step. Birth control to me is a dismal abyss. It amounts to playing with unknown forces. Assuming that birth control by artificial aids is justifiable under certain conditions, it seems to be utterly impracticable of application among the millions. It seems to me to be easier to induce them to practise self-control than control by contraceptives. This little globe of ours is not a toy of yesterday. It has not suffered from the weight of over-population through its age of countless millions. How can it be that the truth

has suddenly dawned upon some people that it is in danger of perishing of shortage of food unless birth rate is checked through the use of contraceptives? My fear is that my correspondent has led himself from one fallacy to another ending in the quagmire of contraceptives on a scale hitherto unknown.

14-9-1935

## A FATAL FALLACY

Among the questions that a correspondent asked me for discussion in *Harijan*, there was one which I have kept on my file for some time :

“Don't you think that it is impossible to achieve any great reform without winning political power? The present economic structure has also got to be tackled. No reconstruction is possible without a political reconstruction, and I am afraid all this talk of polished and unpolished rice, balanced diet and so on and so forth is mere moonshine.”

I have often heard this argument advanced as an excuse for failure to do many things. I admit that there are certain things which cannot be done without political power, but there are numerous other things which do not at all depend upon political power. That is why a thinker like Thoreau said that “that Government is best which governs the least.” This means that when people come into possession of political power, the interference with the freedom of people is reduced to a minimum. In other words, a nation that runs its affairs smoothly and effectively without much state interference is truly democratic. Where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic only in name.

There is certainly no limit or restraint on the freedom of thought. It may be remembered that many reformers are nowadays laying the greatest emphasis on a new ideology. How few of us are going in for any reform in our opinions! Modern scientists recognize the potency of thought, and that is why it is said that as a man thinks so does he

become. One who always thinks of murder will turn a murderer, and one who thinks of incest will be incestuous. On the contrary he who always thinks of truth and non-violence will be truthful and non-violent, and he whose thoughts are fixed on God will be godly. In this realm of thought political power does not come into play at all. Even so it must be obvious that political power or want of it is of no consequence in many of our activities. I would make a humble suggestion to the correspondent. Let him make a detailed note of all his daily activities, and he is sure to find that many of them are performed independently of any political power. Man has to thank himself for his dependence. He can be independent as soon as he wills it.

The correspondent has raised the bugbear of 'great' reform and then fought shy of it. He who is not ready for small reforms will never be ready for great reforms. He who makes the best of his faculties will go on augmenting them, and he will find that what once seemed to him a great reform was really a small one. He who orders his life in this way will lead a truly natural life. One must forget the political goal in order to realize it. To think in terms of the political goal in every matter and at every step is to raise unnecessary dust. Why worry one's head over a thing that is inevitable? Why die before one's death?

That is why I can take the keenest interest in discussing vitamins and leafy vegetables and unpolished rice. That is why it has become a matter of absorbing interest to me to find out how best to clean our latrines, how best to save our people from the heinous sin of fouling Mother Earth every morning. I do not quite see how thinking of these necessary problems and finding a solution for them has no political significance and how an examination of the financial policy of Government has necessarily

a political bearing. What I am clear about is that the work I am doing and asking the masses to do is such as can be done by millions of people, whereas the work of examining the policy of our rulers will be beyond them. That it is a few people's business I will not dispute. Let those who are qualified to do so do it as best they can. But until these leaders can bring great changes into being, why should not millions like me use the gifts that God has given them to the best advantage? Why should they not make their bodies fitter instruments of service? Why should not they clear their own doors and environments of dirt and filth? Why should they be always in the grip of disease and incapable of helping themselves or anyone else?

No, I am afraid the correspondent's question betrays his laziness and, despair and the depression that has overtaken many of us. I can confidently claim that I yield to none in my passion for freedom. No fatigue or depression has seized me. Many years' experience has convinced me that the activities that absorb my energies and attention are calculated to achieve the nation's freedom, that therein lies the secret of non-violent freedom. That is why I invite everyone, man and woman, young and old, to contribute his or her share to the great sacrifice.

11-1-1936

## XVI

### INDIAN INDUSTRY

The question is often asked, what is an Indian Industry? It is asked generally regarding Indian exhibitions. Formerly it used to be claimed that any industry that was conducted in India was an Indian Industry. Thus a mill manned by non-domiciled Europeans bringing capital, skilled man-power and machinery from abroad was considered to be an Indian Industry even though it could be proved to be harmful to the masses. From that we have travelled a long distance. An industry to be Indian must be demonstrably in the interest of the masses. It must be manned by Indians both skilled and unskilled. Its capital and machinery should be Indian, and the labour employed should have a living wage and be comfortably housed, while the welfare of the children of the labourers should be guaranteed by the employers. This is an ideal definition. Only the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A. can perhaps barely satisfy that definition. For even these Associations have much leeway to make up. Nevertheless complete conformation to the definition is their immediate goal.

But between that definition and the one that was the vogue even with the Congress before 1920 there are many shades of definitions. The Congress definition has generally been all goods other than mill cloth manufactured in India. The great mill industry may generally be claimed to be an Indian industry. But, in spite of its ability to compete with Japan and Lancashire, it is an industry that exploits the masses and deepens their poverty in exact proportion to its success over khadi. In the modern

craze for wholesale industrialization, my presentation has been questioned, if not brushed aside. It has been contended that the growing poverty of the masses, due to the progress of industrialization, is inevitable, and should therefore be suffered. I do not consider the evil to be inevitable, let alone to be suffered. The A. I. S. A. has successfully demonstrated the possibility of the villages manufacturing the whole of the cloth requirement of India simply by employing the leisure hours of the nation in spinning and the anterior processes. The difficulty lies in weaning the nation from the use of mill cloth. This is not the place to discuss how it can be done. My purpose in this note was to give my definition of Indian Industry in terms of the millions of villagers, and my reasons for that definition. And it should be plain to everyone that national exhibitions should only be for those industries which need public support in every way, not those which are flourishing without the aid of exhibitions and the like, and which organize their own exhibitions.

## XVII

### WHAT IS VILLAGE WORK

[During his convalescence after the fast, Gandhiji has been giving part of his time each day to workers coming with their doubts and difficulties. Among these were some of the professors of the Gujarat Vidyapith. As the talk has a bearing on village work and therefore intimately affects Harijans, a summary is given below. M. D.]

The real work of the Vidyapith lies in the villages. I have been stressing this point ever since the inception of the Vidyapith, but until a couple of years ago, when it was declared an illegal organisation and most of our professors and boys were imprisoned, we laboured under the impression that the work could be carried on only through a central institute situated in the capital town of Gujarat. But under the altered conditions, and now that we have some breathing time to put our heads together and to collect our thoughts, we shall do well to hark back to the original conception and think of our future work in its terms. Each member of a live institution must be a living embodiment of the ideals of the institution, wherever he may be; and when such a state of things is brought about, it is the same thing whether the institution has a habitation and a corporate existence or not.

I would, therefore, expect every one of you who has cherished the ideals of the Vidyapith and who is pledged to serve it to go straight to the villages and start living those ideals there. Each one of you will thus be a peripatetic Vidyapith teaching the ideals by means of his own personal example. It is quite conceivable that a host of workers, after having lived the life in the villages according to



the ideals of the Vidyapith, re-establish the central institute in a village. But we are not in that position today. We have yet to gain all that experience on which alone you can build the new Vidyapith.

The centre of this village worker's life will be the spinning wheel. I am sorry I have not been able yet to bring home to anyone the message of the spinning wheel in all its implications. The reason is that my life itself is not a true echo of the message. But it came home to me again and again during my nine months' peregrinations in India. We have not yet sufficiently realised that hand-spinning is a supplementary industry of universal application and scope in India. The village weaver cannot live but for the spinning wheel. He gets his yarn no doubt from the mills, but he is doomed to destruction, if he is to remain for ever dependent on the mills. Today the spinning wheel has established itself in our economic life only to the extent that it is needed to minister to the clothing needs of the new class of khadi-wearers that has sprung up during the past decade. But a large body like the Spinners' Association cannot justify its existence to fulfil that limited object. The idea at the back of khadi is that it is an industry supplementary to agriculture and co-extensive with it, that it is the life-breath of millions of Harijan weavers who derive their sustenance from it. The spinning wheel cannot be said to have been established in its own proper place in our life, until we can banish idleness from our villages and make every village home a busy hive. Unemployment and idleness of millions must lead to bloody strife. Khadi is the only alternative to this and not the so-called socialism, which presupposes industrialism. The socialism that India can assimilate is the socialism of the spinning wheel. Let the village worker, therefore, make the wheel the central point of his activities.

The worker will not only be spinning regularly but will be working for his bread with the adze or the spade or the last, as the case may be. All his hours minus the eight hours of sleep and rest will be fully occupied with some work. He will have no time to waste. He will allow himself no laziness and allow others none. His life will be a constant lesson to his neighbours in ceaseless and joy-giving industry. Bodily sustenance should come from bodily labour, and intellectual labour is necessary for the culture of the mind. Division of labour there will necessarily be, but it will be a division into various species of bodily labour and not a division into intellectual labour to be confined to one class and bodily labour to be confined to another class. Our compulsory or voluntary idleness has to go. If it does not go, no panacea will be of any avail, and semi-starvation will remain the eternal problem that it is. He who eats two grains must produce four. Unless the law is accepted as universal, no amount of reduction in population would serve to solve the problem. If the law is accepted and observed, we have room enough to accommodate millions more to come.

The village worker will thus be a living embodiment of industry. He will master all the processes of khadi, from cotton-sowing and picking to weaving, and will devote all his thought to perfecting them. If he treats it as a science, it won't jar on him, but he will derive fresh joy from it every day, as he realises more and more its great possibilities. If he will go to the village as a teacher, he will go there no less as a learner. He will soon find that he has much to learn from the simple villagers. He will enter into every detail of village life, he will discover the village handicrafts and investigate the possibilities of their growth and their improvement. He may find the villagers completely

apathetic to the message of khadi, but he will, by his life of service, compel interest and attention. Of course, he will not forget his limitations and will not engage in, for him, the futile task of solving the problem of agricultural indebtedness.

Sanitation and hygiene will engage a good part of his attention. His home and his surroundings will not only be a model of cleanliness, but he will help to promote sanitation in the whole village by taking the broom and the basket round.

He will not attempt to set up a village dispensary or to become the village doctor. These are traps which must be avoided. I happened during my Harijan tour to come across a village where one of our workers, who should have known better, had built a pretentious building in which he had housed a dispensary and was distributing free medicine to the villages around. In fact, the medicines were being taken from home to home by volunteers and the dispensary was described as boasting a register of 1,200 patients a month! I had naturally to criticise this severely. That was not the way to do village work, I told him. His duty was to inculcate lessons of hygiene and sanitation in the village folk and thus to show them the way of preventing illness, rather than attempt to cure them. I asked him to leave the palace-like building and to hire it out to the Local Board and to settle in thatched huts. All that one need stock in the way of drugs is quinine, castor oil and iodine and the like. The worker should concentrate more on helping people realise the value of personal and village cleanliness and maintaining it at all cost.

Then he will interest himself in the welfare of the village Harijans. His home will be open to them. In fact, they will turn to him naturally for help in their troubles and difficulties. If the village folk will not suffer him to have the Harijan friends

in his house situated in their midst, he must take up his residence in the Harijan quarters.

(A word about the knowledge of the alphabet. It has its place, but I should warn you against a misplaced emphasis on it. Do not proceed on the assumption that you cannot proceed with rural instruction without first teaching the children or adults how to read and write. Lots of useful information on current affairs, history, geography and elementary arithmetic, can be given by word of mouth before the alphabet is touched. The eyes, the ears and the tongue come before the hand. Reading comes before writing and drawing before tracing the letters of the alphabet. If this natural method is followed, the understanding of the children will have a much better opportunity of development than when it is under check by beginning the children's training with the alphabet.)

The worker's life will be in tune with the village life. He will not pose as a litterateur buried in his books, loath to listen to details of humdrum life. On the contrary, the people, whenever they see him, will find him busy with his tools—spinning wheel, loom, adze, spade, etc.—and always responsive to their meanest inquiries. He will always insist on working for his bread. God has given to everyone the capacity of producing more than his daily needs and, if he will only use his resourcefulness, he will not be in want of an occupation suited to his capacities, however poor they may be. It is more likely than not that the people will gladly maintain him, but it is not improbable that in some places he may be given a cold shoulder. He will still plod on. It is likely that in some villages he may be boycotted for his pro-Harijan proclivities. Let him in that case approach the Harijans and look to them to provide him with food. The labourer is always worthy of his hire and, if he conscientiously serves them, let

him not hesitate to accept his food from the Harijans, always provided that he gives more than he takes. In the very early stages; of course, he will draw his meagre allowance from a central fund where such is possible.

I have deliberately left out the question of the cow. The village worker will find it difficult to tackle the question and will not attempt it, except to the extent of educating the people in the theory of it. We have not yet hit upon the best way of curing dead cattle's hide and dyeing it, as also the best means of protecting the cow. In Gujarat the buffalo problem complicates the situation. We have got to make people realise that to encourage the buffalo is to allow the cow to die. But more of this some other time.

Remember that our weapons are spiritual. It is a force that works irresistibly, if imperceptibly. Its progress is geometrical rather than arithmetical. It never ceases so long as there is a propeller behind. The background of all your activities has, therefore, to be spiritual. Hence the necessity for the strictest purity of conduct and character.

You will not tell me that this is an impossible programme, that you have not the qualifications for it. That you have not fulfilled it so far should be no impediment in your way. If it appeals to your reason and your heart, you must not hesitate. Do not fight shy of the experiment. The experiment will itself provide the momentum for more and more effort.

## XVIII

### 'A HUMBLE VILLAGER OF BIRBHUM'

'A Humble Villager of Birbhum' living in Santiniketan sends me through Deenabandhu Andrews the following questions:

1. What is an ideal Indian village in your esteemed opinion and how far is it practicable to reconstruct a village on the basis of an 'Ideal Village', in the present social and political situation of India?
2. Which of the village problems should a worker try to solve first of all and how should he proceed?
3. What should be the special theme of village exhibitions and museums in a miniature form? How should such exhibitions be best utilized for the reconstruction of a village?

1. 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. In the present circumstances its cottages will remain what they are with slight improvements.

Given a good zamindar, where there is one, or co-operation among the people, almost the whole of the programme other than model cottages can be worked out at an expenditure within the means of the villagers including the zamindar or zamindars or without Government assistance. With that assistance there is no limit to the possibility of village reconstruction. But my task just now is to discover what the villagers can do to help themselves if they have mutual co-operation and contribute voluntary labour for the common good. I am convinced that they 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.

2. The very first problem the village worker will solve is its sanitation. It is the most neglected of all the problems that baffle workers and that undermine physical well-being and breed disease. If the worker became a voluntary bhangi, he would begin by collecting night-soil and turning it into manure and sweeping village streets. He will tell people how and where they should perform daily functions and speak to them on the value of sanitation and the great injury caused by its neglect. The worker will continue to do the work whether the villagers listen to him or no.

3. The spinning wheel should be the central theme of all such village exhibitions and the industries suited to the particular locality should revolve round it. An exhibition thus arranged would naturally become an object-lesson for the villagers and an educational treat when it is accompanied by demonstrations, lectures and leaflets.

## OUR VILLAGES

A young man who is trying to live in a village and earn his livelihood has sent me a pathetic letter. He does not know much English. I am therefore giving the letter below in an abridged form:

"Three years ago when I was 20 years old I came to this village life after spending 15 years in a town. My domestic circumstances did not allow me to have college education. The work you have taken up for village revival has encouraged me to pursue village life. I have some land. My village has a population of nearly 2,500. After close contact with this village I find the following among more than three-fourths of the people:

1. Party feelings and quarrels
2. Jealousy
3. Illiteracy
4. Wickedness
5. Disunion
6. Carelessness
7. Lack of manners
8. Adherence to the old meaningless customs
9. Cruelty.

This is an out of the way place. No great man has ever visited such remote villages. The company of great ones is essential for advancement. So I am afraid to live in this village. Shall I leave this village? If not, what guidance will you give me?"

Though no doubt there is exaggeration in the picture drawn by the young correspondent, his statement may be generally accepted. The reason for the



tragic state is not far to seek. Villages have suffered long from neglect by those who have had the benefit of education. They have chosen the city life. The village movement is an attempt to establish healthy contact with the villages by inducing those who are fired with the spirit of service to settle in them and find self-expression in the service of villagers. The defects noticed by the correspondent are not inherent in village life. Those who have settled in villages in the spirit of service are not dismayed by the difficulties facing them. They knew before they went that they would have to contend against many difficulties including even sullenness on the part of villagers. Only those, therefore, who have faith in themselves and in their mission will serve the villagers and influence their lives. A true life lived amongst the people is in itself an object-lesson that must produce its own effect upon immediate surroundings. The difficulty with the young man is, perhaps, that he has gone to the village merely to earn a living without the spirit of service behind it. I admit that village life does not offer attractions to those who go there in search of money. Without the incentive of service village life would jar after the novelty has worn out. No young man having gone to a village may abandon the pursuit on the slightest contact with difficulty. Patient effort will show that villagers are not very different from city-dwellers and that they will respond to kindness and attention. It is no doubt true that one does not have in the villages the opportunity of contact with the great ones of the land. With the growth of village mentality the leaders will find it necessary to tour in the villages and establish a living touch with them. Moreover the companionship of the great and the good is available to all through the works of saints like Chaitanya, Ramkrishna, Tulsidas, Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, Tukaram, Tiruvalluvar, and others.

too numerous to mention though equally known and pious. The difficulty is to get the mind tuned to the reception of permanent values. If it is modern thought—political, social, economical, scientific—that is meant, it is possible to procure literature that will satisfy curiosity. I admit, however, that one does not find such as easily as one finds religious literature. Saints wrote and spoke for the masses. The vogue for translating modern thought to the masses in an acceptable manner has not yet quite set in. But it must come in time. I would, therefore, advise young men like my correspondent not to give in but persist in their effort and by their presence make the villages more livable and lovable. That they will do by serving the villages in a manner acceptable to the villagers. Everyone can make the beginning by making the villages cleaner by their own labour and removing illiteracy to the extent of their ability. And if their lives are clean, methodical and industrious, there is no doubt that the infection will spread in the villages in which they may be working.

20-2-1937

## A GREAT EXPERIMENT

The Ahmedabad Labour Union has of late started a great experiment which is likely to prove of great interest and importance to all labour organizations. The essence of the experiment consists in training its members to a supplementary occupation in addition to their principal occupation in the mills so that in the event of a lock-out, strike or loss of employment otherwise, they would always have something to fall back upon instead of being faced with the prospect of starvation. A mill-hand's life is ever full of vicissitudes. Thrift and economy no doubt provide a sort of remedy and it would be criminal to neglect them. But the savings thus made cannot carry one far, seeing that the vast bulk of our mill labourers are always struggling on the margin of bare subsistence. Moreover it would never do for a working man during strike or unemployment to rest idly at home. There is nothing more injurious to his morale and self-respect than enforced idleness. The working class will never feel secure or develop a sense of self-assurance and strength unless its members are armed with an unfailing subsidiary means of subsistence to serve as a second string to their bow in a crisis.

The idea of a subsidiary occupation for the mill-hands was first conceived by me during the eventful twentythree days' strike of the Ahmedabad mill-hands in the year 1918. It occurred to me then that if the strike was to be successful the mill-hands must have an occupation that would maintain them wholly or partly. They must not rely upon doles. During the strike many of them were employed on unskilled

labour. It was then that I mooted my suggestion to teach mill-hands a subsidiary occupation. But my suggestion remained a dead letter till the next strike came. A sort of a beginning was made then. But it was difficult to bring into being all of a sudden an effective organization for teaching subsidiary occupations. With the end of the second strike died also the effort to find and teach suitable occupations.

An organized and systematic effort is now being made by the Labour Union in that direction. Mill-hands are being taught to select occupations which they can practise in their leisure hours at home and which would give them substantial relief in times of unemployment. These are ginning, cleaning, carding and spinning of cotton, weaving, tailoring, soap and paper making, type-setting, etc.

I hold that a working knowledge of a variety of occupations is to the working class what metal is to the capitalist. A labourer's skill is his capital. Just as the capitalist cannot make his capital fructify without the co-operation of labour, even so the working man cannot make his labour fructify without the co-operation of capital. And if both labour and capital have the gift of intelligence equally developed in them and have confidence in their capacity to secure a fair deal, each at the hands of the other, they would get to respect and appreciate each other as equal partners in a common enterprise. They need not regard each other as inherently irreconcilable antagonists. But the difficulty is that whilst today capital is organized and seems to be securely entrenched, labour is not. The intelligence of the working man is cramped by his soulless, mechanical occupation which leaves him little scope or chance to develop his mind. It has prevented him from realizing the power and full dignity of his status. He has been taught to believe that his wages have to be dictated by capitalists instead of his demanding his own terms. Let him

only be organized along right lines and have his intelligence quickened, let him learn a variety of occupations, and he will be able to go about with his head erect and never be afraid of being without means of sustenance.

It is the grossest of superstitions for the working man to believe that he is helpless before the employers. The effort of the Labour Union in Ahmedabad is to dispel this superstition in a concrete manner. Its experiment, therefore, ought to be welcomed by all concerned. Success will depend on an inflexible determination on the part of the Labour Union to follow up the good beginning that has been made, with unflagging perseverance. It must have the right sort of instructors who can arouse among the workers an intelligent interest in their work. A handicraft plied merely mechanically can be as cramping to the mind and soul as any other pursuit taken up mechanically. An unintelligent effort is like a corpse from which the spirit has departed.

## XXI

### A UNIQUE EXHIBITION

[In terms of the resolution passed at the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress the Reception Committee of the Lucknow Congress with the help of the Secretaries of the A. I. S. A. and A. I. V. I. A., Sjts. Shankerlal Banker and J. C. Kumarappa, organised an exhibition which was opened on the evening of the 28th March by Gandhiji. In its very constitution, therefore, it is a unique exhibition. I reserve a detailed description for the next issue giving here only a condensed summary of Gandhiji's speech. M. D.]

I am glad and thankful to be able to come to Lucknow to open this Khadi and other Village Industries Exhibition. I may tell you that I was eager to be here at the opening. Though I know that Dr. Murarilal and Sjt. Shankerlal Banker have devoted themselves heart and soul to organising it, at the back of it all was my conception. This exhibition, to my mind, brings out concretely for the first time the conception of a true rural exhibition I have nursed in my breast for several years. In 1921 when we met in Ahmedabad in the first year of the new Congress Constitution, we took the first step towards rural-mindedness, and the exhibition organised under the auspices of the Congress held there was the beginning of the process which you find reaching its maturity today after 15 years. I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its few cities but in its 700,000 villages. But we who have gathered here are not villagers, we are town-dwellers. We town-dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns and that the villages were created to

minister to our needs. We have hardly ever paused to inquire if those poor folks get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves with and whether they have a roof to shelter themselves from sun and rain. Now I do not think any Congress worker has travelled through the length and breadth of India as much as I have done during the past twenty years. That in itself is hardly a thing to be proud of. I, however, humbly claim, as a result of those peregrinations, to know the Indian villages more than any other Congress worker or leader. I have found that the town-dweller has generally exploited the villager, in fact he has lived on the poor villager's substance. 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 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. The Village Industries Association was formed last year in order to study the conditions in which they lived and the state of their handicrafts, and to revive such village arts and crafts as may be revived. Simultaneously with the creation of the A. I. V. I. A. was passed a resolution to the effect that future exhibitions should be organised by the Spinners' and the Village Industries Associations. This exhibition I am about to declare open today is the first of that kind.

As I have told you the whole conception here is mine, and yet I must confess that we are still far

from bringing out that conception fully. It is an evidence of the organisers' wonderful industry, and yet it is not perfect of its kind. It was not humanly possible to achieve it during the time at their disposal. It is no easy job to bring village artisans from their villages. You will find here villagers from South India who perhaps don't know where they have come to. It is the purpose of this exhibition to show that even this starving India of the villages is capable of producing things which we town-dwellers may use both to the villagers' and our own advantage.

This exhibition is not a spectacular show like its predecessors. Those earlier ones were bound to be big shows. They were designed for a different purpose. Congress expenses were generally found out of the takings of the exhibition. The whole outlook was changed last year. We decided not to have things of spectacular interest, but we decided to give the spectators a glimpse of the Indian villager and his craft. This therefore is a vast educative effort. Not that we will have no takings this time. Only they will depend on those Congressmen who are intent on freedom and will win it by rehabilitating the village. If they will establish a living bond between towns and villages, they will flock to the exhibition and will make a point of studying the various demonstrations in the exhibition.

This cannot be done by one visit only. You should visit it daily and carefully study every section. If you will do this, you will marvel at the energy and industry expended in organising it. You will be deeply interested in it if you approach it in a spirit of service. You will find here craftsmen and craftswomen from Kashmir and South India, from Sind and Assam, and learn how they earn their scanty living. You will find that it is within your power to add a little to their income and to enable them to have a square meal, if



only you will make up your minds to pay for their wares enough to ensure them a living wage.

You will not expect me to describe all or even one of the numerous sections of the exhibition. It is impossible for me to do so. Let me tell you that you will have an inkling of the inside even from where you are sitting. For in front of you are no triumphal arches but there are simply but exquisitely decorated walls done by Sjt. Nandalal Bose, the eminent artist from Shantiniketan and his co-workers who have tried to represent all the villagers' crafts in simple artistic symbols. And when you go inside the art gallery on which Babu Nandalal Bose has lavished his labours for weeks, you will feel, as I did, like spending there hours together. But even the other sections will attract you. You may not find in the exhibition anything to amuse you like music or cinema shows, but I assure you you will find much to learn.

In conclusion I want you all to be voluntary advertising agents of the exhibition so that numbers may be attracted to see it. The exhibition has not been organised for the villagers, it is organised for the city-dweller to enable him to see how the villager lives and what he is capable of. The Reception Committee has spent something like Rs. 35,000 in order to bring this exhibition into being. The least that you must do is to enable them to meet the expenses. This you can do if you become their enthusiastic advertising agents. Commission I can promise none, though I dare say you will get it for work dutifully done when you appear before the Great White Throne. I may tell you that I am staying here for some days and expect to visit the exhibition as often as I can. I shall therefore know how you have discharged your trust.

It is our intention to throw the exhibition open to the people from villages if the expenses are covered.

You will find in the exhibition many a drawback, but you and I are to blame for them, not the villagers. Let me tell you, however, that the organisers have attempted the stupendous task of achieving in a few weeks the work which should take many months to be properly done. You will therefore bear with us and forgive the shortcomings you will no doubt see.

## TRUE PATRIOTISM

[ Gandhiji's speech at the Lucknow exhibition on the morning of the 12th April, 1936, which he was asked to deliver at half an hour's notice, seemed to be a kind of eye-and-ear-opener for our Peter Bells. He actually appealed to them to go and visit the exhibition, once, twice, three times, even four times, with their eyes and ears open, and if possible with the eyes and ears of their souls open. They would then see miracles in the exhibition. He said : ]

"When I told you the other day that the exhibition was not a cinema show, I meant more than I said. When you go to a cinema show you meet with things there to captivate in a sensual way your eyes and ears. I may tell you that we have tried to boycott from this exhibition everything that had no educative value. We have tried to make the exhibition a sacred and a holy place, a feast for your eyes and ears, a spiritual feast capable of purifying the senses. I shall tell you why. Do you know Orissa and its skeletons? Well, from that hunger-stricken, impoverished land of skeletons have come men who have wrought miracles in bone and horn and silver. Go and see these things not only ready-made but in the making, and see how the soul of man even in an impoverished body can breathe life into lifeless horns and metal. A poor potter has also worked miracles out of clay. Things which I thought would be worth several annas, are worth only a copper or a couple of coppers, and yet they are delicate little pieces of art. A dear sister purchased the other day a little 'Krishna' in ivory. She was not given to worshipping Lord Krishna, but she now tells me

that she has begun to worship the exquisite little form.

"The exhibition is thus not a spectacular show, but a kind of fairyland. But our tastes have been so debased that miracles happening before our very eyes appear like so much dust or clay and trifles coming from abroad become exquisite pieces of art, water from a spring in far-off Europe with the witchery of an unintelligible name becomes invested with miraculous quality, while the water of the holy Ganges which is said to be a purifier and a natural disinfectant seems to be no better than water from a dirty pool."

[Towards the close of the speech, which was constantly disturbed by men and women cramped for want of space and perspiring in the sun, Gandhiji who had begun with a prosaic note became passionately eloquent, and addressed this appeal to those whom the miracles in the exhibition failed to stir with emotion. M. D.]

"If a vision of the kind I have described to you fails to stir your hearts and urge you to make some little sacrifice for the ill-fed and the underfed, God help you. Iqbal, whose poem *Hindustan Hamara* still stirs our hearts with emotion, must have had some such vision before his mind's eye when he described India with her eternal sentry the Himalayas, and Ganges the eternal witness of the numerous stages through which our civilization has passed. We attend flag hoisting ceremonies and are proud of our National Flag. Let me tell you that our pride has no meaning if you do not like things made in India and hanker after foreign ones. It is idle for those whose heart is not stirred at the sight of things made by our poor craftsmen and craftswomen and to make a little sacrifice for them to talk of Independence for India."

18-4-1936

## XXIII

### A VILLAGERS' EXHIBITION

[I give below a resume of Gandhiji's speech on the occasion of opening the Khadi and Village Industries Exhibition on the 25th of December, 1936, at Faizpur. All kinds of reports of this speech have appeared in the press, as of the more important speech on the 27th, and all kinds of meanings have been put not only on his words but even on his gestures. The speech on the 25th was pitched in a lower key and was full of humorous little bits. At one stage he picked up one article after another and exhibited them to the audience. Someone in the audience could not see the fox-hide that Gandhiji had in his hand. He shouted: "Please put up your hand." Gandhiji answered back: "Wait, I shall put it up properly, later on,"—meaning thereby that he would sell the hide and claim a fancy price for it. Of course there was not time left for this profitable pastime which had to be abandoned. But this sentence has been interpreted to mean that he had something up his sleeve. A TIMES OF INDIA report says: "Those who imagine that Mr. Gandhi is a spent force are sadly mistaken; he has something up his sleeve. He was loudly cheered when incidentally he said: 'I have not yet revealed my hand. Wait until I do so.'" Well he had nothing up his sleeve, for the simple reason that he has no sleeve! M. D.]

You must have seen from the newspapers that the responsibility for having this session of the Congress in a village is wholly mine. They had also announced that I would go to Faizpur in the beginning of December and supervise all the arrangements about the exhibition. The latter half of the statement is true, and without any false modesty or

exaggeration I would say that I am wholly responsible for whatever shortcomings you see here. The idea of having the Congress and the exhibition in a village originated with me, and I must shoulder the responsibility for whatever defects or shortcomings you will notice here. The credit for anything good that you will see belongs to those who were in charge of the arrangements here. It was Dastane and Dev who accepted my suggestion to have the Congress and the exhibition in a village, and with the thoroughness and determination that characterize the Maharashtris they have carried out their promise. The exhibition was bound to be according to my conception because it is organized by the All India Spinners' Association of which I am the president and the All India Village Industries Association which I am guiding and directing. I had to warn them against creating a Lucknow or Delhi in a Maharashtra village. Why not in that case have the Congress and the exhibition both in Poona? But if they were to be in a village, they must be in keeping with an Indian village. And no one could do it better than I, because as I said to them I had long been a villager by choice, whereas they had become villagers only recently. Of course, I too settled in Segaon only a few months ago, and as I was actually born and bred and educated in a town, my body found it difficult to adjust itself automatically to village life. I had, therefore, malaria there. But, as you know, I threw it off immediately, recovered quickly, and am alive and kicking. Part of the reason, of course is that I am now care-free, having cast all my cares on the broad shoulders of Jawaharlal and the Sardar. However, let me yield up the real secret of my health, which is that my body happens to be where I had set my heart.

Credit for the arrangements here belongs to the architect Sjt. Mhatre and the artist Sjt. Nandalal

Bose. When Nanda Babu responded to my invitation a couple of months ago I explained to him what I wanted, and left it to him to give concrete shape to the conception. For he is a creative artist and I am none. God has given me the sense of art but not the organs to give it concrete shape. He has blessed Sjt. Nandalal Bose with both. I am thankful that he agreed to take upon himself the whole burden of organizing the artistic side of the exhibition, and came and settled down here some weeks ago to see to everything himself. The result is that the whole Tilaknagar is an exhibition in itself, and so it begins not where I am going to open it but at the main gateway which is a fine piece of village art. Of course our thanks are due also to Sjt. Mhatre, who has spared no pains in bringing the entire plan to completion. Please remember that Nanda Babu has depended entirely on local material and local labour to bring all the structures here into being.

Now I want you to go and see the exhibition with, if possible, my eyes. If you will realize that it is organized under the auspices of the A. I. S. A. and A. I. V. I. A., you will know what to expect there. The object of the former is to make the whole of India khadi-clad, a goal which we are unfortunately still far from having reached. The object of the latter is to revive the moribund cottage industries of India. Both khadi and the other cottage industries are vital to the economic welfare of our villages.

This exhibition is no spectacular show, it is not intended either to dazzle the eyes of the public or to delude them. This is a genuine village exhibition which has been brought into being by the labour of villagers. It is a pure educative effort. It simply shows the villagers how to double their income if only they will use their hands and feet and the resources around them. I would ask our President to take me to a village in U. P., and I would offer to

reconstruct the village not out of Jamnalalji's money but with the help of the hands and feet of the men and women living there, on condition that he induces the villagers to work according to instructions. Our President will perhaps say that as soon as these poor folk begin adding to their income a zamindar like Jamnalalji would enhance the rent and thus rob the extra income out of their hands. Well, we will not allow the zamindar to do anything of the kind. There is no doubt in my mind that in a country like ours, teeming with millions of unemployed, something is needed to keep their hands and feet engaged in order that they may earn an honest living. It is for them that khadi and cottage industries are needed. It is clear to me as daylight that they are badly needed at the present moment. What the future has in store for them I do not know, nor do I care to know.

[With this he proceeded to describe some of the exhibits that had been placed before him—small tools from the blacksmith's smithy which had been made overnight, articles made by Andhra workmen out of grass growing on river banks (e. g. pouches and spectacle-cases), fox's hide, cured and tanned and lined with khadi at the Wardha tannery, and so on.]

These little things add substantially to the income of the poor villagers. If you can ensure them three annas instead of the three pice that they get today, they will think they have won Swaraj. That is what khadi is trying to do for the spinners today.

In brief we have to teach them how to turn waste into wealth, and that is what the exhibition is meant to teach them. When I met Nanda Babu two months ago I asked him not to bring from Shantiniketan costly paintings from his own school of art, lest untimely rain should ruin them. He accepted my advice and has collected things from the neighbourhood of this place. He launched out



to the villages with the eye of an artist that is his, and picked up numerous things from the peasants' households, things that never catch an ordinary eye as striking objects of art, but which his discerning eye picked up and arranged and thus clothed with a new meaning.

Sjt. Vaikunth Mehta has apologized for the small size of the exhibition as compared with the previous ones, but there was no occasion for apology. It does not contain one superfluous exhibit, and the crafts represented mean so much additional production. Look, for instance, at the samples of hand-made paper out of *munj* grass, banana bark and bamboo. Bamboo has indeed played a prominent part in all the structures you see here, and you may be sure that after this Congress camp breaks up all the bamboo will be turned to good account.

You could not but have noticed the grand simplicity of the procession that was organized for our President, especially the beautifully designed and decorated chariot drawn by six pairs of bullocks. Well all that was designed in order to prepare you for what awaited you here. No city amenities or comforts, but everything that poor villagers could provide. The place is thus a place of pilgrimage for us all, our Kashi and our Mecca, where we have come in order to offer our prayers for freedom and to consecrate ourselves to the nation's service. You have not come here to lord it over the poor peasants but to learn how to get off their backs by participating in their daily toil, by doing the scavenger's job, by washing for yourselves, by grinding your own flour, etc. For the first time in the history of the Congress you are being given here rice unpolished of its substance and *chapati* made out of hand-ground flour, plenty of fresh air, and clean mother earth to rest your limbs upon. But you will please bear with all the poor organizers' shortcomings.

for in Khansabeh's language we are all Khudai  
Khidmatgars — servants of God, come here not to  
take but to tender service.

2-1-1937

## XXIV

### A RESTATEMENT OF FAITH

[ If the speech at the opening of the exhibition on the 25th, simple enough as it was, baffled newspaper reporters (perhaps chiefly because they could not listen to him) the speech he made on the exhibition grounds on the 27th December baffled them still more. Not because they could not listen to him. They listened to him, but they had heard nothing like it for many a long day, and it was so full and thorough and answered so many of the doubts, difficulties and objections raised regarding his constructive programme that some felt that it had other implications than the most obvious. In some quarters it was described as a most intriguing speech; it has been described as "an apology, a challenge, and a revolutionary and electioneering speech all rolled into one"; and a newspaper stunt has given some colour to the impression that the speech was a clear indication that he was thinking of re-entering politics. No wonder that these fanciful interpretations should find themselves expressed in strange headlines like these: "Gandhi prepared to come back"; "I am powerful as ever and will prove it when time comes".

Well, the newspapers are not to blame. The speech was one of Gandhiji's many and unique spiritual efforts, and such do not easily lend themselves to being well-reported. One may call it a political speech in the sense that he stated that the fourfold constructive programme of the Congress of 1920, if carried out in full, must result in *Poorna Swaraj*, and there was in the speech an appeal to fulfil the programme. It was certainly no fighting

speech and certainly had not a trace of the vulgarity that most electioneering harangues have. It was spoken from the heart and addressed to the vast number of his co-workers in the field of constructive work who are often distracted by doubt, whom objections sometimes puzzle, and who quail before some of the difficulties of the situation. It was nothing more or less than a restatement of faith which grows brighter with increasing difficulties, and was intended to put heart into the army of workers who have dedicated themselves to the cause of his constructive programme of work. It was, I repeat, a spiritual discourse.

I was myself not confident of being able to do full justice to the utterance. I wrote it out in his own words, as they were spoken, and left it to him to summarize it himself. The result is an independent article written without the original in front of him. It amplifies some of the arguments and omits some portions that may be considered superfluous in cold print. Here then is Gandhiji's own version of the speech. M. D.]

I am going to say nothing new today. The cult of the spinning wheel is 18 years old. I said in 1918 that we could win Swaraj through the spinning wheel. My faith in the ability of the spinning wheel is as bright today as when I first declared it in 1918. It has become richer for the experience and experiment of all these years.

But you should know the implications of the wheel or khadi its product. It is not enough that one wears khadi on ceremonial occasions or even wears it to the exclusion of all other cloth if he surrounds himself with Videshi in everything else. Khadi means the truest Swadeshi spirit, identification with the starving millions.

Let there be no mistake about my conception of Swaraj. It is complete independence of alien

control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is *Dharma* i. e. religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all. You may recognize it by the name of Truth, not the honesty of expedience but the living Truth that pervades everything and will survive all destruction and all transformation. Moral and social uplift may be recognized by the term we are used to, i. e. non-violence. Let us call this the square of Swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue. In the language of the Congress we cannot achieve this political and economic freedom without truth and non-violence, in concrete terms without a living faith in God and hence moral and social elevation.

By political independence I do not mean an imitation of the British House of Commons, or the Soviet rule of Russia or the Fascist rule of Italy or the Nazi rule of Germany. They have systems suited to their genius. We must have ours suited to ours. What that can be is more than I can tell. I have described it as Ramraj, i. e. sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. The Congress constitutions of Nagpur and Bombay for which I am mainly responsible are an attempt to achieve this type of Swaraj.

Then take economic independence. It is not a product of industrialization of the modern or the Western type. Indian economic independence means to me the economic uplift of every individual male and female by his or her own conscious effort. Under that system all men and women will have enough clothing—not the mere loin cloth, but what we understand by the term necessary articles

of clothing — and enough food including milk and butter which are today denied to millions.

This brings me to socialism. 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.

✓ Let us now see how India came to be utterly impoverished. History tells us that the East India Company ruined the cotton manufacture and by all kinds of means made her dependent upon Lancashire for her cloth, the next great necessity of man. It is still the largest item of import. It thus created a huge army of partially unemployed men and women counted in millions and gave them no other employment in return. With the destruction of hand-ginning, carding, spinning, and weaving to a certain extent, perished the other industries of India's villages. Continuous unemployment has induced in the people a kind of laziness which is most depressing. Thus whilst the alien rule is undoubtedly responsible for the growing pauperism of the people, we are more

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\*सभी भोस गोपालकी, वामें अटक कहाँ ?  
जाके मनमें खटक रही, सोही अटक रहा ।

responsible for it. If the middle class people, who betrayed their trust and bartered away the economic independence of India for a mess of pottage, would now realize their error and take the message of the wheel to the villagers and induce them to shed their laziness and work at the wheel, we can ameliorate the condition of the people to a great extent. It would be a terrible thing if laziness replaces industry and despair triumphs over hope.

The parliamentary programme is in the air. It has come to stay and rightly. But it cannot bring us independence. Its function is strictly limited though quite necessary. Its success will prevent the Government from claiming that ordinance rule or any measure restricting our progress to the goal was sanctioned by popular representatives. Hence the necessity for voters voting for the Congress candidates who dare not vote for unpopular measures without being liable to Congress discipline. The success of that programme may also bring some relief in individual cases such as the release of Shri Subhas Bose or the detenus. But that is not independence, political or economic.

Then look at it in another way. Only a limited number of men and women can become members of legislatures, say 1,500. How many from this audience can become legislators? And just now no more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  crores can vote for these 1,500 members. What about the remaining  $31\frac{1}{2}$  crores? In our conception of Swaraj they are the real masters and the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  crores are the former's servants who in their turn are masters of the 1,500. Thus the latter are doubly servants, if they will be true to their trust.

But the  $31\frac{1}{2}$  crores have also a trust to discharge towards themselves and the nation of which they as individuals are but tiny parts. And if they remain lazy, know nothing of Swaraj and how to win it, they will themselves become slaves of the 1,500

legislators. For my argument the 3½ crores of voters here belong to the same category as the 31½ crores. For if they do not become industrious and wise, they will be so many pawns in the hands of 1,500 players, it is of little consequence whether they are Congressmen or otherwise. If the voters wake up only to register their votes every three years or more and then go off to sleep, their servants will become their masters.

The only way I know to prevent such a catastrophe is for the 35 crores to be industrious and wise. This they can only be, if they will take up the spinning wheel and the other village industries. They will not take to them unintelligently. I can tell you from experience that the effort means adult education of the correct type and requires possession of patience, moral fibre and a scientific and practical knowledge of the industry the worker seeks to introduce in the village of his choice.

In such a scheme the spinning wheel becomes its centre. If you call it the solar system, the wheel becomes the golden disc and the industries the planets revolving round it in obedience to the inviolable law of the system. When the Sun lost its illuminating power by the action of the East India Company, the planets lost their power and became invisible or almost so. The Sun is being reinstated in his past status now and the planets are regaining their motion in exact proportion to the strength of the Sun.

Now perhaps you will understand the meaning and the message of the Charkha. I said in 1920 that if the Congress truly and successfully worked the programme laid down in 1920, including the fourfold constructive programme of khadi, communal unity, prohibition of intoxicants and removal by Hindus of untouchability, the attainment of Swaraj within a year was a certainty. I am neither sorry for nor



ashamed of having made that declaration. I would like to repeat that declaration before you today. Whenever the fourfold programme is achieved in its fulness, you can have Swaraj for the asking. For you will then have attained the power to take it. Just think for a moment where the Charkha stands today in your faith or action. Is the mutual secret assassination of Bombay a sign of communal unity? Where is total prohibition? Have the Hindus rid themselves of untouchability root and branch? One swallow does not make a summer. Travancore's great proclamation may be the beginning of the end, but it is not the end. If we remove the untouchability of Harijans, but treat Mussalmans or others as such, we have not removed the blot. 'All land belongs to God' has a deeper meaning. 'Like the earth we, of it, also belong to God, and hence we must all feel like one and not erect boundary walls and issue prohibition decrees against one another.

This is the non-violent way in action. If we could fulfil this programme, there would be no need to offer civil disobedience, there would certainly be no need to do violence. Thirtyfive crores of people conscious of their numerical strength as one man would be ashamed of doing violence to 70,000 white men in India, no matter how capable they are of dealing destruction and administering poison gas to millions in a moment. The Charkha understood intelligently can spin not only economic salvation but can also revolutionize our minds and hearts and demonstrate to us that the non-violent approach to Swaraj is the safest and the easiest. Though the progress may seem slow, it will prove quickest in the long run.

Believe me if Jawaharlal is not in jail today, it is not because he is afraid of it. He is quite capable of walking into prison doors as of mounting the gallows with a smile on his lips. I do not think I

have lost the power or faith in the efficacy of such suffering. But there is no issue for it today as far as I can see. But what I feel is that all that suffering can be avoided if by united faith and will we achieve the constructive programme. If we can, I promise that we won't need to struggle with or against the British nation, but Lord Linlithgow will come to us and own that he was mistaken in his disbelief of our non-violence and truth, and will undertake on behalf of his nation to abide by our decisions. Whether he does or not, I am working towards that end and no other. "All belongs to God."

समी भोम गोपालकी ।

## AN ANNUAL TRAINING SCHOOL

When an exhibition of this kind was first opened at Lucknow I said that our exhibitions should be schools of instruction. Since then we have been progressing successfully towards the ideal and the exhibition I have just now been through and am declaring open is such an annual training school. It is not, as exhibitions of old used to be, a place of entertainment. It is a place of instruction for the hundreds of thousands of those who will be visiting it during the week or two that it will be on. It provides to the poor man who visits it a kind of provision for the next year's journey. It arms him with knowledge of an occupation which can carry him and his family through for the next year by working at it for eight hours. It ensures the training in securing an honest livelihood to everyone who will use his or her hands and feet, no matter how ignorant or illiterate he or she may be.

I have spent an hour this morning at the exhibition. Please don't think for a moment that there should be nothing new in it for one who is the President of the All India Spinners' Association and who is guiding the All India Village Industries Association. Even if you think so, I am not such a simpleton as to entertain the belief. I would like to spend not one hour but hours there learning something new every moment. But I confess that I should not be able to earn my livelihood from an occupation that I might pick up there. At the present moment I am begging my livelihood, which perhaps is

Speech at Haripura Exhibition on 10th February, 1938.

inevitable for one like me. But I am sure that it is possible for any able-bodied man or woman to pick up ONE of the many processes exhibited here as a means of honest livelihood.

I have often said that if seven lakhs of the villages of India were to be kept alive, and if peace that is at the root of all civilization is to be achieved, we have to make the spinning wheel the centre of all handicrafts. Thus my faith in the spinning wheel is growing every day, and I see it more and more clearly that the Sun of the wheel will alone illumine the planets of other handicrafts. But I go a step further and say that just as we go on discovering new stars and planets in the vast solar system, even so we should go on discovering fresh handicrafts every day. But for the sake of this thing we have to make the spinning wheel the really life-giving Sun. I made the spinning wheel in every home a necessary condition for the inauguration of Satyagraha in Bardoli in 1921, and though I knew that the condition was far from being satisfied, I yielded to the importunations of the late Vithalbhai and inaugurated the Satyagraha, with what followed you know very well. Well, I would even today ask the people of Bardoli to fulfil that condition of one wheel in every home. That will help you to eke out your small income and make you self-sufficient.

19-2-1938

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF KHADI

[It was in a spirit of self-introspection that Gandhiji poured himself out at the exhibition on the morning of the 16th February. The voice had not the pitch and timbre that his voice had on the day he delivered himself of a spiritual oration at Faizpur on the 25th of December 1936, but it had the same solemnity, the same spiritual fervour, the same appeal made more irresistible by the foreboding that it may be stilled in a near rather than a remote future. M. D.]

The U. P. and the Bihar Ministers are here having tendered their resignations. There is nothing very extraordinary about that. They accepted their offices in full knowledge of the fact that the Constitution is a bauble. What has happened in Bihar and U. P. may happen tomorrow in Bombay and the day after in Madras. But I am going to tell you today why exactly the thing has happened. If I am a Minister it is within my power to release prisoners, no matter whether they are three or thirty. What right has the Governor to interfere? I am Minister because I have the majority of votes, and so long as I hold the office, there is no one to question my authority to release the prisoners. But the Governors of two provinces have interfered. Let me tell you why. *Pace* what the Socialist friends may say, I hold that the Governors dared to interfere because we have not realized the implications of khadi.

Khadi has been conceived as the foundation and the image of *ahimsa*. A real khadi-wearer will not utter an untruth. A real khadi-wearer will harbour no violence, no deceit, no impurity. To those who

will say, 'If this is khadi, we will not wear it,' I will say, 'You are welcome to do what you like, but then you must forget to win Swaraj by means of truth and non-violence. Nor may I compel you to observe truth and non-violence, nor may I compel you to win Swaraj after my method.

Seven and a half lakhs have gone into the making of Vithalnagar. There are many things here I have liked, but it lacks the spirit of khadi. The Sardar and I are close to each other, we are as one, we work alike and we think alike, but it may be that even the Sardar has not fully grasped the secret of khadi. Where there is the conscious endeavour to fulfil the spirit of khadi, there is no place for the expenditure of seven and a half lakhs. I said that we should be able to hold a village session at the outside expense of Rs. 5,000. Before the Faizpur Congress I told Deo that he would be found wanting in my estimate if he failed to manage it with Rs. 5,000. Well the idea has still not left my mind. If we cannot do this, we are not true soldiers of Swaraj, we have not become real villagers. Rural-mindedness and electrical illuminations go ill together. Nor have motor cars and motor lorries any place there. They took me to Faizpur and they brought me to Haripura in a car. They would not allow me to foot it out. They would not even take me in a bullock cart. That was reserved for Subhas Babu. If they had brought me in a bullock cart, it would have meant some loss of time. But how does that matter? We have all become princes, and I am told some pedestrians waylaid cars and threatened Satyagraha if they were not given cars. The seven lakhs would not have been spent here, if we were khadi-minded. Here there are petrol and oil engines and water-pipes, stoves and electricity, most of the modern city-dwellers' amenities, including the tooth paste and the tooth brush and scented hair-oils. The villager is or should

be unspoilt by these things. His brush is the fresh babul stick and his powder is salt and charcoal. You wear khadi, but what about the other things that surround you and are out of keeping with khadi?

Because we have not assimilated and lived the *mantra* of khadi, some Socialist friends are impatient with us and say that Gandhi's days are gone and a new age is upon us. I do not mind this, in fact I welcome plain-spokenness. If you think that what I say deserves to be rejected, do by all means reject it. Do what you do for the sake of India, not for my sake. I am but an image of clay, which is sure to be reduced to cinders. If you wear khadi for my sake, you will burn khadi on the day you burn my dead body. But if you have fully understood the message of khadi, if you have thoroughly assimilated it, khadi will long outlive me. Khadi is not a lifeless image to be worshipped externally. Proper worship is not image worship, it is the worship of God in the image. If we miss the spirit of khadi and make only a fetish of it, we are no better than gross idolaters.

For twenty years I have preached the cult of khadi to my countrymen. I want to preach the same cult today when I am at death's door. Khadi is no longer the old tattered rag it looked like when it was born. It has all the health and beauty and vigour of youth, and I can therefore preach the cult of khadi with redoubled faith and vigour. Something within me tells me that herein I am not wrong. In khadi lies Swaraj—Independence.

**PART II**  
**WRITINGS OF OTHERS.**



## WAR ON THE MACHINE

*(By Mahadev Dèsaï)*

Ever since the passing of the All India Village Industries Resolution at the Bombay Congress, Gandhiji is being besieged with inquiries, questions, suggestions and offers of service, from all quarters of the country. Gandhiji will deal with them in due course, and the Executive Board of the Association which will soon come into being will give the suggestions and offers the most careful consideration. But one question that is being asked repeatedly — which has been put to me, at least, by several people — may be dealt with at once. "Gandhiji says in a recent article that every mill-hand does the work of at least ten labourers doing the same work in their villages, and thus he puts some of his countrymen out of employment," said one of them to me. "But that way every machine puts some hands out of employment. The Singer's sewing machine does sewing much more rapidly and much more inexpensively than the tailor who uses his fingers without the help of the machine. I do not know how many tailors have been thrown out of employment by the sewing machine. But would the Village Industries Association include in its crusade the sewing machine? You have declared a war on the flour mill and the rice mill already. Why not say plainly that it is a general war on the machine?"

The question involves several fallacies and hasty conclusions. The argument about the mill-hand having ousted the fellow-villagers does not apply to the village tailor, because the sewing machine helps and supplements human labour, but does not displace

it. But the textile mill has ruined an essential industry which supported the whole population of the country and kept it out of want and unemployment. Any machine which can be handled by the simplest villager and which helps him to eke out his living is not only useful but necessary. The spinning wheel itself is such a machine, even the handmill is such a machine, and no effort should be spared on making such machines as much productive as possible.

But if the textile mills have brought unemployment and impoverishment in their wake, the rice mill and the flour mill have brought not only unemployment and impoverishment in their wake, but also ill-health and disease. Gandhiji is busy collecting medical and expert opinion on the subject and expects to prove to the hilt the truth of this statement.

That the machine and the large scale industry in general have in many cases worked to the detriment of art, elegance and intellectual originality is a proposition that is now universally accepted.

The war on the machine, therefore, that the Village Industries Association has declared is a war, not on the machine as such, but on the machine where it has spelt impoverishment and unemployment, ill-health and disease, destruction of artistic activity. But it is really no war on the machine. It aims at revival and restoration of the life-giving industries which have, for reasons that need not be discussed here, slipped 'out of our hands, and also aims at the total extinction of unemployment.

If industrialisation or mechanisation was a panacea, or even a possible remedy, for the universal unemployment of this country and all the ills that have followed in its train, Gandhiji would have no hesitation in giving it a trial. But they are not, as a few facts and figures will immediately show. Sjt. P. K. Wattal, in his *Population Problem in India*.

has carefully considered the results. He has made a list of the existing industries (large scale of course) and ruled out jute, tea and coal, which admit of no expansion as they are worked to their utmost capacity. But he has considered the other industries in some detail, and the results are worth studying. Thus, the total number of workers employed in cotton textile factories in 1931 was 4,92,284 and these were "able to meet 72 per cent or three-fourths of the demand for cloth in India, and only one-fourth is imported. If we presume that the industry will expand in the next few years to such an extent as to meet the whole of the country's requirements in respect of cloth, it cannot employ at the outside more than  $\frac{1}{3} \times 4,92,284$  or 1,64,494 persons, in addition to those it employs at present."

As regards sugar, of which the imports before the war were valued at over Rs. 14 crores but which in 1932-33 were just a little over Rs. 4 crores, "this industry is capable of now supplying the entire requirements of the country, and it is not likely, owing to the overstocking of the world markets at present, that India will be able to export sugar to any considerable extent. The industry will, therefore, not be able to support many more persons than it already does." This number is calculated to be not more than 62,500.

As regards the iron and steel industry, the imports of manufactured iron and steel were very low in 1932-33 and amounted to 3,26,000 tons only. The industry can thus afford very little further relief than it does at present.

As regards the oil industry, Mr. Wattal thinks that, "in view of the impending separation of Burma from India, the development of this industry cannot be regarded as falling within the resources of India." With regard to the paper industry, the total number of persons employed, at the last census, was about

7,000 and "it is the opinion of those best qualified to judge that, even when trading conditions improve, it will be several years before the demand increases sufficiently to justify new mills or the extension of existing ones." The cement industry has made considerable progress during the last 15 years and employs 20 to 25 thousand workers, but "as only one-sixth of the present demand is met from imports, the utmost further relief that it can give would be 3 to 4 thousand extra workers." Regarding the match industry India is producing practically all the matches she requires, and "the capacity of the industry to occupy a large number of additional men may now be regarded as nil."

The only hope, therefore, lies in the expansion of khadi and the small village industries. Mr. Wattal has not considered khadi at all, that being not his subject, and he refuses to think in terms of khadi as the only cloth that a country bent on finding employment for its millions must use. Small industries he dismisses in a sweeping statement: "The relief which such industries can give is at best local and not very substantial. They are unable, as a rule, to compete with the products of large scale factories, and their production is consequently limited to areas beyond the reach of imported products."

It is this statement that the Village Industries Association would like to challenge. The writer has in view only industries like soap-making, hosiery, boot and shoe making, which, from the point of view of the All India Village Industries Association, are not the "small village industries" within its purview. It has in its purview dying and dead industries which are as much artisan as agricultural, and as much employment-giving as health-giving. We have no census in terms of small industries, as other countries do have. Thus, the Industrial Census of Italy for 1911 states 1,89,244 as the number of establishments

which employed from one to five persons, and Gina Lombroso says that France is "the richest and happiest country of Europe", not because it is a highly industrialised country, nor because it has carried large scale industry to perfection, but because "it has resisted large scale industry. Her wealth is not gained from her great industries that foreigners are beginning to admire; it is gained from the small industries that are as much artisan as agricultural. . . In 1921, of 40,00,000 salaried workers in France, there were only 7,74,000 in factories of more than 500 workers; the others were all employed in smaller establishments. It is these small 'industrialists', these isolated artisans, who create the wealth of France and are its industrial strength. In clothing alone, objects of dress, France exported yearly goods worth 16,32,70,00,000 francs, besides the goods sold directly to foreigners valued at 40,00,000, francs. . . A great part of the famous silks of Lyons are not woven in the great factories from which fashion comes, but by the small weavers scattered across the countryside. There are around Lyons about 4,000 of these weavers who possess from one to ten looms, and it is they who form the strength of the silk industry of Lyons."

If these are the conditions in an industrialised country like France, they are much more possible to create in a country like India. France has not waged a war on the machine; France has only preserved its manhood from being enslaved by the machine and thus saved its people from unemployment, and its art from extinction. It is for these two objects that the All India Village Industries Association has to find out the small village industrial resources of the 7,00,000 villages of India and to tap them to the best advantage.

## II

### POSERS

( *By Mahadev Desai* )

A worker came with a number of questions which, though they had been discussed often enough, still continued to trouble him. "Why are we laying such an emphasis on khadi and wholesome foodstuffs, when you know that even before the advent of the British khadi was there and our good foodstuffs were there, and yet we were in no better case?" was his first question.

"This question," said Gandhiji, "was discussed threadbare in the columns of YOUNG INDIA and NAVAJIVAN if you read them. But I shall sum up the reply for you. We had khadi, but we did not know its significance; we were self-contained, but without realizing its necessity. There was little intelligence behind khadi and our handicrafts, and we little realized that they sustained us. Therefore, when they were lost to us we did not miss them, and today when an attempt is being made to restore them, some of us are wondering what use there could be in their restoration."

"Then that means that political education and propaganda is needed, and you have tabooed this."

"No political propaganda is needed to teach people the lesson of self-help, of reform in their diet, and of throwing off their inertia and making the best of their idle hours."

"My difficulty," said the worker, "is this, that though people in our villages are working like asses from morning until night without an hour's respite they do not get enough to eat. And you are asking them to labour still more!"

"What you say is news to me. The villages I know are those in which quantities of time are being wasted. But if as you say there are people who are being overworked, I am asking such people to accept nothing less than a living wage for nothing more than eight hours' work."

"But why not accept the machine with all its good points, eliminating the bad ones?"

"I cannot afford to keep our human machines idle. We have such an amount of human power lying idle that we have no room for other power-driven machines."

"Introduce the power-driven machine, and get them to work for only as long as is needed for our purposes."

"How do you mean? Supposing X produced all the cloth we needed, in mills specially constructed for the purpose, and gave work to say three million men, also distributing all the profit between them, what then? Then these three million men will be having all the money that used to be distributed between 300 million a hundred years ago."

"No, sir," argued the friend, "I propose that our men should not work more than is necessary for our purposes. Some work is indeed necessary for all of us, but why should we work, say, more than a couple of hours a day, and not devote the rest of our time to pleasant occupations?" (The talk was all in Hindustani and I am giving the objector's argument as best I can.)

"So you would be satisfied if our men were to work only for one hour a day?"

"That should be worked out. But I should certainly be satisfied."

"Well there's the rub. I should never be satisfied until all men had plenty of productive work, say eight hours a day."

"But why, I wonder, should you insist on this eight hours' minimum?"

"Because I know that millions will not employ themselves in work for the sake of it. If they did not need to work for their bread, they would lack the incentive. Supposing a few millionaires from America came and offered to send us all our foodstuffs and implored us not to work but to permit them to give vent to their philanthropy, I should refuse point-blank to accept their kind offer."

"That would be because the offer would hurt your self-respect?"

"No, not only because of that; but especially because it strikes at the root of the fundamental law of our being, viz. that we must work for our bread, that we eat our bread by the sweat of our brow."

"But that is your personal view: Would you leave the organization of society to society itself, or would you leave it to a few good guides?"

"I should leave it to a few good guides."

"Which means that you are for a dictatorship."

"No, for the simple reason that my fundamental principle is non-violence and I should not coerce any individual or community. Guidance is not dictatorship."

The argument might have gone on to an exasperating length, but Gandhiji had no more time and the friend had to be content for the day.

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Apropos of this discussion, it may be worth while turning to Mr. L. P. Jacks' essay *The Science and Art of Leisure*, where he shows what a difficult science and art it is, and how it is impossible to achieve both without mastering the science and art of Labour. Mr. Bertrand Russel, who considers



ample leisure for the citizen to be one of the essentials of a successful social system, reduces the working hours to four per day—thank God he does not, like our friend in the foregoing dialogue, reduce them to an hour a day! But Mr. Jacks thinks that Mr. Russel simplifies the problem too much and forgets that “the leisure of the first man would get considerably interfered with by the doings of others,” for “we spend a great deal of our leisure in mutual botheration.” “Moreover,” remarks Mr. Jacks, laying his finger on the sorest spot, “account has to be taken of the fact that one’s leisure-time is precisely that part of life where Beelzebub finds his most promising opportunities. One can imagine the rejoicings in Beelzebub’s quarter of the universe if the working hours were reduced to four per diem.” And then Mr. Jacks attempts a definition of ‘leisure’ and defines it as “that part of a man’s life where the struggle between white angels and black for the possession of his soul goes on with the greatest intensity,” and gives a few statistics “which may help us to form an idea of the way people nowadays distribute their leisure-time between the cultivation of their souls and the cultivation of something else.” He takes them from a little volume called *Books* by R. L. Duffus :

“We are told that 115 million people in the United States attend the ‘movie’ theatres every week, and that in this way they spend as much money in three weeks as the entire population spends on books in a year. The total national expenditure on books is given as 200 million dollars per annum. The total national expenditure on pleasure-touring in motor cars is 3,000 million dollars. The American public pays for books one-half of one per cent of its annual income. As a result of elaborate calculations Mr. Duffus concludes that the ‘average

American' buys two books and borrows two from the library every year. From an official bulletin issued by the American Government we get the following: 'The national bill for candy is 27 times as large as the national bill for books; for the movies 22 times; for the wireless 12½ times; for 'soft drinks' 11 times. The amount spent by the Americans on hard drinks is not mentioned. These figures, of course, require careful interpretation. Not all the books that are bought or borrowed can be classed as tending to the cultivation of the soul. On the other hand, the leisure occupations indicated by the rest of the figures must not be set down indiscriminately as having no cultural value, though certainly there is not much in 'candy' on which Americans spend 27 times what they spend on books. But when an allowance has been made for all that, the figures on the whole seem to strengthen my contention that just now Beelzebub is going strong at the leisure end of our civilization."

These are American facts. As for England, Mr. Jacks gives an example from one of the Lancashire towns:

"Outside an establishment devoted to the newly invented sport of greyhound racing there was an immense crowd waiting for the gates to open in the middle of the morning, and on making inquiry I was informed that the vast majority were the unemployed. Many of the mills in the neighbourhood had closed down, but the greyhound racing industry was doing a roaring business. Some days afterwards I met a gentleman prominent in the W. E. A. and asked him whether the increased leisure of the district had caused an increase in the demand for the classes and courses of lectures his movement had to offer. He said it had not. There were too

many counter-attractions. And he mentioned greyhound racing as one."

As for India one may safely say that most of the riots and destructive activities that are in evidence at the present day are the work of those who have no work to do. A study in criminal statistics would be most instructive from the point of view of the employment of leisure hours, but I am quite sure no one has yet been able to demonstrate the wrongness of the old adage that Satan always finds enough mischief for idle hands to do.

7-12-1935

### III

## THE LURE OF LEISURE

( *By Mahadev Desai* ),

I gave some time ago in these columns Mr. L. P. Jacks' definition on leisure: "That part of a man's life where the struggle between white angels and black for the possession of his soul goes on with the greatest intensity," and tried to show, from the statistics he had given, how difficult is the science and art of leisure. Mr. Bertrand Russel who is keen on ensuring every citizen ample leisure would reduce the working hours to four per day. But an esteemed friend talking to Gandhiji the other day wondered if the problem of leisure was really so difficult. "Why do you insist on eight hours' manual work a day?" he asked. "Is it not possible in a well-ordered society to reduce the working day to two hours and leave the citizen ample leisure for intellectual and artistic pursuits?"

"We know that those who get all that leisure — both the working and the intellectual classes — do not make the best use of it. In fact we too often find the idle mind being turned into the Devil's workshop."

"No; he would not be idling away. Supposing we divided the day into two hours' physical labour and six hours' intellectual labour; would it not be good for the nation?"

"I do not know that it would be feasible. I have not mathematically calculated it, but if a man will do the intellectual labour only for profit and not for the nation, I am sure that the scheme will break down; unless of course the State pays him amply for the two hours' labour and compels him to do other work."

without paying him anything. That would be a fine thing, but it cannot be done without a kind of State conscription."

"But take for instance you. You cannot in the nature of things do eight hours' physical labour, and have to do eight hours' or more intellectual work. You do not abuse your leisure?"

"It is compulsory work and leaves no leisure, as for instance it would if I was going out to play tennis. But I tell you even taking my case that I am sure our minds would have been infinitely better if we laboured with our hands for eight hours. We would not have a single idle thought, and I may tell you that my mind is not entirely free from idle thoughts. Even now I am what I am because I realized the value of physical labour at a very early stage of my life."

"But then if physical work has such inherent virtue, our people have been working more than eight hours a day, not with any appreciable effect on the purity or strength of their minds."

"Physical labour by itself is not an education even as mental labour is not. It has been with our people deadly drudgery without their knowing this, and that deadens one's finer instincts. That is where I have my strongest complaint against the Savarna Hindus. They have rendered work for the proletariat a task of hard drudgery, from which they have no pleasure and in which they have no interest. If they had been considered members of the society enjoying the same status as they, theirs would have been the proudest position in life. This is supposed to be the *Kaliyuga*. In the *Satyayuga*, or golden age, whenever it was, the society I daresay was better ordered than today. Ours is an ancient land where civilizations have come and gone, and it is difficult to say what exactly we were like at a particular age. But there is no doubt that we are where we are because we

have long neglected the Shoodras. Today's village culture, if culture it can be called, is an awful culture. The villagers live as worse than animals. Nature compels animals to work and live naturally. We have so debased our working classes that they cannot work and live naturally. If our people had laboured intelligently and with joy, we should have been quite different today."

"Work and culture cannot be separated, then?"

"No. They tried to do it in ancient Rome and failed miserably. Culture without labour, or culture which is not the fruit of labour, would be 'Vomitoria' as a Roman Catholic writer says. The Romans made indulgence a habit, and were ruined. Man cannot develop his mind by simply writing and reading or making speeches all day long. All my reading I tell you was done in the leisure hours I got in jails, and I have benefited by it because all of it was done not desultorily but for some purpose. And though I have worked physically for days and months for eight hours on end I don't think I suffered from mental decay. I have often walked as much as 40 miles a day and yet never felt dull."

"But you had this mental equipment."

"No fear. You don't know how mediocre I was at school and in England. I had never the courage to speak at debating society meetings or even in a gathering of vegetarians. No. Don't you run away with the thought that I was blessed with any extraordinary powers. God, I think, advisedly did not give me then the power to speak. You must know, among us I am the least read man."

## IV

### IN DEFENCE OF MACHINERY

(By Mahadev Desai)

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, asked 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 not 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 asphixiating 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."



## A FORMIDABLE INDICTMENT

*( By Mahadev Desai )*

In a note I wrote some time ago I reproduced Gandhiji's words in reply to a question asked by Sjt. Ghanashyamdas Birla to this effect: "How long can all this village industries business go on in this machine age?" This is what Gandhiji said:

"I have no such fear, because I have the conviction within me that when all these achievements will have disappeared these our handicrafts will remain; when all exploitation will have ceased, service and honest labour will remain. It is because this faith sustains me that I am going on with my work..... Faith in my work sustains me, but there is also added to it the conviction that all the other things that seem to challenge my faith are doomed. Don't you see that if India becomes industrialized we should need a Nadirshah to find out other worlds to exploit, that we shall have to pit ourselves against the naval and military power of Britain and Japan and America, of Russia and Italy? My head reels to think of these rivalries. No. I am clear that whilst this machine age aims at converting men into machines, I am aiming at reinstating man turned machine into his original estate."

On this an esteemed friend, then in London, wrote:

"It strikes me very forcibly how difficult it is to consider a question rationally when outlooks and premises differ so vastly. Every statement made by Gandhiji seems to me to be

based on a wrong premise, or on a misconception of what those in favour of the machine are saying. The result is that the ideas never meet, they go on running parallel to each other, each ignorant of the other. Every thinking and sensitive person has a feeling that something is grievously wrong in our lives and our social order. If he is not of the purely religious type, he approaches all nostrums and suggested remedies with some suspicion. Even when he accepts a proposed remedy he does not do so in toto; he is groping for the truth. But when Gandhiji says that 'Faith in my work' sustains me, but there is also added to it the conviction that all the other things that seem to challenge my faith are doomed,' he is hardly the truth-seeker. He is one who has convinced himself that he has found it and has therefore closed his mind to further search or enquiry. Then again he says, 'If India becomes industrialized, we shall need a Nadirshah to find out other worlds to exploit, etc.' That is an extraordinary statement and only justifiable on the basis of a continuation of the present capitalist-imperialist order. It has no reference whatever to a society based on the principles of Socialism. Exploitation and international conflict arise not from industrialization — was there no terrible exploitation and conflict before the machine age? — but from the profit motive which is at the back of capitalism. If this motive goes, where is the exploitation or the conflict? If production is for consumption and not for making money out of others, the whole of Gandhiji's argument collapses.

Yet another instance, which may surprise you. 'I am clear,' says he, 'that whilst this machine age aims at converting men into machines, I am aiming at reinstating man turned

machine in his original estate.' What exactly was man's original estate? So far as I know history or the story of man's origins this original estate was one of the utmost degradation, something very near to the beasts of the field. At no period of history and in no country prior to the machine age have the masses had anything but a miserable, hard-worked, machinelike existence to look forward to. (An exception might be made of certain favourably situated far-away islands like the South Sea Islands.) The machine has in fact first produced the conditions when men need not be machines. True, this has only been partly realized and only in a few countries. But the fault lies in the exploitation of the machine in an unholy way for the profit of individuals and groups. Rightly used for the social good it should be the mightiest factor for humanizing man."

This formidable indictment merits an answer. First as to the challenge about Gandhiji's being a truth-seeker, when he speaks like one who has found the truth and closed his mind to further search. Gandhiji has never claimed infallibility. He has gone so far as to say that if someone convinced him that truth was an error, he would be a convert and give up the search, but whilst the condition lasts, a truth-seeker is bound to defend it at the cost of his life. He dare not doubt the truth of his position. The very fact that he claims to be a seeker and nothing more carries its own limitations. When Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru talks about socialism, his faith naturally makes him describe it as the panacea for all our evils. That is his conviction. Does anyone doubt that whilst he has that firm conviction, he yet keeps an open mind? The fact is that objectively all truth is relative, subjectively it is absolute. We have to seek it with an open mind,

but we have to be devoted to it, to pursue it, and live it as though it was absolute. And any truth-seeker who has lived for truth and cared to pursue it, has acted in the faith that the opposite is doomed. That faith alone can sustain him, and most of our troubles spring from a lack of that living faith in what we believe.

Then about the profit motive. Our critic is apparently right. It is the profit motive that vitiates all industry, and no doubt exploitation arises from the profit motive. But does it not arise from industrialism itself? Will socialization of uncontrolled private ownership eradicate the wrongs inherent in mass distribution and mass consumption which mass production presupposes? As Borsodi says in *This Ugly Civilization*,

"The elimination of exploitation by the abolition of private ownership of production and distribution does not reach the root of the trouble. The factory's ineradicable attributes will still remain to plague mankind. Socialization or functionalization of the factory will never produce the utopia for which so many idealists are working. Socialization must fail as a remedy because it does not treat with the real disease which the factory system has inflicted upon mankind. Socialization must fail because it contains no balm for efficiency-scourged mankind. For the efficiency that is the quintessence of factory civilization is the real disease which the factory has inflicted upon mankind... Comfort would have to be sacrificed on the altar of the great god efficiency under socialism, precisely as it has to be under capitalism, because the factory system ceases to be economic unless it is efficient, unless it is efficient enough to absorb the institutional burden which is its inescapable concomitant."

I have no space here to go into the detail of the institutional burden of the factory, but it is apparent from this that socialization by itself cannot do much. Unless it is tacked on to a home-industry civilization and divorced from the factory civilization, mere socialization will throw us from the frying pan into the fire. Was there not terrible exploitation, our critic asks, before the machine age? Indeed there was, but was the gulf separating the rich and the poor wider then or narrower? The cure of the economic ills may lie in socialization, but not in socialization ill-matched with the factory.

To come to the last point. I confess my language was loose when I represented Gandhiji as saying that he was aiming at reinstating man in his original estate. Gandhiji meant to say nothing more than this that the revival of the cottage industry aimed at making man the real human being that he was fast ceasing to be. The critic assumes that Gandhiji is against the machine as such. There could not be a greater mistake. He wants the machine to minister to the needs of man, to serve man, not to be the master of man. Let man improve the machine in his control so as to save his labour and increase production, but let him not be the automaton that power-driven machinery has made of him. The factory civilization of today has made machine the master of man not only because it is based on exploitation, but because of the inherent limitations of the factory itself. There may have been men leading a machinelike existence in the pre-factory age (I will not call it a pre-machinery age, as machines have been there ever since Adam delved and Eve span), but I maintain that it was less machinelike existence, less drab and dreary, less wedded to the uglinesses and indecencies that are inevitable in a factory civilization. And that applies not only to the South Sea Islands,

(which unfortunately I do not know), but to India of a pre-factory age. I am not talking here of the golden age of India, the India of the Upanishads and the Ramayana and the Mahabharat, but of a more historical India. Kabir, who sprang from the weaver's caste, Tukaram from the peasant's, Chokhamela from the so-called untouchable's, Raidas from the cobbler's caste, Gora from the potter's, and Dhana from the carpenter's, were no exemplars of a machinelike existence, but of a godlike existence.

## VI

### A FEW HOME TRUTHS

( *By Mahadev Desai* )

The Bombay Assembly was the scene of a debate on the grant for cottage industries and khadi, during which the question of hand-work v. machine was discussed threadbare. A protagonist of the machine like Sjt. Parulekar raised the familiar cry of putting back the hands of the clock, and went the length of asserting that "it is the machine alone which can make a man happy." Sjt. Gulzarilal Nanda in a forceful speech pointed out that the issue between machinery and the negation of machinery did not arise, that the greatest advocate of cottage industries did not eschew machinery altogether, or machinery as such, and that the spinning wheel was no less a machine than anything else. "The complaint of those who are now pursuing this industry is that technical knowledge has been withheld from these simple industries, and made the monopoly of capitalist industries, and if they could have it they would welcome it... The issue is not between machine and no machine. The issue is between one type of machine and another." The protagonist of the machine stated that the objective was increased production and wealth, giving employment and livelihood and securing leisure and culture. Sjt. Gulzarilal accepted the objective and showed that the little charkha and the handloom stood the test better than anything else. He said :

"Produce more wealth, you say. Do by all means. But do you really do so? You engage a few people on the machines which increase production tenfold and throw out of employment

the majority. For if one gets employment on the machine, nine will be thrown out of work, because they are no longer necessary.....These nine people are not machines. They are human beings all the time consuming wealth. They have to be fed and maintained. And who is to maintain them? These agriculturists who have not sufficient resources to maintain themselves have to maintain these nine people who are thrown out of employment for the sake of one man who took to mechanized industry. Another point is that a human being is a much more valuable asset than a machine and the deterioration that takes place in this asset, because of lack of employment, is much worse and a much more serious matter than the depreciation of machinery. Owing to lack of employment a human being deteriorates in value both physically and morally.....It has been said, 'Look at England and America, the standard of living there is so much higher.' Well, these countries have their problems of unemployment, they have got their doles; their standard of living, whatever it may be, has been obtained by the exploitation of other countries. If our unemployed were to be engaged in mechanized industries, we should in one year produce as much cloth as would go round the whole world for several years, and we should have to conquer every country on earth in order to be able to sell our products."

Coming to the question of employment and livelihood, Sjt. Nanda said:

"If there was any guarantee that every one of our unemployed would get employment in large scale industries, I should not object. But where is the capital? It would not be there for several generations. I will give you an illustration from the textile industry. I think that



roughly about Rs. 3,000 is required as investment to give employment to one man in the textile industry. As against that Rs. 3 will be sufficient to give employment to one man in the spinning industry..... Even if we had enough capital, could we give employment to all our people? I say again, 'No.' The people for whom employment is needed are the people engaged in agriculture. Can we transplant them to the cities and give them employment there? We have to take employment to their doors. We cannot start a textile mill on every farm..... Next is the question of livelihood. Sjt. Parulekar ridiculed the wage of one anna for fourteen hours which khadi offered to him. Spinning and weaving, as they have been carried on for the last ten or fifteen years, have never been carried on under conditions which demanded of a worker fourteen hours of work. Of the textile industry I could say that there was a time—not very long ago—when men were being worked for more than fourteen hours a day. Subsequently they were being worked for twelve hours a day, and then for ten hours. It has never happened that they have worked for less than eight hours a day in this industry..... A reasonably efficient man can obtain three annas from spinning and eight to ten annas from weaving. I do not think that this is a very insignificant sum, when you compare the per capita income of the country." [Sjt. Nanda might have added that the charkha and the loom offered the wage to the man in his own cottage, and also that we were working for a day when everyone would get one anna per hour of labour.] "But there is something more. What do you do in the mills? Four lakhs of people are paid ten annas or so each. Now about fifty crores of rupees worth of cloth is

produced in our mills. About twenty per cent of that — about ten crores — is paid in wages, to four lakhs of people. What would happen in the case of khadi? Thirtyfive crores would go as wages, and it would be distributed among a much larger number of people. It would be less than ten annas per individual of course; but a much larger number of people would be doing something, and they would be getting employment also."

Lastly he took up the question of leisure and culture :

"Leisure is not an absolute need, irrespective of the amount and nature of work done. It is related to our work. If we decide to place the workers in cottage industries, I think the strain on their nerves will be very much smaller. I do not think this point of leisure really arises so far as the cottage industries are concerned."

As for culture, "does culture mean articles of luxury in the house such as furniture of all manner and good clothes and good food? I think it is something else. It means development of individuality. It means self-expression. It means taste. It is a very curious process to first subject a man to the deadening process of machine work that takes all the fineness from the soul of man, and then to take him through a course of art, drawing, this and that. Our masses will get the culture in their homes, in their mosques and temples, and chiefly through their work. That work itself is a process of training, of education, of culture and art. Even on this score I think that cottage industries can easily establish their claim of superiority over large scale industries."

## VII

### INTERPRETATION OF THE WARDHA EDUCATION SCHEME

( *By Mahadev Desai* )

Dr. John De Boer, who is in charge of an educational institution in South India, was on a visit to Wardha before starting on a long furlough. He has made a careful study of the Wardha educational scheme and had therefore useful discussions with Shri Aryanayakam and Kakasaheb. He was keen on having a few minutes with Gandhiji too. He said the scheme had appealed to him most strongly, because at the back of it was non-violence. His difficulty was why non-violence figured so little on the syllabus.

"The reason why it has appealed to you is quite all right," said Gandhiji. "But the whole syllabus cannot centre round non-violence. It is enough to remember that it emerges from a non-violent brain. But it does not presuppose the acceptance of non-violence by those who accept it. Thus, for instance, all the members of the Committee do not accept non-violence as a creed. Just as a vegetarian need not necessarily be a believer in non-violence—he may be a vegetarian for reasons of health—even so those who accept the scheme need not be all believers in non-violence."

"I know," said Dr. De Boer, "some educationists who will have nothing to do with the system because it is based on a non-violent philosophy of life."

"I know it. But for that matter I know some leading men who would not accept khadi because it is based on my philosophy of life. But how can I help it? Non-violence is certainly in the heart of the scheme, and I can easily demonstrate it, but I

know that there will be little enthusiasm for it when I do so. But those who accept the scheme accept the fact that in a land full of millions of hungry people you cannot teach their children by any other method, and that if you can set the thing going the result will be a new economic order. That is quite enough for me, as it is enough for me that Congressmen accept non-violence as a method for obtaining independence, but not as a way of life. If the whole of India accepted non-violence as a creed and a way of life, we should be able to establish a republic immediately."

"I see," said Dr. De Boer. "There is one thing now which I do not understand. I am a socialist, and whilst as a believer in non-violence the scheme appeals to me most, I feel as a socialist that the scheme would cut India adrift from the world, whereas we have to integrate with the whole world, and socialism does it as nothing else does."

"I have no difficulty," said Gandhiji. "We do not want to cut adrift from the whole world. We will have a free interchange with all nations, but the present forced interchange has to go. We do not want to be exploited, neither do we want to exploit any other nation. Through the scheme we look forward to making all children producers, and so to change the face of the whole nation, for it will permeate the whole of our social being. But that does not mean that we cut adrift from the whole world. There will be nations that will want to interchange with others because they cannot produce certain things. They will certainly depend on other nations for them, but the nations that will provide for them should not exploit them."

"But if you simplify your life to such an extent that you need nothing from other countries, you will isolate yourselves from them; whereas I want you to be responsible for America also."

"It is by ceasing to exploit and to be exploited that we can be responsible for America. For America will then follow our example and there will be no difficulty in a free interchange between us."

"But you want to simplify life and cut out industrialization."

"If I could produce all my country's wants by means of the labour of 30,000 people instead of 30 million I should not mind it, provided that the thirty million are not rendered idle and unemployed. I know that socialists would introduce industrialization to the extent of reducing working hours to one or two in a day, but I do not want it."

"They would have leisure."

"Leisure to play hockey?"

"Not only for that but for creative handicrafts for instance."

"Creative handicrafts I am asking them to engage in. But they will produce with their hands by working eight hours a day."

"You do not of course look forward to a state of society when every house will have a radio and everyone a car. That was President Hoover's formula. He wanted not one but two radios and two cars."

"If we had so many cars there would be very little room left for walking," said Gandhiji.

"I agree. We have about 40,000 deaths by accidents every year and thrice as many cases of people being maimed."

"At any rate I am not going to live to see the day when all villages in India will have radios."

"Pandit Jawaharlal seems to think in terms of the economy of abundance."

"I know. But what is abundance? Not the capacity to destroy millions of tons of wheat as you do in America?"

"Yes, that's the nemesis of capitalism. They do not destroy now, but they are being paid for NOT producing wheat. People indulged in the pastime of throwing eggs at one another because the prices of the eggs had gone down."

"That is what we do not want. If by abundance you mean everyone having plenty to eat and drink and to clothe himself with, enough to keep his mind trained and educated, I should be satisfied. But I should not like to pack more stuff in my belly than I can digest and more things than I can ever usefully use. But neither do I want poverty, penury, misery, dirt and dust in India."

"But Pandit Jawaharlal says in his Autobiography you worship Daridranarayan and extol poverty for its own sake."

"I know," said Gandhiji, with a laugh.

## VIII

### SWADESHI INDUSTRIES AND DISCRIMINATION

(By Mahadev Desai)

The discrimination clauses in the new Constitution have been the subject of much discussion of late, and naturally so. For that is one of the many vicious features of the new Constitution which make Federation unacceptable. There would seem to be no doubt about what Gandhiji meant when he insisted on the insertion of the words 'in the interests of India' in the Agreement which is now known as the Irwin-Gandhi Pact. An automatic commentary on the words was provided by the clause in the Agreement granting the right of Indians to picket all foreign cloth shops. Does the exclusion of all foreign cloth, which necessarily includes British cloth, mean discrimination 'against the British cloth manufactures? Lord Irwin did not think so. In the same way about all other industries which were killed or nearly killed in order that British industries may be reared on their ruin. In fact a friend draws my attention to the fact that whilst Lord Irwin recognised the principle in 1931, it was recognised as long ago as 1916 by Sir William Clarke, the then Member for Commerce and Industry of the Government of India. In supporting the resolution for the appointment of the Industrial Commission, he said: "The building up of industries where the capital, control and management should be in the hands of Indians is the special object we all have in view;" and he viewed with disfavour a situation created by "the manufacturer who now competes with you from a distance," transferring "his activities to India and competes with you within your own country."

To make the whole thing clear once for all and to have Gandhiji's authoritative opinion on this matter and his definition of Swadeshi Industries, three representatives of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company had an interview with him at Segaon some days ago. They seemed to be worried by the following among a number of things:

1. The discrimination clauses. They cited from Gandhiji's article in YOUNG INDIA entitled *The Giant and the Dwarf* the following statements:

"To talk of no discrimination between Indian interests and English or European is to perpetuate Indian helotage. What is equality of rights between a giant and a dwarf? Before one can think of equality between unequals, the dwarf must be raised to the height of the giant...It will be a misnomer to call the process one of racial discrimination. There is no such question. There is room enough in our country for every British man, woman and child if they will shed their privileged position and share our lot." And again: "In almost every walk of life the Englishman by reason of his belonging to the ruling class occupies a privileged position. It can be said without fear of contradiction and without exaggeration that he has risen upon the ruin of India's commerce and industries. The cottage industries of India had to perish in order that Lancashire might flourish. The Indian shipping had to perish, so that British shipping might flourish."

Is the shipping not to revive and rise to its full height in a free India?

2. What are Indian or Swadeshi Companies? It has become a fashion nowadays to bamboozle the unwary public by adding "(India) Limited" to full-blooded British concerns. Lever Brothers "(India) Limited" have their factories here now. They claim to produce swadeshi soap, and have already ruined several large and small soap factories in Bengal. Then



there is the Imperial Chemicals (India) Ltd. which has received valuable concessions. This is dumping foreign *industries* instead of foreign *goods* on us!

3. Then there are companies with Indian Directorate with British Managing Agents who direct the Directorate. Would you call a company with a large percentage of Indian capital and a large number of Indian Directors on the Board, but with a non-Indian Managing Director or non-Indian firm as Managing Agents, a Swadeshi concern?

Gandhiji dealt with these points fairly exhaustively in his reply which may be summarised below in his own words:

"1. On this point I am glad you have reminded me of my article written in 1931. I still hold the same views, and have no doubt that a Free India will have the right to discriminate—if that word must be used—against foreign interests, wherever Indian interests need it.

"2. As regards the definition of a Swadeshi company, I would say that only those concerns can be regarded as Swadeshi whose control, direction and Management either by a Managing Director or by Managing Agents are in Indian hands. I should have no objection to the use of foreign capital, or to the employment of foreign talent, when such are not available in India, or when we need them,—but only on condition that such capital and such talents are exclusively under the control, direction and management of Indians and are used in the interests of India.

"But the use of foreign capital or talent is one thing, and the dumping of foreign industrial concerns is totally another thing. The concerns you have named cannot in the remotest sense of the term be called Swadeshi. Rather than countenance these ventures, I would prefer the development of the industries in question to be delayed by a few years in order to permit national capital and enterprise to

grow up and build such industries in future under the actual control, direction and management of Indians themselves.

" 3. Answer to this is contained in my answer on the second point."

26-3-1938

## IX

### MASS PRODUCTION VERSUS 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."

"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 crises. Granting for the moment that the 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 decentralisation 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."

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 unorganised 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 organisation?"

"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 localised, 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 millions 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."

"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 equalised, would not mass production be sterilised of its evils?"

"No," replied Gandhiji, "the evil is inherent in the system. Distribution can be equalised when production is localised; 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 organisation 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 industrialised nations, or without falling into the pit of unequal distribution. "In other words," replied Gandhiji, "you want me to express opinion on 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."

"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 a 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 organised 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 today with these three million unemployed?' They cannot shift from factory to field in a day. It is a tremendous problem."

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.

## X

### MACHINERY AND UNEMPLOYMENT

(By V. L. Mehta)

The gravest problem that faces the world today is the growth of unemployment among various classes of the community, compelling all Governments, with the solitary exception of the U. S. S. R., to embark upon programmes of unemployment relief. Although in India the State has not yet introduced any system of unemployment relief, the problem of unemployment is growing in complexity. In two provinces, committees appointed by the local Governments are at work to examine the prevalence of unemployment among the urban classes and to suggest measures for its relief. In rural areas, the spectre of unemployment has always been present, although it has usually been ignored; and, in addition, there is the problem of chronic underemployment. The Royal Commission on Agriculture in India which devoted some attention to this question observed that "by far the greater number of cultivators have at least two to four months' absolute leisure in the year." The steady growth of our population has only served to accentuate the gravity of the situation. Our population which was computed at 35 crores in 1931 is reported to have risen already to 37 crores, and Colonel Russel, from his report on the Public Health of India for the year 1933, has no doubt that by the time the next census is taken the population of India will considerably exceed 40 crores. The question of providing employment for this growing population and of feeding it becomes one of the major problems of national policy which must demand immediate attention.

Though the economic conditions of our country differ somewhat from those of other countries, we

can learn much from the experience gained elsewhere in dealing with this problem. There are not wanting economists in India who recommend intensive, nation-wide industrialization as the remedy for this social malady. They forget that industrialization instead of solving the problem of unemployment has, oftener than not, added to the number of the unemployed. In the issue for October, 1935 of the AMERICAN FEDERATIONIST, the organ of the American Federation of Labour, there is an article by Harry Calkins and Frank Finney on "Why 22 million are on relief", in which the writers examine the influence of the growth of machinery on the economic life of the nation. The United States of America have carried mechanization to the highest degree of perfection that the human mind can conceive at present. The productive capacity of the people of the U. S. A. equals that of 14 other leading countries of the world, and the per capita production is 25 times that of India. But has this great productive capacity given the U. S. A. prosperity? The writers answer this question very emphatically in the negative. In the attempt to cut the cost of labour by the use of labour-saving machines, the manufacturers of the U. S. A. have reduced the powers of the population to buy their goods. By the natural process of inventing more and more labour-saving machines the position has been reached that there is very little work for anybody to do. And this is borne out by figures; statistics show that in the U. S. A. 75 workers can produce as much today as 100 did in 1929. And with what result? There are 45 million employable men and women in the U. S. A., and 25 per cent of these are thrown out of work by the introduction of this process of mechanization. So that thanks to the new developments there are now out of work 11½ million people for whom programmes of relief have to be devised.

The application of numan ingenuity to the improvement of the machine might have given the U. S. A., the writers admit, some advantage in the world markets, when there were world markets to capture. There are no such expanding now to be conquered, and the U. S. A. has to forget foreign trade and first to get rid of its troubles at home. The cost of unemployment relief for all the various public authorities amounted to 17 million dollars last year, and this stupendous figure might increase still further unless some method other than the Government dole is found to cure this chronic unemployment. The solution that is propounded in the article is a novel one. The writers divide into two categories the so-called labour-saving machines. Some of these are labour-making machines such as the typewriter, the radio, the kodak, the soda fountain, the automobile or the aeroplane. But type-setting machines, air drills, electric motors, steam shovels, tractors, textile machinery, shoe machinery, business machines and all automatic mechanisms are deemed labour-destroying machines. If only a limited number of the latter type of machines were abolished, the writers claim, jobs could be found without difficulty for those who have been thrown out of employment by the growth of mechanization in all walks of life, business and industry. Not only should labour-killing machinery be abandoned, but the suggestion is made that no patents should be issued in future to manufacturers of such destroyers of labour. It may be argued that this will spell unemployment among those who produce the labour-saving machines. The number of persons engaged in the manufacture of these types of machines is, however, insignificant compared to the large numbers whom their use throws out of employment. Further, the writers urge that the abandonment of this type of machinery will have scarcely any appreciable effect

on the prices of commodities. The general experience is that the consumers benefit only very slightly by the lowering of the manufacturing costs which the machines bring about and the manufacturers appropriate most of the savings of machine production. And even if it were otherwise, the writers assert, whenever prices have been high people have had money with which to pay the high prices and business has boomed.

The conclusion to which the writers come is that scientific invention though a good tool is a bad master, and that it is the duty of the State and the community to secure that the inventive faculty is not misdirected. No labour-saving machines should be encouraged that are destroyers of labour, and instead a regular campaign should be inaugurated under the aegis of the State to create natural, as opposed to artificial, channels of employment. "There is plenty of work in our country," the writers remark, "for all and food for every hungry mouth and scope for the pursuit of happiness for all, if we would stop giving some of the work to labour-saving machines and give it instead to human beings. People should be induced to go back on farms and be taught how to raise all they need. And in addition, they should be made to learn the lost art of hand work in the industries where human beings working with their hands should take over machine work. That provides a more practical dependable way of living than our much-vaunted civilization has been able to give us." If in the United States of America that is the conclusion to which the growth of unemployment side by side with the growth of industrialization and mechanization has led social thinkers, India has yet time to cry halt before that twin process overwhelms her and adds to the miseries of her people. To meet the menace, a practical plan of action is needed, such as is being evolved by the All India Village Industries Association.

XI  
AGRICULTURAL INDEBTEDNESS  
AND  
SMALL INDUSTRIES

( *By V. L. Mehta* )

In various provinces legislation is either under consideration or has already been enacted to deal with the growth of agricultural indebtedness and to regulate the operations of moneylenders. Before according support to such legislation the Government of Madras wished that a detailed survey of the problem of indebtedness should be made and for this purpose they appointed in 1934 a Special Officer, Mr. W. R. S. Sathianathan, I. C. S., to undertake the inquiry. The results of this inquiry were published at the end of the year 1935\* and the Report throws a lurid light on the deterioration in the condition of the agricultural classes that has taken place in recent years. Its special interest for rural workers consists in the scheme for co-ordinated and planned action outlined by Mr. Sathianathan, his main thesis being that without such action legislation to control usury will scarcely be effective.

Those who dwell and work among agriculturists are well aware of the worsening plight of the rural population especially during the last five years. But to those who derive their knowledge of economic conditions from published reviews and statistics, the facts disclosed in Mr. Sathianathan's Report will appear indeed staggering. When a survey of agricultural indebtedness was first made by Sir Frederick

\* Report on Agricultural Indebtedness, by W. R. S. Sathianathan I. C. S. ( Superintendent, Government Press, 1935 ) Price: Annas 10.

Nicholson in 1895 his estimate of the total debt of the rural population was Rs. 45 crores. The next estimate was that of the Madras Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee which computed the aggregate volume of debt at Rs. 150 crores. That estimate was made early in 1930. But in the course of five years the volume of debt, according to Mr. Sathianathan, has grown to the figure of Rs. 200 crores. Not only has the volume of debt increased during this period, but owing to the economic depression which set in in 1930 the ability of the agricultural producer to bear the burden has been sadly curtailed. The gross value of the crops of the Madras Presidency, which was estimated at Rs. 165 crores by the Banking Committee, has, Mr. Sathianathan computes, now been reduced to Rs. 80 crores. For a total rural population of 3.4 crores, this gives an annual income of Rs. 23½ per head, but after deducting the cost of cultivation this is found to have dwindled to Rs. 11½ exclusive of interest on debt and assuming a normal agricultural season.

On the basis of these and other figures, Mr. Sathianathan calculates that the return from investments on agriculture as regards the staple food crops averages from 2 to 5 per cent in a normal year and with average prices. But the vicissitudes of seasons and the vagaries of prices upset these calculations which, incidentally, make no allowance for the payment of interest on debt, much less the repayment of such debt, although in poor seasons especially the ordinary small holder is compelled to borrow for all his wants including cultivation expenses, food and clothing. The rate of interest on the borrowings is 9 per cent at the lowest. But even at this rate borrowing becomes financially unsound and loans cannot be repaid without encroaching on capital. As a consequence the small holder loses possession of his lands, and the statistics quoted in Mr. Sathianathan's

Report bear out the general experience that with the transfer of land to those who have lent money, whether professional sowkars or agriculturists, absentee landlordism is steadily on the increase. This is a process which spells ill for the nation as a whole, apart from the transformation it brings about in the fortunes of the individual peasants who are turned into tenants and wage-earners. How is this process to be checked? It may be necessary to enact legislation to control usury on the lines indicated in the Karachi Congress resolution, and also to facilitate the settlement of debts by providing some machinery for conciliation. The next stage is the provision of facilities for cheap long-term credit through land mortgage banks for the payment of debts at the settled figures, and the supply of cheap credit thereafter for the current needs of the redeemed agriculturists. But all these measures combined do not strike at the root of the evil. The root evils are pressure of population on the land, the diminishing returns from agriculture and the disappearance of supplementary sources of income. To increase and stabilize the returns from agriculture, Mr. Sathianathan proposes various measures for the extension of the activities of the Agricultural Department of Government by concentration of effort on marketing centres in every taluka, the construction of ware-houses, and the improvement of marketing arrangements in such centres, the stabilization of prices by the erection of tariff barriers, and such other action as is within the competence of Government, and the increase of irrigation by means of wells and tanks. These are all measures that depend entirely on State initiative, but equally essential in Mr. Sathianathan's view are the measures that can be taken in hand by the people themselves. Quoting the authority of Dr. Gilbert Slater, Mr. Sathianathan observes that there is agricultural work for the cultivator only for



five-twelfths of his possible working time. Villagers ordinarily have much idle time on their hands, and while this leisure properly utilized may be turned to good account socially and economically in the conditions that obtain today, it merely breeds disharmony and strife in the village community. The spread of adult education is necessary. But along with it must come the development of such cottage industries as are not likely to be drowned by competition from the products of factories and organised industry. In this category Mr. Sathianathan includes spinning, weaving, carpentry, pottery, fruit growing, poultry-keeping, the rearing of sheep and goats, bee-keeping, sericulture, market-gardening and all the skilled and delicate handicrafts, which brought India fame and glory in the past. He quotes the examples of Japan where, though half the land is under rice, two million peasants earn a substantial income by the rearing of the silk-worm. Bee-keeping may not be suitable everywhere in India, but in all centres where development is feasible, Mr. Sathianathan suggests that the Government agricultural farms should be stocked with bee hives and swarms of bees, and also with centrifugal hand machines for extracting honey from the combs at the farms and for doing similar work on payment of a small fee for combs brought in by neighbouring agriculturists. Another interesting item in Mr. Sathianathan's plan of action is the preservation of cattle dung and night-soil as manure. Research may be undertaken in the preparation of composts from decaying vegetable matter, wood ashes and cow-dung, and at the same time he suggests determined education being taken in hand in the use of the valuable manurial products from wastage of night-soil. The improvement of the breed of cattle by the supply of stud bulls to each one of the marketing centres through which work is to be directed and the introduction of dairying on well

Report bear out the general experience that with the transfer of land to those who have lent money, whether professional sowkars or agriculturists, absentee landlordism is steadily on the increase. This is a process which spells ill for the nation as a whole, apart from the transformation it brings about in the fortunes of the individual peasants who are turned into tenants and wage-earners. How is this process to be checked? It may be necessary to enact legislation to control usury on the lines indicated in the Karachi Congress resolution, and also to facilitate the settlement of debts by providing some machinery for conciliation. The next stage is the provision of facilities for cheap long-term credit through land mortgage banks for the payment of debts at the settled figures, and the supply of cheap credit thereafter for the current needs of the redeemed agriculturists. But all these measures combined do not strike at the root of the evil. The root evils are pressure of population on the land, the diminishing returns from agriculture and the disappearance of supplementary sources of income. To increase and stabilize the returns from agriculture, Mr. Sathianathan proposes various measures for the extension of the activities of the Agricultural Department of Government by concentration of effort on marketing centres in every taluka, the construction of ware-houses, and the improvement of marketing arrangements in such centres, the stabilization of prices by the erection of tariff barriers, and such other action as is within the competence of Government, and the increase of irrigation by means of wells and tanks. These are all measures that depend entirely on State initiative, but equally essential in Mr. Sathianathan's view are the measures that can be taken in hand by the people themselves. Quoting the authority of Dr. Gilbert Slater, Mr. Sathianathan observes that there is agricultural work for the cultivator only for

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organized lines should also form a part of the programme of reconstruction. The revival of cottage industries allied to agriculture constitutes a means of reducing the pressure of population on the land and to ensure the success of these industries. Mr. Sathianathan wishes Government to provide technical training and monetary aid, and also to find outlets for the absorption of the products of handicraftsmen. At the same time cottage industries have to be protected, he adds, from the predatory activities of middlemen. The increase of production, it need hardly be emphasised, is helpful to the community if it secures an accretion to the income of the producers and is not utilized by capitalist entrepreneurs for their personal enrichment. That is a word of warning that may well be borne in mind by all interested in the development of rural industries.

15-2-1936

XII  
VILLAGE INDUSTRIES AND RURAL  
INDEBTEDNESS

(By *V. L. Mehta*)

The problem of rural indebtedness in India has baffled administrators and economists for well-nigh half a century, though from time to time solutions have been propounded, some of which have, later on, come to constitute an integral part of administrative policy. Notwithstanding all the thought and energy that have been devoted to the solution of the problem, the volume and incidence of debt go on rising, much to the detriment of the agricultural industry and of the men and women engaged in it. The failure of the ameliorative measures could have been foreseen had we subjected the malady to a closer examination and had we not been attracted by the facile task of applying palliatives. The attempts made so far have taken the shape of securing an improvement in the credit system and the banking machinery of the country. But, as the Bombay Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee pointed out in 1930, no such improvement was likely to be effective unless it was accompanied by measures for raising the standard of living and economic condition of the mass of the population and for building up its productive strength. The Indian Central Banking Inquiry Committee endorsed this view in their Report published in 1931 and observed that a potent factor which contributed to the extreme economic weakness of the Indian agriculturist was the inadequacy of subsidiary occupations to supplement the peasant's slender income from agriculture. Nearly half a

decade has gone by since these observations were made, but so slight has been the change for the better in the situation that the authorities of the newly constituted Reserve Bank of India are again compelled, in their very recent survey of the problem of rural credit, to invite public attention to this aspect of our agricultural economy. The reduction of debt by the constitution of conciliation boards, the restriction of credit, the regulation of rates of interest, all these measures, in the opinion of the Reserve Bank of India, need to be supplemented by arrangements for providing the peasant with suitable subsidiary occupations to enable him to add to his meagre income from agriculture. They further emphasize that the question of credit is intimately connected with an increase in the earning capacity and purchasing power of the farmer, and they recommend that Provincial Governments should explore the possibilities of finding for him and inducing him to follow suitable and profitable side pursuits.

Almost identical are the views expressed by the Committee on Co-operation in Mysore State in their recently issued Report. The relief that any scheme of credit can afford, the Committee admit, is bound to be inadequate. The final solution lies in the steady pursuit of a policy of rural economic improvement, one of the main planks in which should be, the Committee aver, the introduction of subsidiary occupations, which will add to the farmer's income from agriculture. There has been, the Committee remark, a considerable increase in the population living on land without any corresponding increase in production. To aggravate the distress, the cottage industries which used to provide the rayat and the members of his family with subsidiary occupations in the off-season have been wiped out by the competition of machine-made goods from outside. While the agriculturist has at his disposal enough time to

pursue one or the other of the small village and domestic industries, as no organized attempt is made "to find work for his spare time and spare hands", he goes on parting with cash for the purchase of his daily needs. The energies of the co-operative movement, the Committee therefore recommend, must be turned, in increasing measure, to organizing the people for village industries and to supplement their regular pursuits by side occupations. This has to be done, they add, through co-operative societies for various industries which will provide raw material, employ labour, advance wages, provide wholesale depots, and arrange for the sale of the finished products in towns and commercial centres. The Committee proceed to enumerate the industries in the State which may advantageously be worked and developed on co-operative lines, and they call upon the Departments of Co-operation and Industries to devote special attention to the development of these industries on a co-operative basis.

### XIII

#### IS IT ECONOMIC ANARCHISM?

(By J. C. Kumarappa)

Some critics contend that the result of the doctrine I have been propounding will be that manual labour will be the chief instrument of production, that the labourer himself will have to be the possessor of the instruments of production, and that without this no decentralisation can take place. They contend that such decentralisation can only be affected at the cost of abandoning the knowledge that science has given us, and that the conquest over the forces of nature which has been obtained at great sacrifice will have to be surrendered. They nevertheless grant that State Capitalism of Russia is not free from many of the evils of Private Capitalism of Britain or the U. S. A. Russia itself started off with the idea of banishing the evils of Capitalism, but retained centralised production as its chief feature, with the result that though profit motives have been socialised, yet admittedly many of the evils are left behind, i. e., in other words, Soviet Communism has failed to achieve what it had set forth to do. Once this is granted, the situation challenges us to produce a system which is neither State Capitalism nor Private Capitalism. In other words, we have to sterilise the economic organisation in such a way that the ailments which beset society under capitalistic organisation can be cured and prevented. Machine production is not such a boon that in order to retain it we should have to tolerate the evils of capitalism. Is the use of manual labour an evil? Is it not harder to bear enforced idleness and consequent starvation than to strain ourselves



with overwork? Organised power-driven machinery must bring on enforced idleness and starvation for millions. Our effort is directed towards the prevention of such a calamity.

One of the chief attributes of machine production is standardisation. Standardisation kills originality, and in doing so obstructs the progress of humanity. Each man putting forth his best effort to use his talents and energy not only develops his personality but helps to advance the community physically and intellectually. It is to be granted that the percentage of fine finish is likely to be greater in machine production than in decentralised production, but the chances of originality in machine production are nil. No work of art worthy of its name can be produced by organised machinery. Human beings are by nature so built that they do not respond to standardised methods. An Einstein or a Tagore or a Raman cannot be produced by standardised methods of education. We may be able to put on the market hundreds of graduates by centralised education, but what we gain in numbers by centralisation and standardisation we lose in quality. If the individual is to be liberated from economic slavery either to the machine or to the capitalist, there appears no other course open to us than to adopt decentralisation of production. Nevertheless there must always be some centralised production. In our own country in the past we have attended to public utilities in a collective way. Canals were built, tanks were dug, and roads were constructed by collective labour and by collective effort. Similarly, in the modern world, supply of pure water, power, transport, communications, such as telephone and telegraph, may be done collectively and by centralised methods. Therefore, the methods we advocate, while not surrendering the conquest over nature, yet attempt to deliver human beings

from the indignity of being mere machine tools. If we are to make the best of the talents and the energy at our disposal, we have to let every man strive to attain his very best. There can be no economic anarchism when each man puts forth his best effort to make his contribution to human progress. Machinery has been looming large in the horizon only in the last century or so; and we have become so fascinated by the quantity it produces that we have become stupefied and have lost sense of proportion and values. Was there economic anarchism before the advent of the machine? The more we get into a rut the less are we able to make our personal contribution to society. The effort of the All India Village Industries Association is to elicit what is best in each individual, and this cannot be done by 'slave-driving' or the 'speeding up process'.

It is needless to point out that where there is decentralisation of production, there cannot be a concentration of profits. If we do not have concentrated profits by methods of large scale production, the question of obtaining and controlling the market does not arise. Therefore, it cannot lead to group violence, and thus here we see a sound solution for violence. The only hope for disarmament amongst the nations perhaps lies in decentralisation of production. The joy of life does not consist in the multiplicity of things we possess, but it lies in the satisfaction which is derived from the utmost freedom for self-expression. At present, humanity is ailing under the crushing burden of machine production for profit. There is no room in it for self-expression. The A. I. V. I. A. is an attempt to provide an escape from the burden.

## XIV

### UNEMPLOYMENT

(*By J. C. Kumarappa*)

Only the press report of the proceedings of the 25th session of the Economic Conference is before us now. The problem of unemployment was taken up by several eminent scholars from all over India. Many learned discourses were given as to what unemployment means and how we can classify it and what are the contributing causes. A few suggestions were thrown out as to how the problem may be met.

I do not propose to deal with the theoretical part of it as without these fine definitions and descriptions most people know what unemployment is to their own sorrow.

Some of the suggestions are very illuminating and worth considering, if for nothing else than to show what arm-chair knowledge can lead to.

Here are some: 1. The age of retirement from Government service should be lowered from 55 to 50. 2. Compulsory primary education should be introduced to absorb unemployed matriculates. 3. Government public works should be started. 4. Bounties to private concerns may be given. 5. Working hours may be reduced. 6. Workers should start relief funds. 7. Services and industries should be Indianised; and many other suggestions which do not lead to production of wealth but deal only with the symptoms of the disease. There were one or two hackneyed suggestions like industrialising India. All of them go to show how much within the covers of the text-book all the discussion was. Even the suggestions put forward by Dr. Gyanchand, the President-elect of the next Conference, that the

standard of living, should be raised, shows to what extent Western text-books circumscribe our thoughts and how far we are removed from the realities of the situation. The only original and refreshing idea came from Dr. Anthony Nadar. He suggests 'taking up of an intense aerial programme as a practical solution of the problem of unemployment'. His ten year plan is a fourfold programme of military, commercial, university and civil aviation. His scheme for financing this programme is the keystone of the structure. He would float a national loan with recurring grants met by means of a defence tax realised as surcharge on incomes and savings resulting from economy schemes in various departments. The discussions were as ethereal as Dr. Nadar's scheme was aerial.

The relief schemes dealing with the symptoms need no comment from us. Medicine may have its own use but it cannot take the place of wholesome, normal food. A nation cannot exist on doles and public works. The place for such schemes is where the malady is local and transient as in the case of rain failures and famines. The problem facing India is not one such but a nation-wide phenomenon which promises to become a normal feature. Therefore any scheme calculated to meet the problem before us has to take into consideration the causes leading to the present situation as well as the local possibilities. It should have its roots deep down in the permanent national life of the people.

Raising the standard of life is almost a slogan in capitalistic Western countries. There it is like the carrot tied before the donkey. The animal tries to reach the ever-receding root and the capitalist's cart goes the faster. By increasing the labourer's standard of living the labourer's bargaining power is reduced. Because he has become accustomed to many wants he finds it difficult to shirk work or to go on strike. Thus he is tied down fast to his job

and so the capitalist benefits, by a more permanent labour force.

Besides, in other words, increasing the standard of life means extension of the market for consumable goods. A market does not mean any locality but it is made up of individuals with wants. You can increase such a market extensively with additional individuals with the same amount of wants, or intensively with the same number of individuals with additional wants. When we capture China or Abyssinia we are aiming at an extensive market; when we raise the standard of living we get an intensive market. These two methods are avowedly in the interests of the capitalist and not necessarily helpful to the employee.

Where consumption goods are manufactured locally—as in the case of U. S. of America with its enormous internal market—when the increase in demand will call for an increased local production, it may help the unemployed by bringing work within their reach, but only under certain definite conditions. If the standard of living of the employees of Henry Ford be increased so that every employee feels a car a necessity, then the demand for his cars will enable Ford to employ more. The circulation must be within a known area from within which the employees draw their purchasing power and their supplies also come. If the purchasing power comes from one locality and the increased standard of living calls for the goods from another place, then the effect will be to transfer more employment to the supplying area and deplete the purchasing power of the demanding area.

Let us now see which of these three apply to our country. As we are not in favour of capitalism, the first objective of forming a less fluctuating labour class does not interest us. Neither does the second objective of creating an intensive market.

This leaves only the third to be considered. The poverty of our people is such that few are able to meet the very necessities of life. Increasing the standard of life means, in simple words, increasing their wants. When a person is hungry, to increase his wants is to intensify his pangs of hunger. When he has no purchasing power, how will he obtain the wherewithal to satisfy his needs? From this it is clear that increasing the standard of living is a device that can only apply to comforts and luxuries. A casual glance at any bazar will tell you that most of such articles in our country are imported. Therefore increasing demand for such articles will only result in more employment in the countries from which they are imported, until such time when our own people are in a position to cater to the increased demand. At present our country is one that exports raw materials and imports finished goods. Such a country cannot solve its unemployment problem by the device of increasing the standard of living of its people. Any attempt to do so can only result in greater transfer of purchasing power to foreign countries and in increased misery and unemployment in our own country.

A few months back I was passing through a village in Travancore where beautiful screwpine mats were being made. I stopped to see the industry. The leader of the craftsmen bitterly complained about the decline in the trade. Where some years ago there were dozens of families living on this thriving industry, there were now hardly 4 or 5 families eking out a precarious existence. After I had seen the huts where the work was still going on, this leader of mat weavers invited me to take the midday meal with him. There were two friends with me. We agreed and accordingly repaired to the house of our host. On the way he was imploring me to find out the reason for the fall in the trade

and help to rebuild it. When we arrived at the house I found the two friends had screwpine asans placed for them and I was shown to the central place. Immediately I remarked to the host, "I have found the reason for the decline in the trade." Our host brightened up and asked what it was. I said, "You yourself;" and, pointing to the Japanese mat with a big tiger printed on it on which I was standing, continued, "Intending to honour me more, you have given me this foreign mat while you have given your own screwpine mats to my companions. If you yourself value the Japanese mat more than your own, how can you blame others who do so? If people buy Japanese mats by preference, it causes unemployment in this trade and in this village." Similarly every one of us who has a pice to spend can so spend it as either to cause unemployment or more employment according as to what goods we patronise. No pious hopes nor highly paid commissions nor the might of the British Empire can create employment. Nobody can help us. We have to help ourselves. Each one who buys directs industry in the channel in which he wants industry to develop. Let us—each one of us—realise our responsibility and direct our consumption in the right lines. If we are unemployed, it is because we have given all available employment to foreigners. Every foreign article we buy creates unemployment here. After having brought about this situation it does not lie in us to pray to outsiders to devise ways and means of finding employment. The key is in our own hands.

Having found the cause of unemployment in our country and knowing that the remedy lies in using locally made articles, we have to go further and see which method of producing goods provides the best solution. There are two main methods—centralised and decentralised. Centralised method has in its very

nature concentration — either of wealth or of power. But a proper system should by its very working distribute wealth equitably. Under centralised methods even though we may produce more standardized articles yet distribution has to be made artificially. Under decentralised methods the very act of producing itself distributes wealth and functions automatically.

When people advocate centralised methods — industrialisation — they forget the repeated experience of other nations. There is no industrialised nation of any standing which has not succumbed to unemployment. Russia is yet too recent an experiment to provide an argument. Within a century U. S. of America is feeling the pressure, and half a century of it has made it necessary for Japan to control China. When we declare our sympathy for China let us not forget the fall of Japan consequent on its industrialisation. May this tragedy be a warning beacon. Time was when all Orientals looked to Japan with pride believing that industrialisation was advancing that country. But where has it led to? Do we want India to follow in her footsteps? The very basic idea of centralised production is to minimise work of men. How can it solve unemployment when it is the creator of it? Centralisation makes of men slaves to the machine. What we want is that machines should be slaves — tools and instruments — in the control of men. That can only be under decentralisation. Centralisation of Lancashire industry has brought about unemployment in India and has created a few millionaires in England. It has also brought about the political downfall of our country. We are at the present moment standing round the death-bed of many a small handicraft. If we allow these to die, our nation will die with them. If we resuscitate them, we shall bring employment, prosperity and happiness to millions.



This is not a programme in which only big people, millionaires, and Mahatma Gandhis can help, but as we have already stated every person with a pice in his hand to spend can more effectively help them than all the Government machinery and influential people can do. This seems to me to be the only solution on a practical basis.

Some agree that as we are situated this will work, but they have their doubts as to the future. Let the future take care of itself. Everyone who feels that during even the transitional period this will work should give the idea full support purely on economic grounds.

It is not necessary here to go into the ethical and moral reasons on which the solution of unemployment by using village and cottage industries products is based. We may merely mention that any other solution while working injustice on the masses will also entail use of violence at some stage or another.

The master key to unemployment lies in the hands of women who naturally control the household. They are the greatest consumers. By discriminate buying they can help the nation. The present deplorable condition of our nation—both economically and politically—is in no small measure due to the utter darkness of ignorance in which our womenfolk remain. Only an enlightened womanhood can create a self-respecting independent nation. The great responsibility of directing economic activity of the nation cannot be shouldered by having the better half of the nation steeped in ignorance. An inefficient hand at the cradle cannot rule the world but has spelt domination to our country.

Therefore we come to the conclusion that the unemployment problem can only be solved when we realise that we create unemployment by using imported articles and Indian goods of centralised production. The solution lies not in doles and public works,

but by a widespread attempt to produce all we need by decentralised methods and by the consumers restricting themselves to products of such industries only as far as possible.

19-2-1938

## A STRONG CASE FOR SMALL-SCALE INDUSTRIES

(By Chandrashanker Shukla)

### I

*Economic Conditions in Maharashtra and Karnatak* by Sjt. Y. S. Pandit, M. A., is a recent addition to the growing volume of literature on Indian economics written by Indians from the national standpoint. It is a monograph of over two hundred pages, written for a prize of Rs. 1,000 awarded by the Lokamanya Tilak Memorial Trust, and is published on behalf of the Trust by the Tilak Swarajya Sangh, Poona, Maharashtra, for the purpose of this monograph, has been taken to include Berar and the Marathi-speaking districts of the Central Provinces. The author has very rightly devoted the major part of his book to a rapid survey of the economic conditions of the rural population and the peasantry which form the bulk of the Indian nation, for it is but a truism to say that India lives in her villages.<sup>1</sup> The problems of Rural India are many and varied, but poverty is the biggest and the worst of them, and is at the source of many of the evils prevalent in the Indian villages. The author, in common with almost all Indian economists, ascribes this poverty to "the influx of cheap foreign articles which flooded the province, and the destruction of Indian handicrafts", and "the destruction of the self-sufficient village

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1. "Even reckoning places with 5,000 or more inhabitants, which are really overgrown villages, as towns, only 9.4 per cent of the population in 1911 and 10.2 per cent in 1921 were town-dwellers."  
— P. P. Pillai: *India Analysed* Vol. II, p. 76.

economy that prevailed in the province." This indeed was the beginning of our economic troubles. Millions were suddenly deprived of employment, and were reduced to a life of 'poverty, hunger and dirt'. "This was," says the author, "the main factor which gave a predominantly agricultural bias to the economic life of this province which, after the destruction of our handicrafts, developed into a serious problem. Those who were ousted from their industrial occupations also joined in the scramble for land, until agriculture became the mainstay of 70 per cent of our population."<sup>3</sup> The process thus begun over a century ago has not stopped; it still continues, and every decade witnesses an increase in the number dependent on agriculture and a corresponding decrease in the number dependent on 'Industry'.<sup>3</sup>

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2. "If the persons thrown out of work by foreign competition could have been absorbed in new industries, it would have been easier to make the readjustment needed to meet the new conditions..... The artisan had, therefore, to fall back on the land, and thus add to the disproportion between agriculture and industry in the country."— P. P. Pillai: *India Analysed* Vol. II, p. 71.

3. "Agriculture supported 65.2 per cent of the total population of India in 1901, 69.8 per cent in 1911, and 70.9 per cent in 1921. During the same period, 1901-21, the population dependent on 'Industry' decreased from 15.5 per cent to 10.7 per cent; or agriculture gained at the expense of 'Industry'.....In view of the general rate of growth of numbers in 1921-31 it may be concluded that the numbers supported by agriculture today are greater than ever before."— Brij Narain: *India Analysed* Vol. II, p. 15-6.

"Out of every 100 of her population, India gives 72.98 to agriculture and pasture, and 10.49 to industry."— P. P. Pillai: *ibid*, p. 56.

"This overcrowding of agriculture," says the author, "which has continued to the present day has been detrimental to those engaged in it as well as to the whole economy of the province." Agriculture has since long ceased to be a paying occupation. "In fact," says the author, "if we examine the profit and loss accounts of cultivation, that are available to us, we find that in many cases not only cultivation of fields is not profitable, but it is definitely a losing proposition. The inference that it must be profitable because the cultivator has not given it up is absolutely unwarranted. He sticks to it only as an alternative to starvation." His growing indebtedness is itself an eloquent testimony of this fact.

Nor has the replacement of food crops by money crops brought any relief to the agriculturist. It has, if anything, made him more "dependent on the vagaries of demand in external markets" and an easier victim to the fluctuations in prices in far-off markets of which he has no knowledge. The author sums up by saying: "Fifty years of high prices have increased neither the standard of living nor that of farming, and the present fall in prices of agricultural produce has spelt distress to the cultivators of Maharashtra and Karnatak. The cultivators of commercial crops have suffered most." After consideration of various improvements in business methods, etc., he concludes that "the main problem of our agriculture, viz. its overcrowding, will still remain, and the only effective solution of it will lie in the establishment of industries."

He then passes on to another grave problem facing the agriculturist, viz. how to make use of the "period of idleness during which the cultivator has no agricultural operations to perform." "We can safely conclude," he observes, "that on an average our agriculturist remains without any work for about six months of the year. And this is so, when he is

in possession of a holding of average size. However, since about 40% of the total holdings in Maharashtra and Karnatak are below the average size, our conclusion acquires greater significance." "How to avoid this annual waste of labour," he goes on to say, "has therefore become one of the major problems of agriculture in Maharashtra and Karnatak,"—in common, we may add, with the whole of India. "This period of idleness is not continuous but occurs at intervals. In the absence of a suitable occupation, the cultivator generally spends these intervals of enforced idleness in useless pursuits which are highly demoralizing in their effects."

Describing the "similar situation that exists in the districts of the Wainganga valley (i. e. the Marathi-speaking districts of C. P.), in spite of its better conditions of rainfall and better facilities of irrigation," he says:

"During the intervals of leisure the cultivator of this zone, either makes himself happy in the company of his tobacco-pipe or runs to factories like Tata Iron Works, only to sacrifice his life for a meagre wage. When he returns home, he is full of diseases, which in course of time capture village after village in the vicinity in the form of epidemics, and destroy the health of the rural society. However, the number of such farmers running to factories for employment during the off-season is very small, because the off-season is constituted of intervals of leisure spread over the whole year and as such cannot be utilized for securing employment in a factory."

"This problem of the off-season," he remarks, "has been in existence in Maharashtra and Karnatak ever since our ancestors began to plough the field, dry farming being the nature of our agriculture. But the ancient village economy, as long as it predominated in our economic life,

had an easy solution for it. Under its regime, the agriculturist could utilize his off-season for manufacturing a number of articles required for local consumption. But with the disappearance of village economy and the conquest of rural markets by cheap imported goods, the agriculturist lost his time-honoured subsidiary occupations, and no attempt has yet been made to find out new ones to take their place."

And he quotes the Indian Census Report for 1921 ( Vol. I Chap. XII p. 271 ) in his support :

"These periods of inactivity are, in the majority of cases, spent in idleness. Where the cultivator pursues some craft which will employ himself and his family at times when they are not required in the fields—a craft in which continuity of employment is not essential—the proceeds of that craft are a saving from waste and therefore a clear gain."

It is hardly necessary to add that the author's conclusions on this subject are more or less universally accepted and there is hardly any dispute about them.

## II

The need for creating or reviving industries for reducing the appalling unemployment of the masses and relieving the increasing pressure on land has been established beyond doubt or dispute. It is now to be seen what contribution large-scale industries have made so far to the solution of this problem and what contribution they are capable of making in the future. "The large-scale industries of Maharashtra and Karnatak," says Sjt. Pandit, the author of the monograph under review, "include among others the cotton industry, the hydro-electric works, the sugar industry, the engineering industry, the glass industry, the tanning industry, the shellac industry, the mining industry, the ginning and pressing factories, the gud

industry, the oil presses and the paper mills." According to a table he has given there are 1,206 factories—large and small—in these provinces which, put together, give employment to 120,953 persons. The total population of these provinces, according to the latest census, is 20,844,000. The number of persons employed in large-scale industries is, therefore, a little over a half per cent (.57 per cent) of the total population; or taking the working population to be one half of the total population, as the author has done, a little over one per cent of the working population. This is the progress made by these industries after half a century, the first cotton mills in these provinces having been started in 1887.<sup>1</sup>

One sad feature about the development of these industries cannot be overlooked in a consideration of their contribution towards the relief of unemployment. Instead of applying themselves to regaining the ground lost by Indian handicrafts to foreign machine-made products, these new Indian factories encroached upon the handicrafts that had survived the onslaught of foreign goods, and thus intensified the unemployment among the rural masses. They deprived much larger numbers of their employment than they absorbed in their new ventures. With reference to Gujarat, for instance, there is contemporary evidence to show that the new cotton textile mills started in Ahmedabad in the last quarter of the 19th century crushed out of existence all the remnants of the spinning and weaving industry that once flourished in that province and was the mainstay of thousands of persons in the cotton-growing areas. With reference to Maharashtra and Karnatak, Sjt. Pandit also adverts to the "unfortunate feature of the textile mills of these provinces" "that they have been weaving

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1. At another place the author has given this date as 1876, but I have taken the later date.



inferior counts to a great extent and thus have encroached upon a field which should rightfully belong to the handloom industry." This criticism applies with much greater force to the rice, oil and sugar mills, and ginning and pressing factories.

These large-scale industries cannot in the nature of things serve as occupations subsidiary to agriculture. "This subsidiary occupation," says Sjt. Pandit, "must be such as will neither require his (the peasant's) continuous attention for more than a fortnight at a stretch nor compel him to leave his village." And he concludes by saying that "this problem of supplying subsidiary industries suitable to the agriculturist will have to be tackled, even if industrialization removes the most glaring defect of our agriculture, viz. its overcrowding, and makes all the holdings capable of economic cultivation."

"A minor point," he goes on to say, "which strikes the observer in our present industrial system is the concentration of industries in certain parts of the province and their total absence in others. As for instance, the Bombay Deccan claims almost all the organized large-scale industries of the province, while Konkan and Karnatak have not a single large-scale factory to boast of. But this is the inherent defect of large-scale industries against which we must guard ourselves in future and redress the balance by an equitable distribution of small-scale factories," "In the future development of our industries," he sums up, "the most beneficial policy for us to follow will be to encourage the development of industries on small scale as far as possible, where it is compatible with economic production."

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It will not be out of place here to see how industrial conditions in these provinces are in consonance with those obtaining in the rest of India. Dr. P. P. Pillai (Director, International Labour Office,

New Delhi) has, in his essay on 'The Manufacturer' in the second volume of *India Analysed*, quoted revealing figures bearing on the subject under discussion. "The total number of registered factories in British India in 1931," he says, "was only 9,206, out of which the number actually working was only 8,143; and the average number of operatives employed was 1,431,487. It is difficult to assure ourselves that a country has been industrialised when only 1.4 millions out of a total population of 350 millions are employed in organised industrial pursuits. It is true that organised industry has succeeded in winning for itself a definite place in the Indian economic system, but how small that place is, is clear from the figures cited above."<sup>2</sup> That out of the 10.49 per cent of the total population dependent on 'industry' .4 per cent is engaged in large-scale enterprises, and the remaining 10 per cent even at the present stage depend on small scale handicrafts, can be manifestly seen from these figures. This in itself is an answer to those who opine that "the possibilities of improving the condition of the rural population by the establishment of rural industries are extremely limited." "The small place," says Dr. Pillai, "that large-scale production still occupies in the Indian economic system is borne out by the fewness of Indian towns and the small proportion of the urban population. Dr. Clapham has stated that "the best general test of the industrialization of a nation's life under modern conditions is the rate and character of the growth of its towns.....Today, though India has many ancient and historic cities, the town-dwellers form only a tiny fraction of her enormous population."<sup>3</sup>

And here is what he says as to the future of handicrafts in our country :

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2. *India Analysed* Vol. II p. 85.

3. *Ibid* p. 75-6.

"Partly on account of these efforts at improvement, and partly owing to the interest which India is evincing in all rural welfare schemes, cottage industries certainly received a great stimulus during the last twenty years; and, in this connection, a reference must be made to the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Whatever may be his views about industrialization and large-scale production on Western lines, his insistence on the Charkha, the symbol of Indian cottage industries, has been responsible not only for the revival of hand-spinning, which had almost become moribund, but also for the resuscitation and strengthening of a great many other village handicrafts. Coupled with the compelling appeal of this message, is the new-born spirit which animates economic Swadeshism, and its organisational manifestation like the Buy Indian League. In the result, the products of the Indian handicraftsmen have once more become fashionable, the demand for them is steadily on the increase, and it may confidently be hoped that Indian public opinion, now that it has realized the economic significance of handicrafts as providing work for multitudes during periods of enforced idleness, will not willingly let them die."<sup>4</sup>

This is important, coming as it does from one who is not opposed to the advance of organized industries.<sup>5</sup>

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4. *Ibid* p. 74-5.

5. A support for the view propounded here has come from rather unexpected quarters. Here is what an English-owned newspaper in India, that is by no means inimical to the large-scale industrial interests, has said very recently in the course of an editorial note:

## III

There are certain other factors which will surely place still further limitations on the capacity of large-scale industries to absorb larger numbers of men, if they will not definitely displace labour and add to the present unemployment in the country. To take only one of these—and that not an unimportant one—viz. rationalization, which is bound to be introduced in India—if it has not been already—sooner than later. “To the forces which have been in existence previously,” says G. D. H. Cole, the well-known English economist, “is now added the great force of rationalization in bringing about a progressive displacement of labour, particularly at times of the most rapid technical advance.....For, as we have seen, modern technical progress is not content with the application of machinery so as to make labour more productive. It is tending also more and more to the direct supersession of human productive power by the machine.”<sup>6</sup> “To replace and amplify man’s physical strength, to replace and improve upon man’s manual skill—these are not enough. The end of industrialism is to make the worker a merely

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“At present, small industries are particularly suited to India on account of the preponderantly agricultural economy and the comparative failure of large-scale industries to solve the problem of poverty to the extent once expected of them. In some cases large-scale industries require not further development but rather control and rationalization, whereas small industries should be extended all over the country. Handicrafts still give employment to the largest numbers next to agriculture. The Indian artisan’s skill is well known, and even now many fields are his exclusive preserve.” — *Times of India*, Dec. 21, 1936.

6. *World Chaos* p. 349.

incidental and rarer and rarer attendant upon the machine. In the latest development of industrialism the emphasis has been more and more upon this absolute displacement of labour."<sup>7</sup>

In another place in the same book Cole has dealt at some length with what he calls "the burden of labour", where he says:

"But the machine can also have the effect of intensifying the labour, setting by the ever increasing speed of its revolutions a hotter and hotter pace for its human attendant. Nor can there be any doubt that this speeding up by means of the machine has been a very marked movement for rationalization in recent years..... 'High wages' have had to be paid in order to get men to submit to working at this pace; but wages which are high if measured in terms of hours may not be high at all in terms of the intensity of effort demanded of the worker. Moreover, for the most part only the younger workers can stand the strain of the new industrialism. 'Too old at forty' becomes a common cry of the factory employment manager; and the heavier incidence of unemployment on the older workers of those countries in which rationalization has proceeded to considerable lengths is amply illustrated in the unemployment statistics of Germany and Great Britain."<sup>8</sup>

He thus describes the effects of rationalization in a nut-shell:

"This process, unlike the other, ought to be sheer gain; for it ought to give men the choice between higher real incomes and more voluntary leisure. But actually it enforces idleness — which is a very different thing from leisure — upon some; and in many cases, though not in all, makes work harder and more intensive for those who

7. *Ibid* p. 145. 8. *Ibid* p. 24-5.

remain in employment. It does not necessarily cause any expansion in the total volume of production — for that depends on the expansion of the market — and the initial effect of rationalization is to decrease employment without proportionately raising wages, or reducing prices, and so to react on the volume of demand.”<sup>9</sup>

There is much food for thought in this for those who pin their faith on rapid industrialization of the country. Under the present circumstances industrialization, if it will not be definitely retarded, is bound to be slow. And even in countries which are highly industrialized, handicrafts exist side by side with large-scale industries. “This phenomenon,” says Sjt. Pandit, “has been discovered in almost all the industrial countries of the world and is considered quite natural.” France and Germany are two outstanding examples of this. In India, too, handicrafts will thus be necessary even after industrialization, supposing that it will take place at some future date. The urgency, on the other hand, of fighting poverty and unemployment cannot be overemphasized. “On the whole, therefore,” says Sjt. Pandit, on the strength of figures of the net annual per capita income of the provinces he deals with, culled from the Census Report of 1921, “we can conclude that approximately 50 per cent of the population in Maharashtra and Karnatak has hardly a bare minimum of existence. 50 per cent of our population is living on a margin of subsistence.” Shall we, then, act in the present and apply our energies to the revival and revivification of handicrafts, or shall we dream of removing unemployment by industrialization under a future economic order which is today beyond our ken — that is the question we are asked to answer.

2, 9. 16-1-1937

9. *Ibid* p. 177.

## XVI

### THE LATEST IN THE FIELD — THE PNEUMATIC TYRE

(By Chandrashanker Shukla)

It will be remembered that a short description was given in these columns some time back of the movement for the revival of village industries going on in England for now over a decade. I had asked the Director of the Rural Industries Bureau of London about his views on certain questions. I take the liberty of quoting from his letter the following about the use of pneumatic tyres for carts:

"I agree that the use of pneumatic tyred carts must very rapidly eliminate the wheelwright, certainly in his traditional capacity, but the obvious advantages of the pneumatic tyre are such that this change appears to be inevitable. During the period of the change, however, the wheelwrights have found employment increased rather than decreased, but mainly because of the necessity for adapting existing vehicles to the lower level occasioned by the smaller wheel. Personally I very much regret the passing of any traditional form of craftsmanship, but I cannot suggest that it would be wise to resist this change. Whether the same arguments apply in your country or not I do not know. In this country, however, the village blacksmith is only affected to a minor extent, and it is anticipated that the new wheels may in fact create more work for him."

As we hear similar views being expressed in this country, it will be well to examine them here. For one thing, conditions in Britain differ radically from those in India. Britain is one of the most, if not the

most, mechanized countries in the world. "Distinctively capitalist relations of production have become overwhelmingly predominant." "Work for wages has now become the typical way of life of the greatest single mass of the population." According to the census of 1931, "of a total British working population of 21,326,000, 18,872,000, or 88.4 per cent, were in that year wage-workers, and 1,273,000, or 6.0 per cent, were 'workers on their own account'. That is to say they were workers owning their own means of production. This figure of 6.0 per cent gives us a good indication of the extent to which the earlier economic system of small commodity production survives in Britain. The remaining 1,180,000, or 5.5 per cent of the working population, are owners of the means of production employing wage-workers."<sup>1</sup> Small scale producers in Britain do "hold their own in a number of branches of production," but "they have little initiative or influence upon industrial or commercial policy. The utmost they can do is to make a living for themselves in this or that nook or cranny of the business world which large-scale Capitalism has passed by."<sup>2</sup> "Large-scale industry is now supreme, and has crushed small commodity production in every considerable branch of industry," though "many small independent producers still exist (although precariously) in the interstices of the great industries." In India, on the other hand, the system of 'small commodity production' still predominates. Out of the 10.49 per cent (i. e. over 3½ crores) dependent on industry only .4 per cent is engaged in large-scale enterprises, and the remaining 10 per cent still depend on handicrafts. The problem of the handicraftsmen therefore assumes much larger proportions than it does in Britain. And if one of

1. John Strachey: *What Are We To Do?* p. 15.

2. G. D. H. Cole: *World Chaos* p. 574.



these small industries were to stop or to change its complexion, the numbers adversely affected by the change would be much larger than they would be in Britain.

Pneumatic tyres, which their advocates are so enthusiastic in recommending for use for bullock carts, are, even when they are manufactured in India, NOT SWADESHI in the sense that the "control, direction and management either by a Managing Director or by Managing Agents" of the concerns manufacturing these tyres are NOT "in Indian hands". This in itself should be the paramount consideration for ruling out the use of these tyres for village carts. It might be yet another instance of foreign interests being fattened at the cost of the Indian masses.

Leaving, however, this consideration apart for the time being, let us turn to the general consideration urged in the foregoing letter, viz. that "it is anticipated that the new wheels may in fact create more work for the village blacksmith." It is admitted that the increased work may last only "during the period of change". It is indeed true that "the rise of some new, large-scale industry will often itself open up a new sphere for small commodity producers." It is also true that "the rapid evolution of industrial technique combined with the rise in the standard of living during the past twenty years has caused the multiplication of new trades catering for developing forms of demand, and such trades are the happy hunting-ground of the small independent producer." But this lasts 'ONLY FOR A TIME'. For, "as these trades become more standardized and reach the stage at which mass methods can be more readily applied to them, the small man's position is bound to be increasingly challenged by large concerns in both producing and selling operations; and the small-scale producer or trader, if he wishes to hold his own, still has to be constantly seeking fresh fields for his

activity." <sup>3</sup> The garage industry, i. e. the motor-car repairing, selling and maintenance industry, is cited as an instance of a 'derivative industry' created by the motor-car producing industry in Britain and America. "The rise of a vast network of garages all over Britain and America is a striking example of how large-scale, fully developed capitalism, in the very act of crushing small commodity production in one sphere, recreates it, and the class of independent, small commodity producers that go with it, in another."<sup>4</sup> "The garage proprietor, basing his prosperity on the enormous increase in the use of automobiles in recent years, is the outstanding example of this type of success." But the success has been short-lived. Even in their seeming prosperity these small garage proprietors had "to finance their businesses with borrowed money," and were "in the hands of the large motor firms as whose dealers and agents they act."<sup>5</sup>

That, however, is not the end of the story. "Today the counter-process of the invasion of these outlying spheres of production themselves by large-scale industry, and the gradual expulsion of the small, independent owner-producers from them, has begun." And the following description shows how the garage proprietor is being persistently ousted and will have ultimately to go to the wall:

"The example of the garage industry is again relevant. Comparatively large, capitalistically organized garages owned by small joint-stock companies, the shareholders of which have no part whatever in the work of the garages, are becoming more and more numerous. More significant still, chains of garages (viz., The LEX

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3. *Ibid* p. 575.

4. John Strachey: *Op. Cit.* p. 20.

5. G. D. H. Cole: *Op. Cit.* p. 575.

Garages in Britain) have appeared. These chains of garages are owned by quite large companies in which serious amounts of capital are invested; they employ thousands of wage-workers, whose status is exactly the same as that of any other wage-workers. The result of the contest between these large capitalist garages and the small owner-worker garages is not in doubt. These latter will be, and are being, pushed out of the really profitable field, out of the big towns, off the trunk roads, into the villages and onto the by-roads. For the owner-workers cannot be in a position to resist, in the long run, the competition of the big capitalistically organized concerns."<sup>6</sup>

In the race 'the small man' is everywhere being routed:

"Thus when the big, heavily capitalised concerns begin to appear in some new field, the small commodity producers are in no position to put up more than a lingering rearguard action. The process is everywhere the same. The traditional fields of 'the small man', the one-man business and the worker-owner, such as house repairing, for example, have been, and are being, remorselessly invaded by large scale, distinctively capitalist concerns, such as the large, well-organized builders and contractors."<sup>7</sup>

It will be small comfort for our village carpenters and blacksmiths to be told that the introduction of pneumatic tyres will deprive them of their traditional vocation, only to create for them another, albeit temporary. What is to happen at the inevitable end of that temporary employment? Is there any other outlet left for them? Or are they to starve?

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6. John Strachey: *Op. Cit.* p. 21-2.

7. *Ibid* p. 22.

Let us now turn to this consideration. An English author has shown that with the progress of the Industrial Revolution in England large numbers of workers left for the newly discovered continent America, to seize "the opportunity of becoming an independent small commodity producer, enjoying the fruits of his own labour." They wanted to escape from the exploitation inherent in the 'dependent employment' of the new steam factories. Imperialist conquests had opened up new territories which absorbed the surplus labour from England. "And a constant flow of emigration from Britain, which in the immediately pre-war years averaged no less than a quarter of a million persons a year, provided the same outlet for British capitalism as the undeveloped West provided for American capitalism." But these opportunities of escape have now been exhausted and unemployment figures keep mounting up. Millions have to be fed on unemployment doles distributed by the State.

Is the opportunity of escape, which was till recently open to the British worker, at all open to the Indian artisan whom the pneumatic tyre bids fair to deprive of his employment? For him there is no such opening. India has no Colonies abroad. The Colonies dominated by the Whites refuse admission or fair treatment to Indians. The prospects in that matter seem as gloomy as they could be.

"At one time it was thought that East Africa might receive a large Indian population, but that expectation is never likely to be fulfilled. The nearer regions, such as Assam, Burma, Malaya, Ceylon; have already been filled up almost to the point of saturation. When we look further afield the prospects are not encouraging. The Dutch East Indies have already their own population problem in Java, which is clearly becoming overcrowded. Borneo and New

Guinea appear on the surface to present large areas for immigration, but those who have studied the question do not hold out hopes for much room in those directions. The same may probably be stated about the North-western territory of Australia, even if the initial difficulty, connected with the 'White Australia' policy, could be surmounted. But, apart from that policy, it seems to have been clearly proved that the weather conditions are not favourable for the support of a large indigenous and permanent population in those regions."<sup>8</sup>

The artisans who would be driven out of employment would thus be left to shift for themselves. There is no industry that would absorb them. It is doubtful if they would get even temporary employment in fitting pneumatic tyres to carts, for they would lack the necessary skill. Agriculture would give them no relief for it is already overcrowded. There would be no unemployment dole for them, as the magnitude of unemployment in this country is so vast that no Government would find it feasible to cope with it by doles. The doors of emigration are closed for these artisans. What then are they to do but to swell the army of the unemployed and face stark poverty and starvation? Is even the little crumb of bread which they have got today to be snatched from their hands? Are they to be denied even the right to honest toil? There are obvious advantages, it is said, in the use of pneumatic tyres. Serious doubts have been expressed as to this. But supposing that there are advantages in the use of pneumatic tyres, at what cost in human misery are they to be purchased? The grim tragedy has been enacted in the case of many of our industries which have been wiped out of existence. Will it be enacted

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8. C. F. Andrews: *India and the Pacific*, p. 203-4.

in this case also? Shall we be willing parties to the ruin of a section of our own countrymen? If not, it is up to us to resist the use of pneumatic tyres for bullock carts with all the strength that we can command.

## XVII

### THE MENACE OF "(INDIA) LTD."

( *By Chandrashanker Shukla* )

#### I

A huge cry has gone up against the growing invasion of India by foreign capital and the rapid establishment in this country of more and more industrial concerns under the control and management of foreigners, and the capturing by them of the fields in which Indian industries have till now been struggling to live. The non-national concerns, having vast financial resources at their command, wage a merciless rate war against indigenous companies and threaten to wipe them out of existence. An impression is also sought to be made, by the addition of the words "(India) Ltd." to their names, that these concerns are swadeshi, and thus to exploit the swadeshi spirit recently generated in the country. Flaring advertisements are made on a huge scale of the goods produced by them, and the same measure of protection is claimed from the Government as is afforded to the indigenous industries. It is becoming simply impossible for the Indian industries to withstand this unequal competition at their very doors, and they are rapidly succumbing, or will presently have to succumb, before it. The grave apprehension felt by Indian manufacturers and traders alike at this new and fierce encroachment has been recently voiced, among others, by the Secretary of the Bombay Indian Merchants' Chamber, who says:

"My Committee had recently occasion to refer to the Imperial Chemical Industries (India) Ltd. There are also several instances which have come to their notice of non-Indian

concerns and factories having been put up for the manufacture of matches, cigarettes, soaps, boots and shoes, chemicals, rubber, etc. These factories are started by powerful companies with a big capital, and it is hopeless to expect small Indian industries to compete with them. The only result will be, therefore, that the small Indian industries will be wiped out and eliminated from the country....

Taking advantage of the tariff wall, as also of the relevant sections of the Government of India Act, non-Indian factories are now starting up with a colossal production in some cases. In the competition between a Goliath and a pigmy, the latter goes to the wall, and my Committee are afraid that this will be the case with Indian industries, unless immediate steps are taken to safeguard and protect them."

This is but a new stage in the exploitation of the weaker and poorer countries by the richer and physically stronger nations of the world. The first stage consisted of the imposition of their manufactured goods, by force or fraud, on subject nations. The theory of 'Free Trade' was invoked to justify this transaction by England who was first in the field of mechanized manufacture of goods and who wanted open markets throughout the world. The "free trade with India", was, however, as an Englishman remarked in 1840, "a free trade from this country (England), not a free trade between India and this country." This one-sided free trade resulted in the ruin and total extinction of many of India's staple industries and drove millions of her children out of employment. To quote the words, recently written, of an English writer :

"The principle of free trade worked as a positive curse. The main economic consequence of our administration was to 'swamp' India under



a flood of cheap machine-made imports. It was impossible for Indians, without experience or knowledge of applied science, to compete with the products of our mature machine industry.... The heaviest injury of this free trade policy fell, however, not on India's capitalists, but on her handicraft workers. Very gradually, yet by an irresistible doom, the weaver, the potter and the smith were reduced to penury and despair by the competition of British machines. The deficiencies of transport delayed their fate, but today when motor buses carry the housewives of the remotest villages into the towns to do their marketing, the end for these skilled craftsmen is in sight.....Thus free trade, which made in England our swollen and disproportionate over-development of industry, produced in India a parallel and no less disproportionate concentration on agriculture....

And, in fact over wide areas of India they live, as they must, on the barest margin of survival, in mud huts, with a few mats and pots as their sole possessions, often without a change of clothing, on a diet of rice and pulses that supplies a minimum of energy to their slight and emaciated frames.....This morass of poverty the Empire polices."<sup>1</sup>

Then came the second stage :

" Monopoly industry brought huge profits to its owners. Super-profits. More money than the owners knew what to do with. It sounds unbelievable, but in some cases the profits were so great that the trust-makers could not possibly spend all their money, even if they had tried. They didn't try. They saved their money....."

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1. H. N. Brailsford: *Property or Peace?*, p. 217-219.

The surplus capital which had to find an outlet found one in the backward countries—in colonies. Places in need of railways, electricity and gas systems, roads, etc., places rich in natural resources, where 'concessions' on mines and plantations were obtained—it was in these colonial areas that surplus capital found opportunities for profitable employment."<sup>2</sup> "In these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap."<sup>3</sup>

The imposition of capital on weaker nations, irrespective of whether they were willing or not, became the second stage in the exploitation of the world, and it was proclaimed to be part of the "White Man's Burden". The process is thus described by an English economist:

"The enterprises started in the less developed countries are often not only financed by alien capital, but also conducted under alien control by companies registered and administered in the lending country. The profits of the enterprise are remitted home to the alien owners; and the country in which the enterprise is carried on, unless it is recognised as a fully civilised nation, has to submit to alien policing and often even to virtual annexation, either open or disguised under the form of a protectorate. Its citizens are in effect forced to labour for the alien capitalists whether they will or no; and sometimes a large part of its tax revenue is earmarked as security for the payment of interest on the alien capital.....While Europe was asserting within its own borders the right of nationality and self-determination, it was also

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2. Leo Huberman: *Man's Worldly Goods*, p. 260-1

3. Lenin.

denying the right of non-European peoples to abstain from using to the full the potential wealth of their lands and their labour, and was claiming the right to enforce the development of any territory occupied by uncivilised peoples, even against the will of its inhabitants, as part of the civilising mission of the white races..... That is his mission—a mission of civilisation for the world as well as of enrichment for himself, a mission made necessary in the interests of the progress of industrialism."<sup>4</sup>

So far as India was concerned, the first good opportunity for fostering her industries, undisturbed by foreign competition, presented itself to her during the World War, and several of the industries made a rapid progress. This was followed by the Fiscal Autonomy Convention granted to her in 1919, under which she could to a limited extent impose customs duties on foreign imports. The swadeshi movement that followed gave a still greater impetus to these industries, and imports began rapidly to fall. The growing demand of English labour for better wages made English goods dearer in foreign markets and profits began to decline. It is in order to counteract the difficulties created by all these factors that foreign-owned and foreign-controlled—particularly English—factories are being fast dumped on India. "British capital," says an English writer, "used without conscience the single competitive advantage it possessed—cheap and unorganized labour."<sup>5</sup>

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4. G. D. H. Cole : *World Chaos*, p. 124-5.

5. H. N. Brailsford : *Op. Cit.*, p. 217.

Cf. : "The opposition of the white working-classes to the horizontal violence of the capitalist class continually gaining strength, and the workers in

These concerns employ, it is argued, Indian labour and Indian raw materials, and to that extent they contribute to the good of the country. The hollowness of this argument will be seen on comparing the gains of the foreigner and the meagre wages of the Indian labourer. The same English writer remarks:

"It is usually estimated that from £ 600 to £ 700 millions of British capital are invested in India. Part of this capital is sunk in industries which in favourable years yield fabulous profits. Coal mines have been known to pay 100 and 120 per cent on a daily wage of 8d. Out of 51 jute mills, 32 paid as much as 100 per cent in one or more years between 1918 and 1927: 29 never paid less than 20 per cent, and 10 never less than 40 per cent. During the early post-war years the profits of these jute mills ranged from six to eight times their total wages bill. For every £ 12 that they paid in wages to their Indian workers, they remitted £ 100 in profits to their shareholders in Scotland. Such facts may explain the attachment which the British

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towns winning increased wages, shorter hours, insurances, pensions, etc., the white exploiters found it profitable to obtain their labour from men of so-called inferior race backward economically and socially and whose needs are extremely limited. In Indonesia, for instance, a native—we are not speaking of the Dutch Governor-General—'can live,' according to the Dutch Government at the Hague, 'on less than twentyfive French centimes a day.' Capitalism can therefore make infinitely more out there than at home, where the working-class standard of living has steadily risen."—Bart de Ligt: *The Conquest of Violence*, p. 49.

propertied classes feel, not indeed towards Indians, but towards India."<sup>6</sup>

And here is the opinion of yet another Englishman :

"If you take a colonial country like India as an example, there is a strong case for thinking that a high proportion of the total overseas capital invested there has brought no benefit at all to the greatest number of India's inhabitants. What it undoubtedly has done is to tighten two grips—the grip of the Anglo-Indian and Indian rich upon the Indian poor, and the grip of Britain upon India."<sup>7</sup>

Is there the slightest doubt that it is in order to tighten and perpetuate this second grip that the "commercial safeguards" so called are provided for in the new Constitution? It is a thing without a parallel anywhere in the world. The Congress Working Committee has recently clearly stated the Congress position and has warned the unwary against believing these foreign concerns to be swadeshi and therefore deserving support as such. "No concern," declared the Working Committee, "can or shall be regarded as 'swadeshi' unless its control, direction and management are in Indian hands. The Working Committee would prefer to delay the further development of Indian industries if it can only result in the dumping of foreign industrial concerns who would exploit the natural resources of India."<sup>8</sup> The warning has come none too

6. H. N. Brailsford : *Op. Cit.*, p. 221.

7. Leonard Barnes : *The Duty of Empire*, p. 225.

8. The following resolution was passed by the Working Committee in April 1938 :

"The Working Committee view with grave concern the rapid increase in the number of companies owned and managed by foreign nationals

soon, for the struggling swadeshi industries, if not protected in time against the double attack of foreign imports and foreign companies dumped

and describing themselves with designations such as "India Ltd." or similar words in the hope, or with the object, of being regarded as genuine Indian concerns. The establishment of these companies has the 'effect' of robbing India of such advantages or benefits as are expected from the policy of discriminating protection which has been pursued by the Government of India for the development and growth of Indian industries.

"The Congress has always opposed the new Constitution, not only because it is a negation of political freedom, but also because of the inclusion in the Constitution Act of provisions described as safeguards against discrimination. The Working Committee are of opinion that these provisions are not in the interests of India, but are intended and calculated to preserve to foreign nationals, and particularly British capitalists, the exploitation of the natural wealth and resources of this country. The Working Committee maintain that India has the right to discriminate, if that word must be used, against non-national interests, whenever and wherever the interests of India demand or require it.

"The Working Committee have no objection to the use of foreign capital or to the employment of foreign talent when such are not available in India or when India needs them, but on condition that such capital and such talent are under the control, direction and management of Indians and are used in the interests of India.

"The Working Committee are further of opinion and declare that no concern can or shall be regarded as 'swadeshi' unless its control, direction and management are in Indian hands. The Working

into India, will soon suffer extinction, and it will be a most difficult, if not impossible, task to revive them again. The Governments under the new Constitution may not be able to 'discriminate' against non-national industrial concerns, but there is a thing like determined national will that nothing can suppress. No power in the world can force its goods on unwilling buyers. The cry for protection, therefore, from the indigenous industries is addressed to the people of India in the sure hope that it will not go unheard. The Working Committee will have to supplement its resolution by further practical effort in this direction. The office of the A. I. C. C. can periodically issue a list of these so-called "swadeshi" but anti-swadeshi concerns and warn people against buying their products. So long as we have the nefarious "discriminating" clause the only thing open to us is to agitate and educate people against the use of these anti-swadeshi goods, which is nothing short of suicidal.

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Committee would prefer to delay the further development of Indian industries if it can only result in the dumping of foreign industrial concerns who would exploit the natural resources of India. The Working Committee, therefore, hold that the development of India's resources should be achieved by building up industries under the control, direction and management of Indians, which is essential for India's economic independence."

## II

I have received, through the courtesy of an esteemed friend, a list of foreign companies, bearing the name "(India) Ltd.", which is published on page 206. In sending the list the friend writes :

"This list is not exhaustive, and there are many more of the type. I may add that the information was extracted from the annual list, published by the Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, of Joint Stock Companies in British India, for the year 1934-35. Naturally names of such companies as were registered after that year will find no mention in the list. I must, however, point out that the use of the term 'India, Ltd.', by itself, is not an index of the foreign origin of the company. The converse is equally true that it is not necessary or the invariable practice for all foreign companies to add to their names 'India, Ltd.', when they get registered in India. There are again a number of foreign companies which are registered in this country without any indication in their names to suggest their being subsidiaries of foreign companies. I am mentioning all this to tell you that it would be almost impossible without an exhaustive enquiry undertaken by Government to collect full particulars of the extent and number of foreign companies and capital in India. There is another point which should also be borne in mind. For instance, companies which may, *prima facie*, be taken as foreign, sometimes, are owned by a majority of Indians; e. g., Titaghur Paper Mills, Calcutta, have more than 80 per cent Indian shareholding, although the general impression is possible that the company is foreign. In view of all these difficulties, it is not feasible to have a complete



list of foreign companies in India without exhaustive examination of particulars regarding individual shareholding, etc. Therefore, the list that I am sending is to be taken, as stated above, as only illustrative."

The formidable list — which would be still bigger when complete — must vividly bring home to the reader the large extent of the menace to India's industries, large and small. These companies cannot, as Gandhiji said, "in the remotest sense be called swadeshi." A concern, to be swadeshi, must have its control, direction and management in Indian hands — which the companies mentioned elsewhere have evidently not. And yet the tragedy of it is that they have been claiming to be swadeshi and some of them have even received substantial concessions from the Government. The menace has therefore to be fought largely by the people's will and determined effort, irrespective of whether the Government may be willing or able to help or not.

## FOREIGN COMPANIES " (INDIA) LTD."

1. A. B. C. Coupler and Engineering Co. (India), Calcutta;
2. A. E. G. (India) Electric Co., Bombay;
3. A. C. E. C. (India), Bombay;
4. A. Hyland (Punjab), Bombay;
5. Aeroad (India), Calcutta;
6. Alfred Hebert (India), Calcutta;
7. Allen Brothers & Co., (Bombay);
8. Alston Taylor & Co. (India), Calcutta;
9. A. Murcott & Co. (India), Madras;
10. Anglo-American Oil Products Co. (India), Calcutta;
11. Anglo-French Drug Co. (Eastern), Bombay;
12. Anglo-Indian & Domiciled Federation (Bengal), Calcutta;
13. Anglo-Indian & Domiciled Federation (All India & Burma);
14. Anglo Oriental (India), Calcutta;
15. Anglo-Persian Oil Co. (India), Calcutta;
16. B. C. G. A. (Punjab), Punjab;
17. Becker Grey & Co. (1930), Calcutta;
18. Bell's Asbestos & Engineering Co. (India), Calcutta;
19. Bengal Bond Bank (India), Lahore & Calcutta;
20. Bengal Coal Trading Co., Madras;
21. Bitumen & Emulsions (India), Calcutta;
22. Blackie & Sons (India), Bombay;
23. Boulton Bros. & Co. (India), Calcutta;
24. Braithwaite & Co. (India);
25. Bridge & Roof Co. (India);
26. British Arc Welding Co. (India);
27. British India Steam Navigation Co. (India);
28. B. V. Bowater & Sons (India);
29. C. & H. (India);
30. Candy Filters (India);
31. Carreras (India);
32. Carrons (India);
33. Caxton Floors (India);
34. C. & E. Morton (India);
35. Charles Dygambar & Co. (India);
36. Chubb & Hope (India);
37. Ciba (India);
38. Development of Industries (India);
39. D. Gestetner (India);
40. Direction & Development Co. (India);
41. Dodge & Seymour (India);
42. Dunlop Rubber Co. (India);
43. Eakco Films (India);
44. East & Kent Co. (India);
45. Eastern Bank Trustee & Executors Co. (India);

46. Electric Welding & Mfg. Co. (India); 47. Ever Ready Co. (India); 48. Favourite Pictures (India); 49. F. H. Schule (India); 50. Fox Film Corporation (India); 51. F. W. Woodworth & Co. (India); 52. Ganga Commercial Agency (India); 53. Gas Accumulator Co. (India); 54. G. D. Peters (India); 55. General Assurance Trust (India); 56. General Electric Co. (India); 57. George Newnes Book Co. (India); 58. George O-Pen (India); 59. George Spencer Moulten & Co. (India); 60. H. Stanley & Co. (India); 61. Hadfields (India); 62. Hoyle Rabson Barnett & Co. (India); 63. Indestro (India); 64. Indegenous Drugs & Chemicals (India); 65. Ingersoll-Rand (India); 66. Institution of Engineers (India); 67. International General Electric Co. (India); 68. International Trade Developer (India); 69. J. L. Morisson Son & Joans (India); 70. J. Stead & Co. (India); 71. Jenson & Nicolson (India); 72. J. Murray & Co. (India); 73. John Fowler & Co. (India); 74. John Patterson & Co. (India); 75. J. Stone & Co. (India); 76. Kian Gwan Co. (India); 77. Kino Brothers (India); 78. Kleine Patent Flooring Co. (India); 79. Kosmos & Polis (India); 80. Laffans (India); 81. Lajaco Oils (India); 82. Lamson Paragon (India); 83. L. A. Stronach & Co. (India); 84. Lee Tyre Co. (India); 85. Lever Brothers (India); 86. Machine Tools (India); 87. Marshall Sons & Co. (India); 88. Massey, Gany, Hackethat (India); 89. May & Baker (India); 90. Mehoe (India); 91. Midland Bank (India); 92. Muller & Phipps (India); 93. National Chemical & Salt Works (India); 94. National Emporium (India); 95. Nion Sign (India); 96. Paterson Engineering Co. (India); 97. Paradise Pictures (India); 98. Pelman Institute (India); 99. Pfaff Sewing Machine Co. (India); 100. Radiant Display (India); 101. Refrigerators (India); 102. R. Fisher & Co. (India); 103. Rothman's (India); 104. Saxby & Farmer (India); 105. Schering Khalbaum (India); 106. Scholl Mfg. Co.

(India); 107. Senda & Co. (India); 108. Siemens (India); 109. Simplex Concrete Piles (India); 110. Tobacco Industries (India); 111. Tobacco Manufacturers (India); 112. Traill & Co. (India); 113. Turner Brothers (India); 114. United Motors (India); 115. United Steel Cos. (India); 116. Universal Film Corporation (India); 117. Venus Bonds Bank (India); 118. Vickers (India); 119. Vibro Piling Co. (India); 120. W. V. Bowats & Sons (India); 121. William Gossage & Sons (India); 122. Kores (India); 123. Caltex (India); 124. Goodyear Tyre & Rubber Co., (India); 125. Skoda (India); 126. Tide Water Oil Co., (India).

## II

1. Acro Oil Co. (India), Calcutta; 2. Asiatic Steam Navigation Co. (India), Calcutta; 3. Associated Electric Companies (India), Bombay; 4. Associated Instrument Manufacture (India), Calcutta; 5. Auguste Capdeville & Fills (India), Bombay; 6. Br. Institute of Engineering Technology (India), Bombay; 7. Building Corporation (India), Lucknow; 8. Centaur Engineering Co. (India), Calcutta; 9. Colonial Insurance (India), Calcutta; 10. Commercial Loan Co. (India), Calcutta; 11. Corn Products Co. (India), Bombay; 12. Cosmos Engineering Co. (India), Bombay; 13. Courtalds (India), Bombay; 14. Craven Bros. (India), Bombay; 15. Crispin & Co. (India), Bombay; 16. E. Agouri et Fils (India), Calcutta; 17. Filtrators (India), Bombay; 18. Firestone Tyre & Rubber Co. of India, Calcutta; 19. Goodlass Wall (India), Bombay; 20. Goodrich Rubber Company of India, Bombay; 21. Goodyear Tyre & Rubber Co. (India), Bombay; 22. Grahams Trading Co. (India), Bombay; 23. H. Stanley and Co. (India), Bombay; 24. Imperial Chemical Industries (India), Calcutta; 25. Imperial Tobacco Company of India, Calcutta; 26. Independence Bank of India, Calcutta;

27. Insurance Home (India), Calcutta; 28. International Trading Office (India), Calcutta; 29. John Walsh & Co. (India), Calcutta; 30. Leyland and Birmingham Rubber Co. (India), Calcutta; 31. Lugton and Co. (India), Cawnpore; 32. Morris Industries (India), Bombay; 33. National Engineering Co. (India), Bombay; 34. National Mercantile Insurance Co. (India), Calcutta; 35. Okasa Company, Berlin (India), Bombay; 36. Ormerods (India), Bombay; 37. Orthopedic Stores (India), Calcutta; 38. Phillipps Electrical Co. (India), Calcutta; 39. Printers (India), Calcutta; 40. Publicity (India), Bombay; 41. Raulplug Products (India), Bombay; 42. River Steam Navigation Co. (India), Calcutta; 43. Robert Hudson (India), Calcutta; 44. Roberts Park & Co. (India), Calcutta; 45. Samuel Osborn (India), Calcutta; 46. Silvertown Lubricants (India), Calcutta; 47. Simms Motor Units of India, Calcutta; 48. Slough Syndicate (India), Lashkar, Gwalior; 49. Smith Campbell & Co. (India), Bombay; 50. Sound Studios (India), Bombay; 51. Texas Co. (India), Bombay; 52. Thomas Bear & Sons (India), Calcutta; 53. Thomas Rabinson & Sons (India), Calcutta; 54. Thornycrofts (India), Calcutta; 55. United House Building and Engineering Society (India), Mysore; 56. United Picture Corporation (India), Lucknow; 57. Wood Milne (India), Bombay; 58. Wota (India), Calcutta.

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