

THE
COLLECTED
WORKS
OF
MAHATMA
GANDHI

VOLUME FOURTEEN



THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

THE
COLLECTED
WORKS
OF
MAHATMA
GANDHI

XIV
(1917-1918)

GANDHI - XIV



134. AHMEDABAD MILL-HANDS' STRIKE

February 27, 1918

LEAFLET NO. 2

We saw in yesterday's leaflet what the workers' pledge was. We have now to consider what we should do to carry out that pledge. We know that the employers have crores of rupees and the workers have nothing. If workers have no money however, they have hands and feet with which they can work, and there is no part of the world which can do without workers. Hence, if only he knows it, the worker holds the key to the situation. Wealth is unavailing without him. If he realizes this, he can be sure of success. But the worker who would wield such power must possess certain qualities of character, without which he would be at the mercy of others. Let us see what these qualities are.

1. The worker should be truthful. There is no reason for him to tell a lie. Even if he tells a lie, he will not get the desired wage. The truthful man can be firm and a worker who is firm is never defeated.

2. He should possess courage. Many of us become permanent slaves through fear of what might happen to us if we lost our jobs.

3. He should have a sense of justice. If he asks for wages higher than his deserts, there will be hardly anyone who will employ him. The increase we have demanded in this struggle is reasonable. We should, therefore, have faith that sooner or later we are bound to get justice.

4. He will not be angry with his employer nor bear him any grudge. After all, when everything is over, the worker is to serve under him. Every human being is liable to err. We think the employers are in the wrong in refusing the increase asked for. If we remain straightforward till the end, the employers are sure to revise their attitude. At present they are angry. Also, they suspect that, if the present demands of the workers are granted, they will repeatedly harass them. To remove this suspicion, we should do our utmost to reassure the employers by our behaviour. The first thing to that end is to harbour no grudge against them.

5. Every worker should remember that the struggle is bound to involve suffering. But happiness follows suffering voluntarily undertaken. It is but suffering for the worker to be denied a wage sufficient to enable him to make both ends meet. Because of our

ignorance, however, we endure this and manage to live somehow. Seeking a remedy against this suffering, we have told the employers that it is not possible for us to maintain ourselves without the wage increase demanded and that, if it is not granted to us and we are not saved from continuous starvation, we would rather starve right now. How long will the employers remain unmoved by our suffering?

6. Lastly, the poor have their saviour in God. Our duty is to make the effort and then, fully assured that we are bound to get what He has ordained for us, remain peaceful while our request is not yet granted.

A worker who behaves in this manner will never find it difficult to keep his pledge. We shall discuss in tomorrow's leaflet how the workers may maintain themselves during the period of the lock-out.

[From Gujarati]

Ek Dharmayuddha

135. LETTER TO SHUAIB QURESHI

February 27, 1918

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am ashamed of myself. I am most anxious to be there. Yet the facts seem to have conspired against me. The strike is still on and it is of such a delicate nature that I dare not leave it. The Kaira affair, too, involving as it does the rights of several lacs of people, demands my attention. I know that delay about Ali brothers is dangerous. I therefore stay where I am till I feel free. I know you will not have me do otherwise. Will you please apologize to Maulana Saheb? Do please keep me informed of what goes on there.

Yours sincerely,

M. K. GANDHI

From the manuscript of Mahadev Desai's Diary. Courtesy: Narayan Desai