

# Gandhiji on VILLAGES

Selected and Compiled with an Introduction by

Divya Joshi

## **GANDHI BOOK CENTRE**

Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal 299 Tardeo Road,

Nana Chowk Mumbai 400007 INDIA

Tel.: 2387 2061 Email: [info@mkgandhi.org](mailto:info@mkgandhi.org) [www.mkgandhi.org](http://www.mkgandhi.org)

## **MANI BHAVAN GANDHI SANGRAHALAYA MUMBAI**

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## **PREFACE**

Gandhiji's life, ideas and work are of crucial importance to all those who want a better life for humankind. The political map of the world has changed dramatically since his time, the economic scenario has witnessed unleashing of some disturbing forces, and the social set-up has undergone a tremendous change. The importance of moral and ethical issues raised by him, however, remain central to the future of individuals and nations. Today we need him, more than before.

Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya has been spreading information about Gandhiji's life and work. A series of booklets presenting Gandhiji's views on some important topics is planned to disseminate information as well as to stimulate questions among students, scholars, social activists and concerned citizens. We thank Government of India, Ministry of Tourism & Culture, Department of Culture, for their support.

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President Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya

**Usha Thakkar**

Hon. Secretary Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya

6<sup>th</sup> April 2002

## INTRODUCTION

### Divya Joshi

Gandhiji firmly believed that self-reliant villages form a sound basis for a just, equitable and non-violent order. This can be a guiding principle for all citizens, constructive workers and policy makers in India.

After returning from South Africa Gandhiji developed his ideas on villages from his direct experiences. He was convinced that "If the villages perish, India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost."<sup>1</sup> For him rebuilding of the nation could be achieved only by reconstructing villages. He himself initiated such efforts at certain places like Champaran (1917), Sevagram (1920) and Wardha (1938). With the passage of time, he visualised an elaborate programme of constructive work, which included economic self-reliance, social equality and decentralized political system.

Gandhiji wanted to rebuild India from the lowest level with the poorest and the weakest. So he gave a call to the people to go back to villages for village reconstruction. He had visualized self-reliant villages, free from exploitation and fear, as an important part of the decentralized system. According to him, life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.<sup>2</sup>

Now is the time to listen to Gandhiji's voice carefully, which says, "We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have, in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilization... To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilization seems to me an impossibility."<sup>3</sup>

## REFERENCES

1. *Harijan*, 29-8-1936; 63:241.
2. *Harijan*, 28-7-1946; 85:33.
3. *Young India*, 7-11-1929; 42:108.

## Gandhiji on VILLAGES

### IDEAL VILLAGE

"That village may be regarded as reformed, where everybody wears khadi, which produces all the khadi it needs, in which every inhabitant spends some of his time in one or more processes relating to cotton, which uses only oil produced in indigenous oil-presses, which consumes only jaggery manufactured in the village itself or in its neighbourhood and only hand-milled flour and hand-pounded rice; the village, in other words, where the largest possible number of village industries are flourishing, in which nobody is illiterate, where the roads are clean, there is a fixed place for evacuation, the wells are clean, there is harmony among the different communities, and untouchability is completely absent, in which everybody gets cow's milk, ghee etc., in moderate quantities, in which nobody is without work, and which is free from quarrels and thefts, and in which the people abide by the *sevak's* advice in all matters. This is possible in the existing conditions. I cannot of course say about the time required."

(Letter to Munnalal Shah, 4-4-1941; 73:421)

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"The villagers can make great progress if they work like this in co-operation with one another. Ours is a small village. We should inquire and find out in which spheres of activity and to what extent we can work on a co-operative basis. Even if all villagers are not inclined to follow the co-operative method we must find out those who are prepared to give it a trial. . .

"We should produce all the other necessities in the village itself. Then we should also find out what other industries we can set up here. We ought to press oil and make shoes locally. Similarly we can think of other industries also. . .

"We have to think about education in Sevagram. Though you have not asked me any question on this, I may at least tell you that in my opinion there should not be a single illiterate person in Sevagram. I put forward the concept of basic education very late in my life but all the same I attach great importance to it. I had put the following question before the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad : What kind of

literature are the writers bringing out for the crores of illiterate villagers? This task is as huge as it is difficult.

"Let me also tell you that our own life, if it is simple and pure, is bound to have its impact on the villagers without our having to tell them in so many words."

(Speech at the prayer meeting, Sevagram, 22-10-1941; 75:43.44.)

\* \* \*

"My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow *useful* money crops, thus excluding *ganja*, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks, ensuring clean water supply. This can be done through controlled wells or tanks. Education will be compulsory up to the final basic course. As far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of satyagraha and non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The government of the village will be conducted by a Panchayat of five persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office. Any village can become such a republic today without much interference even from the present Government whose sole effective connection with the villages is the exaction of the village revenue. I have not examined here the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-

violence rules him and his government. He and his village are able to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in the defence of his and his village's honour.

"The reader may well ask me—I am asking myself while penning these" lines—as to why I have not been able to model Sevagram after the picture here drawn. My answer is: I am making the attempt. I can see dim traces of success though I can show nothing visible. But there is nothing inherently impossible in the picture drawn here. To model such a village may be the work of a lifetime. Any lover of true democracy and village life can take up a village, treat it as his world and sole work, and he will find good results. He begins by being the village scavenger, spinner, watchman, medicine man and schoolmaster all at once. If nobody comes near him, he will be satisfied with scavenging and spinning."

*(Harijan, 26-7-1942; 76:308-9.)*

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"My idea of self-sufficiency is that villages must be self-sufficient in regard to food, cloth and other basic necessities. But even this can be overdone. Therefore you must grasp my idea properly. Self-sufficiency does not mean narrowness. To be self-sufficient is not to be altogether self-contained. In no circumstances would we be able to produce all the things we need nor do we aim at doing so. So though our aim is complete self-sufficiency, we shall have to get from outside the village what we cannot produce in the village; we shall have to produce more of what we can in order thereby to obtain in exchange what we are unable to produce. Only nothing of our extra produce would be sent to Bombay or far off cities. Nor would we produce things with an eye to export to those cities. That would run counter to my conception of swadeshi. Swadeshi means serving my immediate neighbour rather than those far away.

"Our outlook must be that we would serve the village first, then the neighbourhood, then the district and thereafter the province."

*(Discussion with Shrikrishnadas Jaju, 10-10-1944; 78:171.)*

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"My ideal village still exists only in my imagination. After all every human being lives in the world of his own imagination. In this village of my dreams the villager will not be dull—he will be all awareness. He will not live like an animal in filth and darkness. Men and women will live in freedom, prepared to face the whole world. There will be no plague, no cholera and no smallpox. Nobody will be allowed to be idle or to wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to do body labour. Granting all this, I can still envisage a number of things that will have to be organized on a large scale. Perhaps there will even be railways and also post and telegraph offices. I do not know what things there will be or will not be. Nor am I bothered about it. If I can make sure of the essential thing, other things will follow in due course. But if I give up the essential thing, I give up everything."

(Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, 5-10-1945; 81:320.)

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1. The crucial question according to you, is how to ensure man's mental, economic, political and moral development. That is my position too.
2. And in doing so every individual should have equal right and opportunity.
3. From this point of view there should be equality between villages and cities. And therefore their food and drink, their way of life, their dress and their habits should be the same. If such a condition is to be brought about people should produce their own cloth and food and build their own houses. So also they should produce their own water and electricity.
4. Man is not born to live in the jungle; he is born to live in society. If we are to make sure that one person does not ride on another's back, the unit should be an ideal village or a social group which will be self-sufficient, but the members of which will be interdependent. This conception will bring about a change in human relationship all over the world."

(Letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, 13-11-1945; 82:72.)

\* \* \*

"Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world. It will be trained and prepared to perish in the attempt to defend itself against any onslaught from without."

*(Harijan, 28-7-1946; 85:32.)*

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"A village unit as conceived by me is as strong as the strongest. My imaginary village consists of 1,000 souls. Such a unit can give a good account of itself, if it is well organized on a basis of self-sufficiency. Do not, therefore, think that unless you have a big union you will not be able to give a good account of yourself. . .

"... I have conceived round the village as the centre a series of ever-widening circles, not one on top of the other, but all on the same plane, so that there is none higher or lower than the other. Maine has said that India was a congerie of village republics. The towns were then subservient to the villages. They were emporia for the surplus village products and beautiful manufactures. That is the skeleton of my picture to serve as a pattern for Independent India. There are many faults in the ancient village system. Unless they are eradicated, there will not only be no hope for the untouchables in a free India but for India in the comity of nations."

*(Harijan, 4-8-1946; 85:79.)*

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## VILLAGE AND NON-VIOLENCE

"I expect to convert the zamindars and other capitalists by the non-violent method, and therefore there is for me nothing like an inevitability of class conflict. For it is an essential part of nonviolence to go along the line of least resistance. The moment the cultivators of the soil realize their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilized. What can the poor zamindar do when they say that they will simply not work the land unless they are paid enough to feed and clothe and educate themselves and their children in a decent manner? In reality the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. That is how I do not see the necessity of class conflict. If I thought it inevitable I should not hesitate to preach it and teach it."

*(Harijan, 5-12-1936; 64:73.)*

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"Cast off the cloak of foreign thoughts and ideals, identify yourselves with the villagers. The Western world is giving us destructive knowledge; we want to impart constructive education through non-violence."

*(Harijan, 30-4-1938; 67:36.)*

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"If the worker going to the village has no faith in nonviolence, our work must fail. If he concerns himself with economics alone and disregards ethics and morality, all our efforts are of no avail. Non-violence is the basis on which our work is to be built. It will not do to ignore it. In the initial stages people might achieve something even without it but ultimately the edifice of swaraj will not be raised without the foundation of ahimsa.

*(Speech at All India Spinners' Association meeting, Sevagram, 1-9-1944; 78:63.)*

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"There are some big men who hold this view. They think that the teaching of non-violence has proved disastrous. They believe that the way of the spinning-wheel would only take us back to the medieval ages. They think the same of village industries and Nayee Talim. Could it not be that there was something basically wrong with me which led me to have a misguided view of things all through? However, my views are the same as they have always been."

(A letter, 14-4-1947; 87:278.)

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"Whatever effect is produced there will be the fruit of ahimsa. Without ahimsa village uplift seems impossible to me."

(Letter to Manibhai Desai, 11-12-1947; 90:210.)

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## EXPLOITATION OF VILLAGES BY CITIES

"The half a dozen modern cities are an excrescence and serve at the present moment the evil purpose of draining the life-blood of the villages. Khaddar is an attempt to revise and reverse the process and establish a better relationship between the cities and the villages. The cities with their insolent torts (sic) are a constant menace to the life and liberty of the villagers.

"Khaddar has the greatest organizing power in it because it has itself to be organized and because it affects all India. If khaddar rained from heaven it would be a calamity. But as it can only be manufactured by the willing co-operation of starving millions and thousands of middle-class men and women, its success means the best organization conceivable along peaceful lines."

*(Young India, 17-3-1927; 33:166.)*

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"I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its few cities but in its 7,00,000 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."

*(Harijan, 4-4-1936; 62:298.)*

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"Today our villages have become a mere appendage to the cities. They exist, as it were, to be exploited by the latter and depend on the latter's sufference. This is unnatural. It is only when the cities realize the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive from them, instead of selfishly exploiting them, that a healthy and moral relationship between the two will spring up, and if the city children are to play their part in this great and noble work of social reconstruction, the vocations through which they are to receive their education ought to be directly related to the requirements of the villages. So far as I can see, the various processes of cotton manufacture from ginning and cleaning of cotton to the spinning of yarn answer this test as nothing else does. Even today cotton is grown in the villages and is ginned and spun and converted into cloth in the cities. But the chain of processes which cotton undergoes in the mills from the beginning to the end constitutes a huge tragedy of waste in men, materials and mechanical power.

"My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding, etc., is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequence. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages and lay the foundation of a juster social order in which there is no unnatural division between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom. And all this would be accomplished without the horrors of a bloody class war or a colossal capital

expenditure such as would be involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or technical skill. Lastly, by obviating the necessity for highly specialized talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands."

*(Harijan, 9-10-1937; 66:169-70.)*

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"The cities are not only draining the villages of their wealth but talent also."

*(Harijan, 31-3-1946; 82:365.)*

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"I will have no regrets if the money invested in these machines is reduced to dust. True India lies in its seven lakh villages. Do you know that big cities like London have exploited India and the big cities of India in turn have exploited its villages? That is how palatial mansions have come up in big cities and villages have become impoverished. I want to infuse new life into these villages. I do not say that all the mills in cities should be demolished. But we should be vigilant and start afresh wherever we happen to make a mistake. We should stop exploiting the villages and should closely examine the injustice done to the villages and strengthen their economic structure."

*(Talk with Manu Gandhi, 18-4-1947; 87:303.)*

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"In the scheme of reconstruction for Free India, its villages should no longer depend, as they are now doing, on its cities, but cities should exist only for and in the interest of the villages. Therefore, the spinning-wheel should occupy the proud position of the centre round which all the life-giving village industries would revolve."

*(Harijan, 30-8-1947; 89:82.)*

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"But for the last 150 years the trend has been for cities to exist only to squeeze wealth out of the villages. They took raw material from the villages, carried on trade with foreign countries and made crores of rupees. This money did not go to the villagers, or only a very small fraction of it did. The bulk of it went to millionaires and the mill-owners. Towns exist to exploit the villages. The city culture does not therefore fit into the framework of villages. A woman worker from a town should not carry to the villages the atmosphere and the ways of towns. May be she has a lot of money and articles of luxury. May be she has a motor car, cosmetics, dresses of velvet and toothpastes, foreign or indigenous, tooth brushes, dainty shoes and sandals. If she takes all these things along with her, how can she serve the villages? If with these things she sets the standard for the villagers they will devour the villages. The cities should be for increasing the prosperity of the villages, for making money available to them for developing the village culture."

(Prarthana pravachan II pp. 185-8; New Delhi, 9-12-1947; 90:201.)

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## UPLIFTMENT OF VILLAGES

"We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have, in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilization. Its defects are well known but not one of them is irremediable. To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilization seems to me an impossibility, unless we are prepared by some drastic means to reduce the population from three hundred million to three or say even thirty. I can therefore suggest remedies on the assumption that we must perpetuate the present rural civilization and endeavour to rid it of its acknowledged defects. This can only be done if the youth of the country will settle down to village life. And if they will do this they must reconstruct their life and pass every day of their vacation in the villages surrounding their colleges or high schools and those who have finished their education or are not receiving any should think of settling down in villages."

*(Young India, 7-11-1929; 42:108.)*

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"India does not live in its towns but in its villages. But if the cities want to demonstrate that their populations will live for the villagers of India the bulk of their resources should be spent in ameliorating the condition of and befriending the poor. We must not lord it over them, we must learn to be their servants. When the cities realize that they must live for the welfare of the poor, they will make their palaces and institutions and the life of their inhabitants correspond somewhat to our villages."

*(Young India, 23-4-1931; 46:12.)*

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"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 utilize 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."

*(Harijan, 30-11-1934; 59:413.)*

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"The true Indian civilization is in the Indian villages. The modern city civilization you find in Europe and America, and in a handful of our cities which are copies of the Western cities and which were built for the foreigner, and by him. But they cannot last. It is only the handicraft civilization that will endure and stand the test of time. But it can do so only if we can correlate the intellect with the hand. The late Madhusudan Das used to say that our peasants and workers had, by reason of working with bullocks, become like bullocks; and he was right. We have to lift them from the estate of the brute to the estate of man, and that we can do only by correlating the intellect with the hand. Not until they learn to work intelligently and make something new every day, not until they are taught to know the joy of work, can we raise them from their low estate."

*(Harijan, 30-3-1940; 71:335-36.)*

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"India is trying to evolve true democracy, i.e., without violence. Our weapons are those of satyagraha expressed through the charkha, the village industries, primary education through handicrafts, removal of untouchability, communal harmony, prohibition, and non-violent organization of labour as in Ahmedabad. These mean mass effort and mass education. We have big agencies for conducting these activities. They are purely voluntary, and their only sanction is service of the lowliest."

*(Harijan, 18-5-1940; 72:60.)*

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"If some of you see the villages, you will not be fascinated by the sight. You will have to scratch below the dung heap. I do not say that they ever were heavenly places. Today they are really dung-heaps. They were not like that before. What I say is not from history but from what I have seen myself. I have travelled from one end of India to the other and have seen the miserable specimen of humanity with lustreless eyes. They are India. In these humble cottages, in the midst of these dung-heaps, are to be found the humble Bhangis in whom you find the concentrated essence of wisdom."

*(Harijan, 20-4-1947; 87:192.)*

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". . . besides communal unity I had recommended to the nation only one thing, viz., handspun yarn with which alone we could bring swaraj nearer.

"The spinning-wheel has almost been forgotten. There is all this talk of militarization and industrialization. But it is my conviction that a day will come when they will all see for themselves that for India there is no way other than that of village industries and non-violence. We shall not find a way out unless we develop these. But I am still optimistic."

*(Talk with C. Rajagopalachari, 25-5-1947; 88:4.)*

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"Take the village people and slum-dwellers in your hands and give them the benefit of your knowledge, skill, insight, constructive work and patriotic spirit. Give the people this true education through the example of your own lives. Let all your activities be directed to the welfare of the people. If that is not done and if the people lose patience, our plight will be much worse than the present slavery. Before the people take to the path of destruction, see that they are given constructive, life-giving training."

*(Bihar Pachhi Delhi, pp. 14-19; 88:16.)*

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## VILLAGE SANITATION

"It is scarcely necessary to enlarge upon the rule that dirt must not be thrown on the street. Disposal of refuse is also a science. Glass, iron, etc., should be buried deep. Twigs and sticks used for cleaning teeth should be washed, dried and used for fuel. Rags may be sold. Left-over food, peelings, etc., should be buried and turned into manure. I have seen many a heap of manure prepared in this way. Paper can be made from rags. It should not be necessary to employ anyone to remove refuse in a village, because there is very little of it and most of it can be converted into manure.

"Near the village or dwellings, there should be no ditches in which water can collect. Mosquitoes do not breed where water does not stagnate. Where there are no mosquitoes, the incidence of malaria is low. At one time, water used to collect around Delhi. After the hollows were filled, mosquitoes were greatly reduced and so also was malaria."

*(Navajivan, 2-11-1919; 16:273.)*

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"Naturally a village worker must find happiness in a simple and frugal life. Let no one think that I have sketched what is an impossible requirement. I have not. The technique though it reads formidable is by no means so for a patient student. Purity of character must be a foregone conclusion in any of this work. And no village worker can help falling a prey to some disease or other if he does not know and observe in his own person the laws of sanitation and does not know domestic treatment of simple diseases. The spinning organization is capable of accommodating any number of workers who can satisfy the simple test laid down above."

*(Young India, 10-3-1927; 33:152.)*

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"Villagers today have no practical knowledge in many fields and we find, instead, that often ignorant superstition has established a hold over them.

". . . From the standpoint of health, the condition of villages is deplorable. One of the chief causes of our poverty is the non-availability of this essential knowledge of hygiene. If sanitation in villages can be improved, lakhs of rupees will easily be saved and the condition of people improved to that extent. A sick peasant can never work as hard as a healthy one. . .

". . . In my opinion based on experience, our poverty plays a very small part in our insanitary condition."

*(Shikshan Ane Sahitya, 18-8-1929; 41:295.)*

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". . . Hence the primary duty of a village worker is to educate villagers in sanitary habits. . .

". . . This is so because these insanitary habits have taken such deep root that the villagers are not prepared to listen to the volunteers, and, even if they do so, show a singular lack of enthusiasm to act accordingly. . .

". . . Hence it is the dharma of the volunteers to give object- lessons. Only if they themselves perform the tasks that have to be performed by the villagers, will the latter follow their example; then doubtless they will positively do so. . .

". . . We should never get into the habit of defecating on the road. It is uncivilized to do so in the open in public and to make even little children do so. We are aware of the uncivilized nature of this act, for we avert our eyes if anyone happens to pass at that moment. Hence every village should have the most inexpensive water-closets built at one place. The spot at which the dunghill is located can itself be used for this purpose. Farmers can share among themselves the manure accumulated in this manner. And so long as they do not start making such arrangements, volunteers should clean dunghills in the same way as they clean streets. Every morning after the villagers have performed this function, they should go to the dunghill at an appointed hour, clean up all the filth and dispose

of it in the manner mentioned above. If no field is available, one should mark out the place where the excreta may be buried. If this is done, it will facilitate the task every day and when the farmers get convinced of the matter, they can make use of the manure that is collected there."

*(Shikshan Ane Sahitya, 22-9-1929; 41:445-47.)*

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"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. . .

". . . 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 everyday, as he realizes 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."

*(Harijan, 31-8-1934; 58:305-307.)*

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"I am of opinion that a good deal of medical help is given only in order to make people more helpless. Medical help, in most cases, is practically thrown at them, and so it is lost on them. Some of my co-workers are going to a village close by where the streets are covered with filth. No wonder if the eyes of the children there are bad and there are all kinds of diseases. Just now our workers' efforts do not seem to make any impression on the villagers; but when they find that, as a result of their village having become cleaner and free from filth, they are also comparatively free from disease, they will appreciate the difference. Now, if you had a free dispensary there and were giving doses of medicine to all that came,

you would make no headway. Tackling the village sanitation is the only really substantial work. There is an evil at our doors which is perfectly preventible, and yet we have suffered our villagers to tolerate it for scores of years. It is an uphill task, whilst the distribution of free medicines is much easier. But I am asking my co-workers to avoid the easy thing and cheap applause. We must first concentrate on the prevention of disease, we can tackle the disease itself later on."

*(Harijan, 29-3-1935; 60:324.)*

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"The task of rural sanitation is no easy one, it means nothing less than raising the village Bhangi to the status of an ideal Bhangi. The whole subject is unexplored; the profession, far from being a dirty one, is a purifying, life-protecting one. Only we have debased it. We have to raise it to its true status."

*(Harijan, 5-12-1936; 64:105.)*

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"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, 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 the 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."

*(Harijan, 9-1-1937; 64:217-18.)*

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"If rural reconstruction were not to include rural sanitation, our villages would remain the muck-heaps that they are today. Village sanitation is a vital part of village life and is as difficult as it is important. It needs a heroic effort to eradicate age-long insanitation. The village worker who is ignorant of the science of village sanitation, who is not a successful scavenger, cannot fit himself for village service.

"It seems to be generally admitted that without the new or basic education the education of millions of children in India is well-nigh impossible. The village

worker has, therefore, to master it, and become a basic education teacher himself.

"Adult education will follow in the wake of basic education as a matter of course. Where this new education has taken root, the children themselves become their parents' teachers. Be that as it may, the village worker has to undertake adult education also."

*(Harijan, 18-8-1940; 72:380.)*

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"Village sanitation, domestic cleanliness, personal hygiene and health care have the first place and also full scope, the underlying idea being that this done there can be no disease."

*(Letter to D.D. Joshi, 1-8-1946; 85:105.)*

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"Mirabehn had called a conference which was attended by a large number of people. They came to the conclusion that all the cow-dung, human faces and vegetable-waste available in villages could be turned into rich manure. It requires not expenditure but a little labour and it increases the fertility of the soil. . .

"... I do not know how clean you keep your village. But it is your paramount duty to make yourselves strong. You must keep yourselves clean externally and internally. Your village should be free of dirt and dung in every way. And it should be free from foul smells. You should follow the rules of sanitation."

*(Speech at a prayer meeting, 27-12-1947; 90:306-307.)*

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## VILLAGES AND SPINNING

"For the vast bulk of the population, as also the worker in the villages, a museum of industries is simply bewildering. They should have one universal industry. And by a process of exclusion, one arrives at the irresistible conclusion that the only universal industry for the millions is spinning and no other. That does not mean that other industries do not matter or are useless. Indeed, from the individual standpoint, any other industry would be more remunerative than spinning. Watch-making will be no doubt a most remunerative and fascinating industry. But how many can engage in it? Is it of any use to the millions of villagers? But if the villagers can reconstruct their home, begin to live again as their forefathers did, if they begin to make good use of their idle hours, all else, all the other industries will revive as a matter of course.

". . . national resources must be concentrated upon the one industry of hand-spinning which all can take up now and besides which the vast majority can take up no other. And when the nation's attention is thus rivetted on its revival, we will not have to be in search of a market for khaddar. The energy and money that have today to be devoted to popularizing khaddar will tomorrow be devoted to its greater manufacture and to its improvement. It is the national inertia that blinds us to the possibility of khaddar and thus paralyses our capacity for a grand national effort. It is not enough to say that hand-spinning is *one* of the industries to be revived. It is necessary to insist that it is *the* central industry that must engage our attention if we are to re-establish the village home."

(*Young India*, 30-9-1926; 31:463-4.)

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"It is this spinning of a constructive type that can bring swaraj and it is in this land that the charkha can sing its finest music."

(*Young India*, 29-12-1927; 35:402.)

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"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."

(*Harijan*, 2-1-1937; 64:195.)

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"My intellect will continue to develop till the moment I die. The charkha is also the prop for my intellect but it does not stray into wrong paths. I have no time to see, hear or read pleasurable things. I discover *Daridranarayana* through the charkha and have vision of God. This is the way my intellect has been developing and will continue to develop all my life. The testing of a man is not complete till he dies. If at the moment of death a man's intellect does not retain its brilliance I will say that he has not succeeded. . .

"I am not yet able to say where the limits of the constructive programme lie. The instance of the clay image shows only this. In the constructive programme we have all-round development. The charkha is a mantra. When I see those who ply the charkha discouraged, I am baffled."

(Speech at Gandhi Seva Sangh meeting, 20-4-1937; 65:126-127.)

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"People may say I am mad in saying that I wish to die with the charkha in my hand. I do not wish to die holding a string of beads. For concentration the charkha is my beads. God appears to me in thousands of forms. Sometimes I see him in the charkha, sometimes in Hindu-Muslim unity, sometimes in the eradication of untouchability. I move as my feeling draws me. When I wish to enter a room in an institution, I do so and I feel there the presence of God. In the *Gita* God has said that He looks to the well-being of those who worship Him. You must be firm in this faith if you have understood me."

(Ibid, 65:133-134.)

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"I repeat that if untouchability lives, Hinduism and with it India dies. Is that not a programme worth living for, dying for? And the spinning-wheel whose every turn brings India nearer her destiny? Surely it can fully occupy every day of every Congressman. And the wheel being the centre of our solar system it includes all the planets in the shape of village industries. . .

". . . The wheel brings us at once to the emancipation of India's manhood, *kisans*, labourers and all those who are weary and heavyladen. If this all-inclusive and mighty programme is not understood and appreciated by Congressmen they do not know the A B C of non-violence nor do they know the elements of C.D."

(Statement to the press, Sevagram, 28-10-1941; 75:61-62.)

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"My idea is that in a well-organized village one person should suffice. For example, one worker may devote two hours to taking in yarn, distributing slivers and spinning tools, and sales of khadi; village industry work might take even less, and the remainder of the time he could give to village uplift and general education. This has not till now been possible because the khadi workers' time has been devoted to teaching people how to spin, etc. But now the time has come when khadi and village products, locally produced, must also be locally absorbed. In that case one person will be able to do all the work. Today it suffices to say that all this work is complementary—and must become one as far as possible. The amalgamation cannot be imposed; it must be a natural growth. I do not, I cannot, apportion any blame to anyone for the existing position. Our plans have progressed as far as our intelligence and experience could have taken them. The creation of khadi *vidyalayas* is meant to expand and improve the technique of work. We shall learn from them how all departments of village work can be amalgamated."

(*Harijan*, 31-5-1942; 76:38.)

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"If we are able to adopt the charkha intelligently we can revive the entire economic life of our villages once more."

(Speech at All India Spinners' Association, Sevagram, 1-9-1944; 78:66.)

\* \* \*

"Today we are not really able to help the villagers. By offering the spinners three, four, six or eight annas I comfort myself with the belief that I have given them a livelihood. But it amounts to nothing more than a dole, for the work that I am providing them is not of a permanent nature. In case we get control of the State in our hands and by that means close all mills, it may perhaps then be possible to provide them permanent work. But today I cannot hide from them the truth that I have been only trying to fill their idle hours. If I have to provide them with some money I shall teach them other crafts also. I shall fully acquaint them with the present economic situation and educate them in this regard. No doubt I would wish to give work to every spinner who comes seeking it. But I shall not send the khadi thus produced to Bombay. I shall ask the workers to sell it in the neighbouring villages. But this is not enough. I must investigate what work other than spinning can be provided to them in the village. Only by revising the entire economic life of the village can our work become permanent. Whether for villagers or for us, I agree, cities will always have some sort of attraction. Nevertheless we shall be free from our present day city life: We shall show how in contrast to the cities more amenities can be provided in the villages. But if we merely go on sending to Bombay the khadi produced in the village, this object can never be accomplished, however high a wage we may pay to the village spinners. . .

"... I would explain to the people that they could not get khadi like mill-cloth. I would try to bring it home to them that if khadi is dearer the extra money goes to the villager, his family and to the village, and that this provides security to the economy of the village. I would explain to them the moral aspect as well. Besides, I would teach them other methods of earning in the village. I have now given up the idea that villagers can earn their living through doing khadi work alone."

(Discussion with Shrikrishnadas Jaju, 12-10-1944; 78-185-87.)

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"I have distinguished other village industries from khadi and called them planets and the charkha or the spinning-wheel the sun. As a matter of fact there is no real reason for such a distinction, for khadi is also a village industry. But it has acquired a special position, and it is because of this special position which it has acquired that we can now talk about the other village industries.

"Today we are not required to demonstrate the special position acquired by khadi but we are required to discover ways and means of putting it and other village industries on a firm footing.

"One of the ways is to resort to centralized production of necessities through machinery worked by power and requiring the minimum of human labour. This results in increasing the number of the rich few and making it a dharma to multiply the people's wants. Even if all such centralized industries were to be State-owned, it would make no difference to me. For the obligation to increase wants will not only not decrease, but may be strengthened where such industries are owned by the State. Only the task of increasing wants will pass from the hands of small capitalists to the bigger capitalists, or the State, whose action will secure the seal of public support. This is how things are going in England and America. I am purposely leaving out Russia; because their work is still continuing, I shall not at this stage dare to assess the result. I hope that Russia will produce something unique. But I must confess that I have my doubts whether it will truly succeed. I shall consider it a great success if, through it, all the wealth really goes into the hands of the poor, and intellectual and personal freedom is at the same time secured. In that case I will have to revise my present concept of ahimsa.

"Now I come to the main point. In England and America, machinery rules supreme. On the contrary, in India we have village industries, symbolizing the resurgence of human labour. In the West, a handful of persons with the aid of mechanical power rule over others. In India, on the other hand, the great task of bringing out what is best in every individual is being attempted by the A.I.S.A., A.I.V.I.A. and other allied institutions. From this point of view the growth of Western civilization seems to be an easy thing, but to develop and organize the

latent capacities of individuals through village industries appears to be a very difficult task.

"Looking at it from another point of view, it may be said that, for a handful of men to rule over other men with the aid of steam and other power will be harmful in the end, as it is bound to multiply injustice. By using the human power available to us by the million, injustice is reduced. And there is no room for failure. For here, along with human power, we rely on divine Power. In the other method, no value is attached to divine Power. In short, if in the case of village industries we do not truly obtain God's help, we are bound to fail. The Western method only appears to be successful, but in truth there is nothing but failure in it. For it destroys the will to work."

*(Pyarelal Papers. Also Gram Udyog Patrika, June, 1945, Part-I, pp. 344-5; 80:152-153.)*

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"The weavers live in the cities today. The businessman exploits them and keeps them dependent on him. If the people Government could supply them with all the yarn they require it would simplify things for them and put their vocation on a stable basis. They would not then need to live in the cities. . .

". . . The villagers should develop such a high degree of skill that articles prepared by them will command a ready market outside. When our villages are fully developed there will be no dearth in them of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In short, there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the villages. Today the villages are barren and desolate and are like dung-heaps. Tomorrow they will be like beautiful gardens and it would be difficult to deceive the people there. . .

". . . The reconstruction of the villages should be organized not on a temporary but on a permanent basis."

*(Harijan, 10-11-1946; 86:58-59.)*

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"I find that talk of khadi and village industries does not interest people any more. Here I am sitting in the capital. Refugees are lying all round shelterless and shivering. Thousands are pouring in every day. How long will you feed them without giving them any work? I am sure everyone will remember this old man one day when it is realized that India has no alternative except to develop village industries. Any government formed by any party—Congress, Socialist or Communist—will be forced to accept this truth. We do not realize this today, but we shall realize it after we stumble in our attempts to compete with America or Russia."

*(Dilhiman Gandhiji, I, 296, 17-11-1947; 90:57.)*

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". . . what I want is that the music of the charkha should be heard in every home and no cloth except khadi should be seen anywhere. If this happened, the poverty prevailing in the villages would disappear."

*(Prarthana Pravachan-II, 189-192; 90:207.)*

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## EDUCATION FOR VILLAGES

"Unfortunately we, who learn in colleges, forget that India lives in her villages and not in her towns.

"India has 7,00,000 villages and you, who receive a liberal education, are expected to take that education or the fruits of that education to the villages. How will you infect the people of the villages with your scientific knowledge? Are you then learning science in terms of the villages and will you be so handy and so practical that the knowledge that you derive in a college so magnificently built—and I believe equally magnificently equipped—you will be able to use for the benefit of the villagers?

"Lastly then, I place before you the instrument to which you may apply your scientific knowledge and that is the humble spinning-wheel. Seven lakhs villages in India are today pining for want of that simple instrument. It was in every home and every cottage of India only a century ago, and at that time, India was not a lazy country that it is today."

*(The Hindu, 19-3-1925; 26:302.)*

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"'But what about my children and their education?'—says the candidate worker. If the children are to receive their education after the modern style, I can give no useful guidance. If it be deemed enough to make them healthy, sinewy, honest, intelligent villagers, any day able to earn their livelihood in the home of their parents' adoption, they will have their all-round education under the parental roof and withal they will be partly earning members of the family from the moment they reach the years of understanding and are able to use their hands and feet in a methodical manner. There is no school equal to a decent home and no teachers equal to honest virtuous parents. Modern high school education is a dead weight on the villagers. Their children will never be able to get it, and thank God they will never miss it if they have the training of the decent home."

*(Harijan, 23-11-1935; 62:133.)*

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"Those who go and live in villages as true villagers are needed where more than persons like me who go there with their own thermos flasks; such persons can provide living literature to the people."

*(Harijan, 14-11-1936; 63:415.)*

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"When you are imparting knowledge to a child of 7 or 10 through the medium of an industry, you should to begin with exclude all those subjects which cannot be linked with the craft. . .

". . . Our education has got to be revolutionized. The brain must be educated through the hand. If I were a poet, I could write poetry on the possibilities of the five fingers. Why should you think that the mind is everything and the hands and feet nothing? Those who do not train their hands, who go through the ordinary rut of education, lack 'music' in their life. All their faculties are not trained. Mere book knowledge does not interest the child so as to hold his attention fully. The brain gets weary of mere words, and the child's mind begins to wander. The hand does the things it ought not to do, the eye sees the things it ought not to see, the ear hears the things it ought not to hear, and they do not do, see, or hear, respectively what they ought to. They are not taught to make the right choice and so their education often proves their ruin. An education which does not teach us to discriminate between good and bad, to assimilate the one and eschew the other is a misnomer. . .

". . . What we need is educationists with originality, fired with true zeal, who will think out from day to day what they are going to teach their pupils. The teacher cannot get this knowledge through musty volumes. He has to use his own faculties of observation and thinking and impart his knowledge to the children through his lips, with the help of a craft. This means a revolution in the method of teaching, a revolution in the teacher's outlook."

*(Harijan, 18-2-1939; 68:372-374.)*

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"Some work for adult education is being done in many places. It is mostly concentrated among mill-hands and the like in big cities. No one has really touched the village. Mere three Rs and lectures on politics won't satisfy me. Adult education of my conception must make men and women better citizens all round. To work out the syllabus and to organize the work of adult education is a more difficult task than preparation of the seven years' course for children. The common central feature of both will be the imparting of education through village crafts. Agriculture will play an important part in adult education under the basic scheme. Literary instruction must be there. Much information will be given orally. There will be books more for the teachers than the taught. We must teach the majority how to behave towards the minority and vice versa. The right type of adult education should teach good neighbourliness and cut at the very root of untouchability and communal problem."

*(The Hindu, 29-10-1944; 78:237-38.)*

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"According to Nai Talim, craft, literary instruction, hygiene and art are not separate things but blend together and cover education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death. Therefore, I would not divide village uplift work into water-tight compartments from the very beginning but undertake an activity which will combine all four. Instead of regarding craft and industry as different from education I will regard the former as the medium for the latter. Nai Talim therefore ought to be integrated into the scheme."

*(Harijan, 10-11-1946; 86:59.)*

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## ECONOMY OF VILLAGES

"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. The millions must have a simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be enabled to reintroduce spinning in their homes, and every village must repossess its own weaver."

*(Young India, 21-7-1920; 18:72.)*

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". . . all the village industries are gradually slipping out of the hands of the villager, who has become 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? . . .

". . .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 organizations, 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."

(Speech at Gandhi Seva Sangh, 30-11-1934; 59:409-11.)

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"Villagers in many parts of India live on dal and rice or roti, and plenty of chillies, which harm the system. Since the economic reorganization of villages has been commenced with food reform, it is necessary to find out the simplest and cheapest foods that would enable villagers to regain lost health. The addition of green leaves to their meals will enable villagers to avoid many diseases from which they are now suffering. The villagers' food is deficient in vitamins; many of them can be supplied by fresh green leaves."

(*Harijan*, 15-2-1935; 60:229)

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"Indeed, economics that ruins one's health is false, because money without health has no value. Only that economy is true which enables one to conserve one's health. The whole of the initial programme of village re-construction is, therefore, aimed at true economy, because it is aimed at promoting the health and vigour of the villagers."

(*Harijan*, 1-3-1935; 60:268.)

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"Not that there is not enough land to feed our 35 crores. It is absurd to say that India is over populated and that the surplus population must die. I am sure that if all the land that is available was properly utilized and made to yield up to its capacity, it would surely maintain the whole population. Only we have got to be industrious and to make two blades of grass grow where one grows today.

"The remedy is to identify ourselves with the poor villager and to help him make the land yield its plenty, help him produce what we need, and confine ourselves to use what he produces, live as he lives, and persuade him to take to more rational ways of diet and living.

"We eat mill-ground flour, and even the poor villager walks with a head-load of half a maund grain to have it ground in the nearest flour-mill. Do you know that in spite of the plenty of food-stuffs we produce, we import wheat from outside and we eat the 'superfine' flour from Australia? We will not use our hand-ground flour, and the poor villager also foolishly copies us.

We thus turn wealth into waste, nectar into poison."

(*Harijan*, 11-5-1935; 60:463.)

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". . . compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. It is a state of slavery. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. And it is health which is real wealth, not pieces of silver and gold. The Village Industries Association is an experiment in willing bread labour."

(*Harijan*, 29-6-1935; 61:212.)

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"My definition of swadeshi is old but it is valid. Only by following it can we evolve a new kind of economics. True economics must follow ethics. Even if we fail in this we shall have succeeded."

(Speech at Gandhi Seva Sangh meeting, 5-3-1936; 62:241.)

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"India's villages require to be revived. Land is parcelled out in holdings, often even less than one acre. The idea, therefore, is to turn waste into wealth. Hence talent that is expensive or that can only express itself in big businesses will not serve my purpose. I want the use of that talent which can see the universe in an atom and, therefore, relates itself to and is rooted in the earth from which we have sprung, on which we are living, to which we have to return. Anyone, therefore, who comes from the West has got to be capable of living the life of the poor. Therefore he must [be] able-bodied and be prepared to live the life of the poorest in the land."

(Letter to Dr. Fritz Michaelis, 13-8-1937; 66:41.)

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"Our worker will have to keep a careful eye on the cattle wealth of his village. If we cannot use this wealth properly India is doomed to disaster and we also shall perish. For these animals will then, as in the West, become an economic burden to us and we shall have no option before us save killing them."

(*Khadi : Why and How*, pp. 161-65; 78:162.)

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## REVIVAL OF VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

"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, handmade 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."

*(Harijan, 30-11-34; 59:414.)*

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"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."

*(Harijan- 4-1-1935; 60:55.)*

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"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."

*(Harijan, 14-9-1935; 61:416.)*

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"If we are to re-introduce village articles after being used to the Western style, we shall have to be patient and inventive. That the pen requires constant dipping is a good point. It lessens fatigue. That the fountain-pen saves time is not an unmixed blessing. The village pen and ink undoubtedly admit of improvement. That can only come when you and I use these things."

*(Letter to Amrit Kaur, 17-4-1937; 65:97.)*

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"At one time cities were dependent on the villages. Now it is the reverse. There is no interdependence. Villages are being exploited and drained by the cities.

". . . under my scheme, nothing will be allowed to be produced by cities which can be equally well produced by the villages. The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing houses for village products."

*(Harijan, 28-1-1939; 68:259.)*

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"In modern terms, it is beneath human dignity to lose one's individuality and become a mere cog in the machine. I want every individual to become a full-blooded, fully developed member of society. The villages must become self-sufficient. I see no other solution if one has to work in terms of ahimsa."

*(Harijan, 28-1-1939; 68:266.)*

"If village industries are revived, millions of villagers will get full wages."

*(Harijan Sevak, 8-7-1939; 69:239.)*

\* \* \*

"The fact is that we have to make a choice between India of the villages that are as ancient as herself and India of the cities which are a creation of foreign domination. Today the cities dominate and drain the villages so that they are crumbling to ruin. My khadi mentality tells me that cities must subserve villages when that domination goes. Exploiting of villages is itself organized violence. If we want swaraj to be built on nonviolence, we will have to give the villages their proper place. This we will never do unless we revive village industries by using the products thereof in place of things produced in city factories, foreign or indigenous. Perhaps it is now clear why I identify khadi with non-violence. Khadi is the chief village handicraft. Kill khadi and you must kill the villages and with them non-violence. I cannot prove this by statistics. The proof is before our eyes."

*(Harijan, 20-1-1940; 71:103.)*

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"Village economy cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil pressing etc." The other village industries cover cattle farming, dairying, farming and compost manure."

*(Constructive Programme : Its meaning and place, 13-12- 1941; 75:153.)*

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## VILLAGES AND CONGRESS / VOLUNTARY WORKERS

"I realize the truth of these words everywhere here in Bengal. It is only recently that we thought of going into the villages. At first, we wanted things from the village people. It is only now that we are going to the villages in order to give the people something. How can we expect to win their confidence in such a short time? It often happens that a father takes years to win his son's confidence. We have to win back our honoured place among the village people, and will get nothing through impatience. Some persons serve their own interests under the guise of service. What other means do the village people have, except experience to distinguish between such persons and genuine workers? Public workers, therefore, must cultivate patience, forbearance, selflessness and such other virtues. The masses can have no other knowledge but experience to guide them."

*(Navajivan, 28-6-1925; 27:310.)*

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"One quality is essential in such a worker and that is purity of character. If he is a slave of his eleven senses he will be able to do no work. These eleven senses are the five of perception, the five of action and the mind. If the mind is pure, then the ten senses automatically remain pure. If the mind is impure, then everything else will be impure. The senses of action are the arms, the legs, the mouth, and two private organs. The senses of knowledge are the skin, the sense of touch, the palate, the ear for hearing, the nose for smelling and the eyes for sight. Anyone who cannot control these should humbly refuse to become a volunteer. If he has become one and then later on finds that he is unable to control his senses, he should humbly resign. This is the right way if we want work to be done.

"Some might say that this programme cannot be completed in a hundred years and we want swaraj just now. This objection has no force. We shall not have an abundance of workers when we get swaraj. Those who are workers now will run the country under swaraj. It is true that those who run the administration at present will be there when its control is handed over to the people. If, however, the Congress does not have the type of volunteers that I have suggested, then we

shall lose control of the administration or it will become corrupt and there will be anarchy in the country. There is no reason to suppose that those who are hated now will become godlike overnight as soon as the control of the administration changes hands. Hence, as we sow now, so shall we reap. If we get sincere workers, the programme that I have chalked out can begin today. Let us first have seventy thousand volunteers and map out the country into blocks of ten miles each and then we shall see what work to take up. This is not the right way to start work. If we approach the task thus, we shall succeed in doing nothing."

(*Navajivan*, 7-6-1931; 46:338.)

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"Although schemes for industrialization of the country might be put forth, the goal that the Congress has set before it today is not industrialization of the country. Its goal is, according to a resolution passed by the National Congress at Bombay, revival of village industries. You cannot have mass awakening through any elaborate scheme of industrialization that you may put before the *kisans*. It would not add a farthing to their income. But the A.I.S.A. and A.I.V.I.A. will put lakhs into their pockets within the course of a year. Whatever happens to the Working Committee or the ministries, personally I do not sense any danger to the constructive activities of the Congress.

(A.I.S.A. - All India Spinner's Association)

(A.I.V.I.A. - All India Village Industries Association)

(*Harijan*, 18-2-1939; 68:371.)

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"... I am in no hurry to precipitate civil disobedience. My prescription to Congressmen, for the time being, is to consolidate the organization by purging it of all weaknesses. I swear by the old constructive programme of communal unity, removal of untouchability and the charkha. It is quite clear that non-violence is impossible without the first two. If India's villages are to live and prosper, the charkha must become universal. Rural civilization is impossible without the charkha and all it implies, i.e., revival of village crafts. Thus the charkha is the

symbol *par excellence* of non-violence. And it can occupy the whole of the time of all Congressmen. If it makes no appeal to them, either they have no non-violence in them or I do not know the A.B.C. of non-violence. If my love of the charkha is a weakness in me, it is so radical as to make me unfit as a general. The wheel is bound up with my scheme of swaraj, indeed with life itself. All India should know my credentials on the eve of what can become the last and decisive battle for swaraj."

(*Harijan*, 4-11-1939; 70:316.)

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"You will have economic equality in the country only along the road I have pointed out. Perhaps you will not understand this today; but note my words and remember them when I am dead and you will say that what this old man of seventy-five said was true. This is not a prophecy I am making; I am saying this on the basis of my lifelong experience. A time will surely come when nobody will listen to your long speeches; nobody will even attend your meetings, for preaching sermons to the people without following those principles in your own lives does not work long in society. The people will ask you for an account of your own work, will ask you what you yourselves are doing, before they listen to you."

(Talk with socialists, 27-5-1947; 88:18.)

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"This is my analysis of the situation. There should be rapport between the constructive workers and the institution. We must first purify ourselves. The Congress has always had the constructive programme. Now it has the power. Why is it then that our work is not progressing? It may be that we have no heart. Because if we were endowed with a heart we would have been sensitive to the pain of others. Moreover, a person may be in sympathy with one in distress and still may not be of any help to him. But our minds have not opened. Many eminent people who are in politics have had this experience. I have had a hand in the formation of all these various institutions, and I can say that things are in such a state because our hearts are not pure. A current was generated. The people caught on to the idea that that was the way to overcome the British. Villagers too

flocked to us in ever larger numbers. It gladdened us that there was such awakening in the country. But in the forefront were intellectuals. And the result was that the freedom that came was not true freedom. The fight being over, our interest in the constructive programme waned. Constructive work is not a strategy or a technique of fighting. Constructive work connotes a way of life. It can be carried on only by men who have adopted it by the heart as well as by the intellect. . .

"Today politics has become corrupt. Anybody who goes into politics gets contaminated. Let us keep out of it altogether. Our influence will grow thereby. The greater our inner purity, the greater shall be our hold on the people, without any effort on our part."

*(Mahatma Gandhi - The Last Phase, Vol. II, PP- 661-66; 90:216-17.)*

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