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◀ GREAT THOUGHTS

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GREAT THOUGHTS
OF
MAHATMA GANDHI

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FOREWORD

Anthologies have always been favourite companions in the world of books and it is likely that their popularity will continue to exist always. They really satisfy an ever present desire in the human mind to know the best that has been thought and said. Especially is that the case in an age, like the present, of un leisured bustle and crowded hurry when one would like if possible to get the best reading in the shortest space of time. One therefore certainly appreciates the excellent idea of this book wherein is made an attempt—an initial attempt—to get together in short compass some of the best and most noteworthy passages from the writings of Mahatma Gandhi.

There have been several great writers whose works have benefited by considerable excision and abridgment. We know for example that Matthew Arnold strongly

advocated a condensed Wordsworth. In the case of several other writers, we know that only the best that they have written has survived the test of time and the rest has perished. It is however not in that sense that Mahatma Gandhi's writings stand in need of any selective process. Every word of that saint, leader of men, practical idealist and "creator of a new humanity," is a treasure unto the ages. It is little of all that Mahatmaji has written that posterity will willingly let die. Nevertheless as a means of propagation it is essential to bring home to men's minds some of the cardinal principles that Mahatma Gandhi has been preaching. That, one takes it, is the real purpose and the justification for making up this garland of the great thoughts of the world's greatest man.

Where everything is equally good and so essentially important it is difficult to make a selection. One most remarkable feature of Mahatma's writings is that we find in them a sustained simplicity of statement and an utter absence of any ornate flourishes or 'purple patches.' The

thought is always of a high level, the reasoning is always well sustained and the diction always terse and balanced. Every sentence is surcharged with a force that comes of restraint and eloquence gathers from passage to passage with the very simplicity of style and gravity of utterance. The selection here made is fully representative of these qualities of Mahatmaji's style. They have a rare quality and virtue in them which can be born of inspiration only and which reminds us forcibly of the prophets of old. Some of them indeed are bright ringlets of gold that shall shine for ever on the stretched forefinger of time, without exception they are all like the *srutis* of Vedic India, terse, condensed, each and all to be noted, memorised, and transmitted from generation to generation as the priceless repositories of Truth Everlasting.

Of Mahatma Gandhi himself little can be said here which has not been already and so ably said by others. Such great persons as Romian Rolland and A. E., (George Russell), have hailed Mahatma as

the harbinger of peace to a strife-ridden world. To India he is the messiah of liberation. His message of non-violent non-co-operation, of Satyagraha and unity has leavened the masses of India to an unparalleled degree and in our faithful carrying out of his doctrine does our deliverance lie.

It is sincerely hoped that this chaplet of Mahatma's noted sayings, this *Gandhi-Mala*, will help to bring home to men's bosoms and concerns the spirit of all that Mahatma Gandhi has been teaching and stands for in politics, social reform, and National Ethics and in its humble way serve to speed the gospel of non-violent non-co-operation, the scripture of Satyagraha.

N. P.

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Boycott is a form of revenge, and for its being able to help us to secure a just solution we have to create a world-opinion.



Boycott is a punishment and is conceived in a vindictive spirit.



Is it a big sacrifice for every Hindu and Mussulman to discard all foreign cloth and to use only Khadi? And if India is not to have that ability will it not also be proof that India is unfit for any sacrifice?



The country should evince sufficient organising ability, resourcefulness and discipline necessary for bringing the emi-

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nently practical Swadeshi enterprise to a successful end. Let us hope and pray that the country will.



Judged by the economic standard, thirty-five years of our political activity have resulted in disaster. The masses of India to-day are less able to stand the ravages of famine and disease than they were fifty years ago. They are less manly than they were at any period in the history of the nation.



Without a cottage industry the Indian peasant is doomed. He cannot maintain himself from the produce of the land. He needs a supplementary industry. Spinning is the easiest, the cheapest and the best.



The cleanest and the most popular form of Swadeshi is to stimulate hand-spinning

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and hand-weaving and to arrange for a judicious distribution of yarn and cloth so manufactured.



True Swadeshi consists in introducing the spinning wheel in every household, and every household spinning its own yarn.



Hand-spinning does solve the problem of India's chronic poverty and is an insurance against famine.



The scheme of Non-co-operation does not aim at starving any labourer outside the country, it is meant to stop him from starving and keeping naked the people of India.



The ideal no doubt is for every village to spin and weave for itself, just as to-day

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most villages grow corn for themselves. It is easier for every village to spin and weave for itself than to grow all its corn.



The best National Education for India is undoubtedly an intelligent handling of the spinning wheel.



Attacks on hand-spinning notwithstanding, I cling to the belief that Swaraj is unattainable without the beautiful art becoming universal in India.



If hand-spinning became universal, every home would get a share of the crores and without any complicated machinery being necessary.



I prophesy that, whatever happens to the other parts of the national programme, Swadeshi in its present shape will bide for

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ever and must, if India's pauperism is to be banished.



Free trade for India has proved her curse, and held her in bondage.



The central idea is not so much to carry on a commercial war against foreign countries as to utilise the idle hours of the nation and thus by natural processes to help it to get rid of her growing pauperism.



I may deserve the curses of posterity for many mistakes of omission and commission, but I am confident of earning its blessings for suggesting a revival of the *Charka*.



Every revolution of the wheel spins peace, goodwill and love. And with all that inasmuch as the loss of it brought

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about India's slavery, its voluntary revival with all its implications must mean India's freedom.

The Lancashire cloth, as English historians have shown, was forced upon India, and her own world-famed manufactures were deliberately and systematically ruined.

Agriculture and hand-spinning are the two lungs of the national body. They must be protected against consumption at any cost.

The economics that disregard moral and sentimental considerations are like wax-works that being life-like still lack the life of the living flesh.

Our cities are *not* India. India lives in her

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seven and a half lacs of villages, and the cities live upon the villages. They do not bring their wealth from other countries.



The city people are brokers and commission agents for the big houses of Europe, America and Japan. The cities have co-operated with the latter in the bleeding process that has gone on for the past two hundred years.



I do not know that the condition of the cattle in any other part of the world is as bad as in unhappy India. We may not blame the Englishmen for this. We may not plead poverty in our defence. Criminal negligence is the only cause of the miserable condition of our cattle.



Before the British advent, India spun

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and wove in her millions of cottages just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witnesses.

••
Little do they (town-dwellers) realise 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.

••
It is our duty to take the Swadeshi Vow; in it lies the prosperity of India. To use foreign articles rejecting those that are

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manufactured in India is to be untrue to India ; it is an unwarranted indulgence.



It is obvious that we cannot reject indigenous articles, even as we cannot reject the native air and the native soil because they are inferior to foreign air and soil.



The true Swadeshi ideal consists in the use of hand-woven cloth only made out of handspun yarn.

Those who think deep will see that such Swadeshi contains pure economics....Imitation of English economics will spell our ruin.



I think of Swadeshi not as a boycott movement undertaken by way of revenge. I conceive it as a religious principle to be followed by all.



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Swadeshi is a religious discipline to be undergone in utter disregard of the physical discomfort it may cause to individuals.



We become a prey to invasion if we excite the greed of foreign nations by dealing with them under a feeling of dependence on them. We must learn to be independent of every one of them.



It is machinery that has impoverished India....It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared.



Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the English gates.



The mill-owners can establish in thousands of households the ancient and sacred

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handlooms, and they can buy out the cloth thus woven. Whether the mill-owners do this or not, people can cease to use machine-made goods.



India has not wished to possess machinery and great cities. The old spinning wheel and the ancient indigenous education have ensured its wisdom and its good.



India cannot be free so long as she voluntarily encourages or tolerates the economic drain which has been going on for the past century and a half. Foreign cloth constitutes the largest drain voluntarily permitted by us. It means sixty crores of rupees annually paid by us for piece-goods. If India could make a successful effort to stop that drain, she can gain Swaraj by that one act.



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The way to carry out a successful boycott of foreign cloth is to increase the output of yarn. And this can only be done by hand-spinning.



The householder should train himself to see art and beauty in the spotlessly white *Khaddar* and to appreciate its uneven softness.



If it is sinful to use foreign yarn, it is a virtue to manufacture more Swadeshi yarn in order to enable us to cope with the want that would be created by the disuse of foreign yarn.



Under the pre-British economy of India, spinning was an honourable and leisurely occupation for the women of India.



The art of spinning being graceful and

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musical and as it did not involve any great exertion, it had become the monopoly of women. But it is certainly as graceful for either sex as is music for instance. In handspinning is hidden the protection of women's virtue, the insurance against famine, and the cheapening of prices.



The revival of handspinning is the least penance we must do for the sin of our forefathers in having succumbed to the satanic influences of the foreign manufacturer.



Just as we cannot live without breathing and without eating, so is it impossible for us to attain economic independence and banish pauperism from this ancient land without reviving home-spinning.



The beauty of spinning is that it is

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incredibly simple, easily learnt and can be cheaply introduced.



There is not the slightest reason why the spinning wheel may not co-exist with the spinning-mill even as the domestic kitchen co-exists with hotels. . . .
The mills may suffer destruction. But the spinning wheel is a national necessity.



I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India.



Spinning was the cottage industry years ago and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be enabled to re-introduce spinning in their homes, and every village must re-possess its own weaver.



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Swadeshi work is the most constructive of all. It does not lend itself to speeches so much as to solid action. It is not possible to save fifty crores of rupees annually by speeches or demonstrations.



Swadeshi yarn means even distribution of wealth from an occupation next in importance only to agriculture. It supplements agriculture and therefore automatically and materially assists to solve the problem of our growing poverty.



The cleanest and the most popular form of Swadeshi is to stimulate hand-spinning and hand-weaving and to arrange for a judicious distribution of yarn and cloth so manufactured.



We have spun many a yarn during all these long 35 years on the Congress plat-

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form. Let us now spin the truest yarn that India wants, and let me tell you that, if you want to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, there is no other way out of the difficulty but spinning for the whole of India.

You will not gain your economic freedom until India becomes self-contained so far as her food and clothing are concerned.

Our orthodox politicians dread to think of anything too striking, or too simple or too drastic. The spinning-wheel is too simple and yet too drastic and too striking an instrument for Swaraj in one year.

Is it such a visionary ideal—an attempt to revive an ancient occupation whose destruction has brought on slavery, pauperism and the disappearance of the inimitable

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artistic talent which was once all expressed in the wonderful fabrics of India and which was the envy of the world?



The more I have studied the economics of India and the more I have listened to the mill-owners of India, the more convinced I have become that until we introduce the spinning wheel in every home of India, the economic salvation and freedom of India is an impossibility.

