

THE
COLLECTED
WORKS
OF
MAHATMA
GANDHI

VOLUME TWENTY-EIGHT



THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

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GANDHI

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184. A GOOD RESOLUTION

During August last, whilst I was passing through Manmad on my way back from Calcutta, some friends met me at the station. I asked as usual how many were regularly spinning in Manmad and there was no answer. Some of them thereafter thought that they would make the commencement, and a letter before me which I have kept on my file for some weeks tells me that, at the time of writing, that is 3rd September, twenty had already commenced to spin with religious regularity. I congratulate these friends on their resolution. I do hope that it will not share the fate of a similar resolution that many made last year and which but few have successfully carried out. Let the word of each one of us be as good as a written bond whose breach carries with it a swift and sharp penalty. I regard resolutions such as the one made by the Manmad friends as promises made to the nation. Those who make them are as a rule grown-up people with a full sense of their responsibility. I hope that the Manmad friends will send in their names to the All-India Spinners' Association.

Young India, 15-10-1925

185. NOTES

SEND YOUR YARN

The year of the All-India Spinners' Association begins from this month, and intending members should, therefore, begin sending their monthly subscription of yarn immediately. Those who were regular members of the Congress under the spinning franchise should find no difficulty to be members of the A.I.S.A. But even the irregular members, that is, those who could not give in the full subscription, should also be able to do so, as it has been reduced to one half of the original Congress subscription. In any case, none of these last should find any difficulty in joining the A.I.S.A. as B class members.

SUBSIDIARY INDUSTRY "PAR EXCELLENCE"

A friend sends me the following from Keatinge's *Agricultural Progress in Western India*:

Attempts have been made to get cultivators to take up unskilled work such as cotton spinning by hand, but in view of the efficiency of spinning mills such operations can be justified economically on the assumption that the cultivator now wastes so much of his time that any work which he does, however badly paid, will be better than nothing. Unfortunately, the existing facts in many cases justify such an assumption, but to condemn the cultivators to this uphill and uneven competition is a counsel of despair. The subsidiary industry *par excellence* of the cultivators should be breeding and rearing of livestock which provides an occupation and income at all seasons, and returns to the soil the manure which is necessary to maintain it in high fertility.

This question is valuable for its two simple admissions, namely, that in many cases the cultivator in India has much time to waste and that any occupation during that time, however badly paid, is better than nothing. The writer, however, discourages hand-spinning because of the efficiency of spinning mills. Upon a close examination the argument will be found to be fallacious. The cultivator has not to compete with efficient mills at his own door. The only thing he has to compete with is his new-fangled taste for starchy and flimsy mill-made cloth. If he would only revive his old taste and return to the simple but soft and beautiful khaddar, he is never in the danger of having an idle moment thrown upon him. The efficient hotels and bakeries offer no inducement or competition to the millions of people who prefer their crudely made chupatties to the geometrically rounded and well-baked and well-spiced biscuits. The subsidiary industry of cattle-breeding that has been suggested is no doubt good and any day more paying than spinning. But it requires capital and a knowledge of breeding which the ordinary cultivator does not possess and cannot and will not possess without much previous preparation. Turn it how you will therefore, for Indian conditions there is no other subsidiary industry that can compete with hand-spinning. Its inestimable value consists not in its capacity for paying a few individuals highly but in immediately providing a remunerative occupation for millions. It is the only subsidiary occupation, therefore, that is capable of being successfully organized. Hence, not cattle-breeding, however good it is in itself, but hand-spinning is the subsidiary industry *par excellence*.

NECESSITY OF BODILY LABOUR

A vigilant friend writes:

In your address to the Jamshedpur gathering published in *Young India* of the 20th August,¹ in the first paragraph, after stressing the

¹ Vide "Speech at Indian Association, Jamshedpur", 8-8-1925.

importance of bodily labour above intellectual, you are reported to have said: "The same thought runs throughout Hindu religion. 'He who eats without labour eats sin, is verily a thief.' This is the literal meaning of a verse in the *Bhagavad Gita*." Now, the question apart whether the *Gita* makes any such distinction between (so-called) manual and (so-called) intellectual labour, I can say that the only passage in the *Gita* which could conceivably be taken to mean what (according to the report) you have said a verse in the *Gita* literally means is the passage, Ch. III, verses 12 & 13; so that in the first place it is not a verse but two, which have been requisitioned in support of your view of "labour", and secondly there is no mention of "labour", manual or other, in either of those verses; but in the first verse there is mentioned, by way of explanation of the duty of *yajna*, man's partaking with or dedicating to the higher powers what they have bestowed upon him—failing in which "he is verily a thief",—and in the second verse we are told that "they eat sin who cook for themselves alone." So that is pretty far removed from "the literal sense of a verse" in the *Gita* as you are reported to have given it in your own paper by M.D. I hope you will make a note of it at your convenience.

Technically speaking the writer is correct in saying that the translation given by M. D. is not of one verse but a combination of parts of two verses, and I am thankful to the writer for the accuracy of his correction. But the substance of his argument seems to me to be that there is no warrant for the translation given in the report of my speech of the famous word *yajna* in the *Gita*. But I propose to stand by that translation and venture to suggest that in the verses 12 & 13 of Chapter III quoted by the writer the word is capable of only one meaning. The fourteenth verse makes it absolutely clear which means:

By food the living live; food comes of rain,
And rain comes by the pious sacrifice,
And sacrifice is paid with tithes of toil.

—ARNOLD

Here therefore there is not only the theory, in my opinion, of bodily labour propounded, but there is also the theory established of labour not only for oneself but for others, when and when only it becomes *yajna* or sacrifice. The rains come not through intellectual feats, but through sheer bodily labour. It is a well-established scientific fact that where forests are denuded of trees rains cease, where trees are planted rains are attracted and the volume of water received increases with the increase of vegetation. Laws of nature are still unexplored. We have but

scratched the surface. Who knows all the ill effects, moral and physical, of the cessation of bodily labour? Let me not be misunderstood. I do not discount the value of intellectual labour, but no amount of it is any compensation for bodily labour which every one of us is born to give for the common good of all. It may be, often is, infinitely superior to bodily labour, but it never is or can be a substitute for it, even as intellectual food, though far superior to the grains we eat, never can be a substitute for them. Indeed without the products of the earth those of the intellect would be an impossibility.

HUMILIATION OR HONOUR?

A worker writes:

I assure you that the majority of our workers feel humiliated when they get their allowances from the Congress funds, but they cannot help it. I request you to kindly encourage them through the pages of *Young India*.

How is it that young men undertake arduous labours and spend money like water in order to belong to the Indian Civil Service? They not only feel no humiliation, but they are themselves proud of the fact and are entertained by their friends when they pass the examination and receive congratulatory addresses when they get some employment in the Civil Service. Is it more honourable to be able to exercise authority over lacs of people and to collect revenue at the point of the bayonet, often from people who can ill afford it, than to belong to the Congress service where there is no authority to be wielded save that of love and service and where the only remuneration possible is a bare livelihood? If it be urged that in the Congress service there is an unwholesome juxtaposition of honorary workers and paid workers, there is the same juxtaposition in the Government service. The Government has, and every government must have, against one paid servant tens of honorary servants. There is very often even jealousy between the two classes. The only reason, therefore, for the disinclination for Congress service so far as I have been able to gather is its newness and instability. All the other reasons are more or less imaginary. Indeed, when the Congress acquires real prestige, which it has not at present—its popularity is merely comparative and not absolute—even a peon will consider it to be an honour to belong to this national service and to take less than the market wage. Meanwhile, I would urge all honest paid workers in the Congress organization, whether at the centre or in the educational, khaddar or the Swarajist bran-

ches, to make the service and the institution popular and attractive by strictest integrity, devotion, and ceaseless application. Those who are conscious that they are giving all the time and attention that they bargained for to the paid national service need feel no compunction about belonging to it. The more progress we make in the work of construction, the more paid workers we shall need. We are too poor as a nation to afford a large number of whole-time honorary workers. We will have to fall back more and more upon paid workers. The sooner, therefore, the idea of humiliation about accepting payment, when it is a necessity, is given up the better it will be for the nation.

Young India, 15-10-1925

186. SPEECH AT DISTRICT CONFERENCE, BALLIA¹

October 16, 1925

After making an appeal for silence and thanking the associations that had presented him addresses, Mr. Gandhi said that, in 1921, he had a mind to visit Ballia, but he was sorry he could not. He then had asked Mr. Motilal Nehru to go instead and give peace unto them. Four years after, he was happy to be amidst them. He would have stayed longer with them but for exigency of time. There was one thing that pained him and which he did not like to conceal. He believed in the power of the people of Ballia. But he also believed that that power could be kept under control by the managing capacity of the workers. Now that he was weak and infirm, unable to withstand the din and bustle of crowds, he had hoped he would be spared the trouble incidental to such gatherings.

Continuing, he observed that the constructive work done by the workers of Ballia pleased him, on which he congratulated them. He was also glad to learn that the two communities lived amicably in Ballia. He prayed that their vow of friendship might be successful and they might set an example to others in this direction. Dwelling on the poverty of India, he confidently remarked that there was no more potent remedy for it than the charkha. Many women were compelled to break stones for their livelihood and he knew how some of the overseers treated them. He spoke from personal experience. He exhorted the audience to help Indian women to be as pure as Sita by abandoning foreign cloth and plying the charkha. "Wear khaddar and increase the power of the charkha." He warned the people against intoxicants,

¹ Among those that attended the conference were Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Syed Mahmud. Various local bodies presented addresses.