

THE  
COLLECTED  
WORKS  
OF  
MAHATMA  
GANDHI

VOLUME FOURTEEN



THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

THE  
COLLECTED  
WORKS  
OF  
MAHATMA  
GANDHI

XIV  
(1917-1918)

GANDHI - XIV



society? Your efforts are of the nature of *duragraha*<sup>1</sup>. My success everyone will accept as success. My failure, too, will not harm anyone; it will only prove that the workers were not prepared to go farther than they did. An effort like mine is satyagraha. Kindly look deep into your heart, listen to the still small voice within and obey it, I pray you. Will you dine with me?

[From Gujarati]

*Mahadevbhaini Diary*, Vol. IV

#### 145. SPEECH TO AHMEDABAD MILL-HANDS

March 1, 1918<sup>2</sup>

Hitherto we have discussed the workers' pledge and what the workers are to do. We have now to declare in writing what our pledge is and what we have decided to do. We shall tell you what you should expect from us and what, in the sight of God, we have been planning to do. Whenever you see us committing mistakes or slackening in our efforts to carry out our pledge, you can confront us with it and censure us.<sup>3</sup>

[From Gujarati]

*Ek Dharmayuddha*

#### 146. AHMEDABAD MILL-HANDS' STRIKE

March 2, 1918

##### LEAFLET No. 5

We have so far considered the situation from our point of view. It is rather difficult to do so from that of the employers. Workers' efforts may have one of these two results :

<sup>1</sup> Holding on to wrong, as opposed to satyagraha, holding on to truth. The mill-owners remained obstinate at this time. Mahadev Desai thus analysed the situation: ". . .it appeared that the non-acceptance of the workers' demand by the employers was not due to their inability to pay 35 per cent, but to sheer obstinacy. They had adopted this perverse attitude fearing that if once the workers succeeded, they would be a source of constant nuisance and the advisers of labour would get a permanent footing."

<sup>2</sup> The speech evidently refers to Leaflet No. 4.

<sup>3</sup> The rest of the speech is not available.

1. They may get a 35 per cent increase in wages, or
2. They may have to resume work without getting such increase.

If the workers get an increase, they will be benefited and the employers will have earned credit. If they have to resume work without any increase, they will be demoralized and obliged to bow before the employers as so many slaves. It is, therefore, in the interests of both sides that the workers get an increase. At any rate, a defeat will cost the workers very much indeed.

Employers' efforts too may have one of these two results:

1. They may concede the workers an increase.
2. They may not do so.

If the employers concede it, the workers will be contented and justice will have been done to them. The employers are afraid that, if the workers' demands are conceded, they will become overbearing. This fear is baseless. Even if workers are suppressed today, it is not impossible that, when opportunity arises, they will take to such ways. It is even possible that the workers, on being suppressed, will become vindictive. The history of the world shows that, wherever the workers have been suppressed, they have risen in revolt later when they got an opportunity. The employers feel that conceding the workers' demand will strengthen their advisers' influence on them. If the advisers are right in their stand, if they are devoted to the cause, the workers will never leave them whether they are defeated or victorious, and be it noted that the advisers also will not abandon the workers. Those who have dedicated themselves to service of others will not forsake it even if they have to incur the displeasure of those whom they oppose. The more cause for disappointment they have, the more devoted will they become in their service. Strive as they may, the employers will never succeed in dividing the advisers from the workers. What, then, will they get by defeating the workers? The only reply can be: nothing but the workers' discontent. The employers will always distrust the suppressed workers.

By granting the increase as demanded, the employers will have contented workers. If the latter fail in their duty, the employers can always rely on the help of the advisers; this way, they can end the loss now being caused to both sides. The workers, on their part, will ever remain grateful if their demand is met and there will be increased goodwill between them and the employers. Thus, the employers' success lies in that of the workers; and the latter's defeat, likewise, will be their defeat. As against this way of

pure justice, the employers have adopted the Western, or the modern, Satanic notion of justice.

[From Gujarati]

*Ek Dharmayuddha*

#### 147. AHMEDABAD MILL-HANDS' STRIKE

[March 3, 1918]<sup>1</sup>

##### LEAFLET NO. 6

Pure justice is that which is inspired by fellow-feeling and compassion. We in India call it the Eastern or the ancient way of justice. That way of justice which has no place in it for fellow-feeling or compassion is known as Satanic, Western or modern justice. Out of compassion or regard, son and father concede many things to each other to the eventual benefit of both. One takes pride in giving up a claim and thinks of one's action as proceeding from strength, not weakness. There was a time in India when servants, passing from father to son, used to serve in the same family for generations. They were regarded and treated as members of the family. They suffered with the employers in their misfortunes and the latter shared the servants' joys and sorrows. In those days, India was reputed for a social order free from friction, and this order endured for thousands of years on that basis. Even now this sense of fellow-feeling is not altogether absent in our country. Where such an arrangement exists, there is hardly any need for a third party or an arbitrator. Disputes between a master and a servant are settled between themselves amicably. There was no room in this arrangement for increase or reduction in wages according as the changing needs of the two might dictate. Servants did not ask for higher wages when there was a dearth of servants and masters did not reduce wages when servants were available in plenty. This arrangement was based primarily on considerations of mutual regard, propriety, decorum and affection. This sense of mutual obligation was not then, as it is now, considered unpractical but ruled us in most of our affairs. History records that many great things have been achieved by our people

<sup>1</sup> Leaflets numbered 5 and 8 have been assigned by Mahadev Desai to March 2 and March 5, respectively. Leaflets numbered 6 and 7 fall naturally on March 3 and March 4,

because they had made this pure justice the law of their life. This is the Eastern or ancient justice.<sup>1</sup>

A totally different way of life prevails in the West today. It is not to be supposed that all persons in the West approve of the modern idea of justice. There are many saintly persons in the West who lead a blameless life, adopting the ancient standard. But in most public activities of the West at present, there is no place for fellow-feeling or compassion. It is considered just that a master pays his servant what he thinks fit. It is not considered necessary to think of the servants' needs. So also the worker can make his own demand, irrespective of the employer's financial condition and this is considered just. It is just, they think, that everyone should look after his own interests and expect others to take these into account. The present war in Europe is fought on the same principle. No means is considered improper for defeating the enemy. Wars must have been fought even in the past, but the vast masses of the people were not involved in them. We would do well not to introduce into India this despicable idea of justice. When workers make a demand merely because they think themselves strong enough to do so, regardless of the employers' condition, they will have succumbed to the modern, Satanic idea of justice. The employers, in refusing to consider the workers' demands, have accepted this Satanic principle of justice, maybe unintentionally or in ignorance. The employers ganging up against the workers is like raising an army of elephants against ants. If they had any regard for dharma, the employers would hesitate to oppose the workers. You will never find in ancient India that a situation in which the workers starved was regarded as the employers' opportunity. That action alone is just which does not harm either party to a dispute. We had confidently hoped that the Jain and *Vaishnava* employers in the capital city of this worthy land of Gujarat would never consider it a victory to beat down the workers or deliberately to give them less than their due. We are sure this wind from the West will pass as quickly as it has come. At any rate, we do not want to teach the workers what they do in the West these days. We wish to follow, and to

<sup>1</sup> Mahadev Desai wrote, in regard to these observations: "Gandhiji had published these ideas years ago in *Indian Opinion* in his article on *Sarvodaya* based on Ruskin's book, *Unto This Last*. The same ideas, having matured in course of time, he discussed in these leaflets in simple, direct and forceful language." *Vide* Vol. IX, pp. 478-81 *et seq.*

make the workers follow, our ancient idea of justice as we have known it and to help them in that manner to secure their rights.

We shall consider, in the next leaflet, some of the evil consequences of the policy followed in the West in modern times.<sup>1</sup>

[From Gujarati]

*Ek Dharmayuddha*

#### 148. LETTER TO MAGANLAL GANDHI

AHMEDABAD,

*Maha Vad 5 [March 3, 1918]*

CHI. MAGANLAL,

Santok and Ramdas arrived here yesterday. They will leave for Rajkot tomorrow.

Shri Khushalbai and Narandas are against letting Krishna and Purushottam go, and so the idea has been given up. I too thought they were right. If Purushottam goes to Rajkot, we must also let him go to Morabi. If Krishna goes to Rajkot this time, we should have to let others, too, go to their own places. I thought, therefore, that, though you would have liked them to go, [it would be better] not to let them, especially as the elders, too, were of the same mind . . . .<sup>2</sup>

From the Gujarati original in Gandhiji's hand: C.W. 5733

#### 149. FRAGMENT OF LETTER<sup>3</sup>

*March 3, 1918*

BHAISHRI,

. . . We are so terribly anxious to live on that the hour of death—especially of those dear to us—always fills us with fear. I, for my part, have always felt that such occasions are in the nature of a real test for us. Anyone who is even faintly alive to the reality of the *atman* understands the true meaning of death.

<sup>1</sup> According to Mahadev Desai, this and some of the succeeding leaflets were intended not only for the workers but also for the employers. Their aim was to convert the mill-owners, if possible, as much as to educate the workers.

<sup>2</sup> The available text of the letter is incomplete.

<sup>3</sup> The name of the addressee is not known.