

*"Pocket Gandhi Series" No. 18*

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# MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

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EDITED & PUBLISHED  
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1970

BHARTIYA VIDYA BHAVAN : BOMBAY-7

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GANDHI PEACE FOUNDATION : NEW DELHI-1

## PREFACE

**I**T has been an age-old tradition with us in India that we have always attached more value to the things of the spirit rather than material possessions, and have preferred voluntary poverty to riches. The *Fakirs* have invariably enjoyed greater veneration at our hands than the *Amirs*. Not that we have not recognized the importance of wealth in the scheme of life, but the pursuit of wealth for mere wealth's sake has not held much attraction for us. Our sages and seers have consistently impressed upon us the beauty and dignity of remaining voluntarily poor and dispossessing ourselves of all things which we do not need. One cannot serve God and Mammon at one and the same time.

But if voluntary poverty has been extolled as a virtue, the same cannot be said about the forced poverty in which millions of our countrymen live and which has reduced them to the level of animals, as it were. There is such a yawning gulf between the rich and the poor that unless the rich voluntarily dispossess themselves of the bulk of their riches, the poor are bound to rise one day in revolt against the existing order. And it would not be surprising

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

if this revolt, born of hatred, jealousy and social injustice, assumes a bloody form. Once there is an eruption of violence on a mass scale, all the virtues and values of life that we hold so dear to-day, will vanish into thin air overnight and the country will be plunged headlong into chaos and civil strife. No one, then, can dare prophesy the shape of things to come or how long will the spell of anarchy last.

It is precisely to avert this disaster overtaking India that Gandhiji has offered us a solution — a solution which constructs a bridge over the gulf that separates the rich from the poor. That solution is his Theory of Trusteeship of wealth, the essence of which, to quote his words, is “that no matter how much money we have earned, we should regard ourselves as trustees, holding these moneys for the welfare of all our neighbours.” And he goes on to add that “if God gives us power and wealth, He gives us the same so that we may use them for the benefit of mankind and not for our selfish, carnal purpose.”

To the rich men, Gandhiji suggests that they should read the signs of the times and use their riches wisely and well. He frankly tells them that “the art of amassing riches becomes a degrading and despicable art if it is not accompanied by the nobler art of how to spend wealth usefully.” He places before them for their emulation the illustrious examples of Rama, King Janaka and Hazrat Umar who, he says, owned nothing against the people and

## PREFACE

who lived in their midst "a life not above theirs, but in correspondence with theirs." Gandhiji does not grudge the prince his palace and the millionaire his mansion. He only wishes that their lives should bear some proportion to the lives of the poor around them, and that they should be their trustees and trusted friends.

To the impatient and the restless, who would like to re-fashion society by all means, fair or foul, Gandhiji sounds a note of warning. It is his considered view that violent methods, such as forcible dispossession of the privileged classes, would not usher in an era of peace and plenty for the country. All that is really needed is change of the heart. "If only the rich people, whether titled or not, will act as trustees," he declares, "we should soon be perfectly happy." And the dream that he wants to realize is "not spoilation of the property of private owners, but to restrict its enjoyment so as to avoid all pauperism, consequent discontent and the hideously ugly contrast that exists to-day between the lives and surroundings of the rich and the poor."

How far and how soon will this noble dream of Gandhiji be realized, no one can dare say with any certainty to-day. The times are changing fast and one cannot feel sure about anything in the present state of flux. One can, however, only hope and pray that India will have the wisdom to act up to the theory propounded by Gandhiji and thus

MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

spare herself the bitter blood-bath, which several nations have gone through in an attempt to better the lot of the common people.

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August 15, 1970.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface .. .. .	v
1. 'Take No Thought for The Morrow' .. .	1
2. Fundamental Law of Nature .. .	5
3. Be Wise .. .. .	6
4. Giving Up Possessions .. .. .	7
5. Reduction of Wants .. .. .	8
6. Non-Possession .. .. .	9
7. Voluntary Poverty .. .. .	11
8. Dignity of Poverty .. .. .	14
9. Why Possess Property? .. .. .	16
10. Defence of One's Property .. .. .	17
11. The Rich and The Poor .. .. .	18
12. To Bridge the Gulf .. .. .	19
13. To The Rich Men .. .. .	20
14. No Forcible Dispossession .. .. .	23
15. My Dream .. .. .	25
16. Advice to The Rich .. .. .	25
17. How to Avoid Class War .. .. .	27
18. Wealth or Work? .. .. .	29
19. To Zamindars .. .. .	30
20. Zamindars <i>v.</i> Tenants .. .. .	31
21. Position of Privileged Classes .. .. .	33

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

		Page
22.	Institution of Kingship .. ..	36
23.	Appeal to The Princes .. ..	38
24.	Advice to Zamindars .. ..	39
25.	The Classes and The Masses .. ..	41
26.	How Can Rich Help The Poor .. ..	42
27.	The Rich As Trustees .. ..	43
28.	The Problem of The Rich .. ..	45
29.	On Trusteeship .. ..	49
30.	Ill-Gotten Gains .. ..	54
31.	Class Conflict .. ..	54
32.	Do Not Covet Possessions .. ..	55
33.	Socialism and Communism .. ..	56
34.	Real Socialism .. ..	57
35.	Non-violent Communism .. ..	58
36.	'Even Unto This Last' .. ..	59
37.	So-Called Inconsistencies .. ..	59
38.	An Anachronism .. ..	62
39.	Mutual Trustees .. ..	63
40.	'Trusteeship' Explained .. ..	64
41.	My Theory of Trusteeship .. ..	65
42.	Social Justice .. ..	66
43.	Zamindars in Free India .. ..	67

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
44.	Benevolent Dictatorship .. ..	68
45.	Donation of Tainted Money .. ..	69
46.	Equal Distribution .. ..	70
47.	Economic Equality .. ..	75
48.	Plain Living and High Thinking ..	76
49.	The Duty of The Rich .. ..	77
50.	Not Necessarily Impure .. ..	79
51.	The Eternal Problem .. ..	81
52.	Riches <i>v.</i> Poverty .. ..	83
53.	A Question .. ..	85
54.	Kisan and Zamindar .. ..	86
55.	A Vicious Circle .. ..	87
56.	Meaning of Economic Equality .. ..	88
57.	My Difference With the Socialists ..	90
58.	The Non-violent Sanction .. ..	91
59.	About Trusteeship .. ..	93
60.	State Ownership .. ..	94
61.	More About Trusteeship .. ..	95
62.	To Landlords and Peasants .. ..	96
63.	Trusteeship is Inevitable .. ..	98
64.	Rights or Duties ? .. ..	99
65.	Trusteeship Formula .. ..	102

## 1. 'TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW'

'TAKE no thought for the morrow' is an injunction which finds an echo in almost all the religious scriptures of the world. In well-ordered society the securing of one's livelihood should be, and is, found to be the easiest thing in the world. Indeed, the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it owns, but the absence of starvation among its masses. The only statement that has to be examined is, whether it can be laid down as a law of universal application that material advancement means moral progress.

Now, let us take a few illustrations. Rome suffered a moral fall when it attained high material affluence. So did Egypt, and so perhaps most countries of which we have any historical record. The descendants and kinsmen of the royal and divine Krishna, too, fell when they were rolling in riches. We do not deny to the Rockefellers and the Carnegies possession of an ordinary measure of morality, but we gladly judge them indulgently. I mean that we do not even expect them to satisfy the highest standard of morality. With them, material gain has not necessarily meant moral gain.

### How to Inherit Eternal Life

The question we are asking ourselves is not a new one. It was addressed of Jesus two thousand

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

years ago. St. Mark has vividly described the scene. Jesus is in his solemn mood. He is earnest. He talks of Eternity. He knows the world about him. He is himself the greatest economist of his time. He succeeded in economizing time and space; he transcended them. It is to him at his best that one comes running, kneels down, and asks: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit Eternal Life?" And Jesus said unto him: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the Commandments. Do not commit adultery; Do not kill; Do not steal; Do not bear false witness; Defraud not; Honour thy father and mother." And he answered and said unto him: "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him and said unto him: "One thing thou lackest! Go thy way, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shall have treasure in Heaven. Come, take up the Cross and follow me."

### The Kingdom of God

And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved, for he had great possession. And Jesus looked round about and said unto the disciples: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again and said unto them: "Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of

## 'TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW'

God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."

### Rule of life

Here you have an eternal rule of life stated in the noblest words the English language is capable of producing. But the disciples nodded unbelief, as we do even to this day. To him they said, as we say to-day: "But, look, how the Law fails in practice. If we sell all and have nothing, we shall have nothing to eat. We must have money or we cannot even be reasonably moral." So they state their case thus:— And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves: "Who, then, can be saved?" And Jesus, looking upon them, said: "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for, with God all things are possible." Then, Peter began to say unto him: "Lo, we have left all and have followed thee." And Jesus answered and said: "Verily, I say unto you there is no man that has left house or brethren or sisters, or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake and Gospel's, but he shall receive one hundredfold, now in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and land; and, in the world to come, Eternal Life. But many that are first shall be last, and the last first."

### Teachers of Mankind

You have here the result or reward, if you prefer

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

the term, of following the Law. I have not taken the trouble of copying similar passages from the other non-Hindu scriptures, and I will not insult you by quoting in support of the Law stated by Jesus, passages from the writings and sayings of our own sages, passages even stronger, if possible, than the Biblical extracts I have drawn your attention to. Perhaps, the strongest of all the testimonies in favour of the affirmative answer to the question before us are the lives of the greatest teachers of the world. Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Shankara, Dayannda, Ramakrishna were men who exercised an immense influence over, and moulded the character of, thousands of men. The world is the richer for their having lived in it. And they were all men who deliberately embraced poverty as their lot.

### Materialistic Craze

So far as we have made the modern materialistic craze our goal, so far are we going down-hill on the path of progress. I hold that economic progress, in the sense I have put it, is antagonistic to real progress. Hence, the ancient ideal has been the limitation of activities promoting wealth. This does not put an end to all material ambition. We should still have, as we have always had, in our midst people who make the pursuit of wealth their aim in life. But we have always recognized that it is a fall from the ideal. It is a beautiful thing to know that the

## FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF NATURE

wealthiest among us have often felt that to have remained voluntarily poor would have been a higher state for them. That you cannot serve God and Mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. We have to make our choice.

### Moral Supremacy

Western nations are to-day groaning under the heel of the Monster God of Materialism. Their moral growth has become stunted. They measure their progress in £. sh. d. American wealth has become the standard. She is the envy of the other nations. I have heard many of our countrymen say that we shall gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt, if it were made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be 'wise, temperate and furious' in a moment. I would have our leaders teach us to be morally supreme in the world.

—*Speeches & Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* : p. 350.

## 2. FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF NATURE

**I** VENTURE to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day-to-day, and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world,

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality, so long we are thieving.

I am no Socialist and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possession; but I do say that, personally, those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody. I should then be departing from the rule of *Ahimsa*. If somebody else possesses more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated, I do say that I dare not possess anything which I do not want.

In India, we have got three millions of people having to be satisfied with one meal a day, and that meal consisting of a *chapati* containing no fat in it, and a pinch of salt. You and I have no right to anything that we really have, until these three millions are clothed and fed better. You and I, who ought to know better, must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation in order that they may be nursed, fed and clothed.

—*Speeches & Writings of M. Gandhi* : p. 384.

### 3. BE WISE

**Y**OU were extravagant in buying the thermos, the magnificent apples. But you would not be a *Raj-kumari* if you were not extravagant. You are none the less so because you spend on others. If you counted

## GIVING UP POSSESSIONS

yourself a trustee, as you should, of all you possess including your body, you will be balanced in using them even for your trust. You may not philosophically smile this simple truth away. Remember the value of a rupee in terms of the poor. It means 64 solid meals which millions do not have. Many in Segaoon<sup>1</sup> live on a rupee per month, *i.e.* only two meals a day costing one pice each. But millions do not get this much. How can you and I knowing this as well as that I am writing this, mis-spend a pice? Will you be wise for a while? If you will become the or a woman of my imagination, you will have to develop all your faculties not excluding account-keeping.

—*Letters to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur: p.102.*

### Be Thrifty

This expensive note-book is of foreign make, I fear. You must learn to be thrifty. One pice ill-spent is so much gone out of the pockets of the poor to whom it should belong.

—*From a Letter to Anand Hingorani : Jan. 1930.*

## 4. GIVING UP POSSESSIONS

**WE** should aim at getting only what the rest of the world gets. Thus, if the whole world gets milk, we

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1. Now, Sevagram.

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

may also have it. We may pray to God and say : "O God, if you wish me to have milk, give it first to the rest of the world". But who can pray thus ? Only he who has so much sympathy for others and who labours for their good. Even if we cannot practise this principle, we must at least understand and appreciate it. For the present, our only prayer to God should be that since we are fallen so low, He may accept whatever little we do, and that even if we do not progress in this direction, He should give us strength to lessen our possession. If we repent of our sins, they will not increase further. We should not keep anything with us thinking it as our own, but should strive to give up as much of our possessions as we can.

—*To Ashram Sisters* : p. 105.

### 5. REDUCTION OF WANTS

**WE** should not receive any single thing that we do not need. . . . . We are not always aware of our real needs, and most of us improperly multiply our wants, and thus unconsciously make thieves of ourselves. If we devote some thought to the subject, we shall find that we can get rid of quite a number of our wants. One who follows the observance of Non-stealing will bring about a progressive reduction of his own wants. Much of the distressing

## NON-POSSESSION

poverty in this world has arisen out of breaches of the principle of Non-stealing.<sup>1</sup>

One who observes the principle of Non-stealing will refuse to bother himself about things to be acquired in the future. This evil anxiety for the future will be found at the root of many a theft. To-day we only desire possession of a thing; to-morrow we shall begin to adopt measures, straight if possible, crooked when thought necessary, to acquire its possession.

—*From Yervada Mandir*: Chap. V.

### 6. NON-POSSESSION

**P**OSSESSION implies provision for the future. A seeker after Truth, a follower of the Law of Love cannot hold anything against to-morrow. God never stores for the morrow. He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. If, therefore, we repose faith in His providence, we should rest assured, that He will give us every day our daily bread, meaning everything that we require. Saints and devotees, who have lived in such faith, have always derived a justification for it from their experi-

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1. "The profound truth upon which this observance is based is that God never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment. Therefore, whoever appropriates more than the minimum that is really necessary for him is guilty of theft."

—*Harijan*: Oct. 10, 1948.

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

ence. Our ignorance or negligence of the Divine Law, which gives to man from day to day his daily bread and no more, has given rise to inequalities with all the miseries attendant upon them.

### Superfluous Possessions

The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are, therefore, neglected and wasted; while millions starve and are forzen to death for want of them. If each retained possession only of what he needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment. As it is, the rich are discontented no less than the poor. The poor man would fain become a millionaire, and the millionaire a multi-millionaire. The poor are often not satisfied when they get just enough to fill their stomach; but they are clearly entitled to it, and society should make it a point to see that they get it. The rich should take the initiative in dispossessing with a view to a universal diffusion of the spirit of contentment. If only they keep their own property within moderate limits, the poor will be easily fed, and will learn the lesson of contentment along with the rich.

### Fulfilment of the Ideal

Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of non-possession requires that man should, like the birds, have no roof over his head, no clothing and no stock of food for the morrow. He will indeed need his daily bread,

## VOLUNTARY POVERTY

but it will be God's business, and not his to provide it.<sup>1</sup> Only the fewest possible, if any at all, can reach this ideal. We ordinary seekers may not be repelled by the seeming impossibility. But we must keep the ideal constantly in view, and, in the light thereof, critically examine our possessions and try to reduce them. Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiuplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service.

—*From Yervada Mandir : Chap. VI.*

## 7. VOLUNTARY POVERTY

**W**HEN I found myself drawn into the political coil, I asked myself what was necessary for me in order to remain absolutely untouched by immorality,

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1. "God that provides the little ant its speck of food and to the elephant his daily one maund bolus will not neglect to provide man with his daily meal. Nature's creatures do not worry or fret about to-morrow, but simply wait on to-morrow for the daily sustenance. Only man in his overweening pride and egotism imagines himself to be the lord and master of the earth and goes on piling up for himself goods that perish. Nature tries every day by its rude shocks to wean him from his pride. but he refuses to shed it."

—*Young India : May 21, 1931.*

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

by untruth, by what is known as political gain. . . . I do not propose to take you through all the details of that act or performance—interesting and, to me, sacred though they are—but I can only tell you that it was a difficult struggle in the beginning and it was a wrestle with my wife and, as I can vividly recall, with my children also. Be that as it may, I came definitely to the conclusion that, if I had to serve the people in whose midst my life was cast and of whose difficulties I was witness from day-to-day, I must discard all wealth, all possession.

### Slow and Painful Progress

I cannot tell you with truth that, when this belief came to me, I discarded everything immediately. I must confess to you that progress at first was slow. And now, as I recall those days of struggle, I remember that it was also painful in the beginning. But, as days went by, I saw that I had to throw overboard many other things which I used to consider as mine, and a time came when it became a matter of positive joy to give up those things. And, one after another then, by almost geometric progression, the things slipped away from me. And, as I am describing my experiences, I can say a great burden fell off my shoulders, and I felt that I could now walk with ease and do my work also in the service of my fellow-men with great comfort and still greater joy. The possession of anything then became a troublesome thing and a burden.

## VOLUNTARY POVERTY

### Joy of Dispossession

Exploring the cause of that joy, I found that, if I kept anything as my own, I had to defend it against the whole world.<sup>1</sup> I found also that there were many people who did not have the thing, although they wanted it; and I would have to seek police assistance also if hungry, famine-stricken people, finding me in a lonely place, wanted not merely to divide the thing with me but to dispossess me. And I said to myself: If they want it and would take it, they do so not from any malicious motive, but they would do it because theirs was a greater need than mine.

### Possession—A Crime

And, then, I said to myself: possession seems to me to be a crime: I can only possess certain things when I know that others, who also want to possess similar things, are able to do so. But we know—every one of us can speak from experience—that such a thing is an impossibility. Therefore, the only thing that can be possessed by all is non-pos-

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1. "In my opinion, it is wrong to possess unnecessary things that presuppose defence of things possessed against those who may covet them. They require care and attention which might well be devoted to more important matters, and loss of them always leaves a pang no matter how detached you may feel about them."

session, not to have anything whatsoever. In other words, a willing surrender.

And those who have actually followed out this vow of voluntary poverty to the fullest extent possible (to reach absolute perfection is an impossibility, but the fullest possible extent for a human being), those who have reached the ideal of that state, they testify that when you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world. In other words, you really get all that is in reality necessary for you, everything. If food is necessary, food will come to you.

—*Speeches & Writings of M. Gandhi*: p. 1066.

## 8. DIGNITY OF POVERTY

**P**OVERTY has a dignity in our country. The poor man is not ashamed of his poverty. He prefers his hut to the rich man's palace. He even takes pride in it. Though poor in material goods, he is not poor in spirit. Contentment is his treasure. He may as well say to himself: 'Since we cannot all become rich and own palaces, let us at least pull down the palaces of the rich and bring them down to our level.' That can bring no happiness or peace either to themselves or anyone else, and God will certainly be not the friend and helper of the poor of such description.

Poverty, in the sense of inequality of material

## DIGNITY OF POVERTY

possessions, is there in every part of the world. That is perhaps in a certain measure inevitable, for all men are not equal either in their talents or the measure of their needs. Even in America, which is fabulously rich and where Mammon has taken the place of God, there are many poor. Poet Malabari had come across some relatives of Shah Alam begging in the streets of Rangoon. He has written a beautiful poem about it, which has sunk into my heart. The substance of it is that he alone is rich who has God for his friend and helper.

### Companionship with God

In India, there is a particular type of man who delights in having as few needs as possible. He carries with him only a little flour and a pinch of salt and chillies tied in his napkin. He has a *lota* and a string to draw water from the well. He needs nothing else. He walks on foot covering 10–12 miles a day. He makes the dough in his napkin, collects a few twigs to make a fire and bakes his dough on the embers. It is called *bati*. I have tasted it and found it most delicious. The relish does not lie in the food but in the appetite that honest toil and the contentment of the mind give. Such a man has God as his companion and friend, and feels richer than any king or emperor. God is not the friend of those who inwardly covet other's riches. Everyone can copy that example and enjoy ineffable peace and happiness himself and radiate

it to others. On the other hand, if one hankers after riches, one has to resort to exploitation, by whatever name it may be called. Even then, the crores cannot become millionaires. True happiness lies in contentment and companionship with God only.

—*Harijan* : July 21, 1946.

### 9. WHY POSSESS PROPERTY?

**W**HY should all of us possess property? Why should not we, after a certain time, dispossess ourselves of all property? Unscrupulous merchants do this for dishonest purposes. Why may we not do it for a moral and a great purpose? For a Hindu, it was the usual thing at a certain stage. Every good Hindu is expected, after having lived the household life for a certain period, to enter upon a life of non-possession of property. Why may we not revive the noble tradition? In effect, it merely amounts to this that for maintenance we place ourselves at the mercy of those to whom we transfer our property. To me, the idea is attractive. In the innumerable cases of such honourable trust, there is hardly one case in a million of abuse of trust. Of course, there are moral considerations arising out of such transactions. Take the instance of father and son. If the son is as good a non-co-operator as the father, why should the father tempt his son by burdening him with ownership of property?

## DEFENCE OF ONE'S PROPERTY

Such considerations will always arise and the moral worth of a person is tested by his ability in delicately balancing cross problems of ethics. How such a practice can be worked, without giving a handle to dishonest persons, can only be determined after long experimenting. No one, however, need be deterred from trying the experiment for the fear of the example being abused. The divine author of the *Gita* was not deterred from delivering the message of the *Song Celestial*, although he probably knew that it would be tortured to justify every variety of vice including murder.

—*Young India* July 3, 1924.

## 10. DEFENCE OF ONE'S PROPERTY

**T**HE highest fulfilment of religion requires giving up of all possession. Having ascertained the Law of our Being, we must set about reducing it to practice to the extent of our capacity and no further. That is the middle way. When a robber comes to take away A's property, he can deliver the property to him if he recognizes in him a blood brother. If he does not feel like one, but dreads the robber and would wish that someone was near to knock him down, he must try to knock him down and take the consequence. If he has the desire but not the ability to fight the robber, he must allow himself to be robbed and then call in the assistance of law courts to regain the lost property. In both

the cases, he has as good a chance of losing his property as of regaining it. If he is a sane man like me, he would reach with me the conclusion that to be really happy he must not own anything, or own things only so long as his neighbours permit him. In the last resort, we live not by our physical strength, but by sufferance. Hence, the necessity of uttermost humility and absolute reliance on God. This is living by soul-force. This is highest self-expression.

Let us bear the Law in mind not as an academic and attractive proposition when it is written on paper, but as the Law of our Being to be continually realized; and let us fashion our practice in accordance with the Law and the measure of our ability to live up to it.

*-Young India: Feb.5,1925.*

## II. THE RICH AND THE POOR

**I** CANNOT picture to myself a time when no man shall be richer than another. But I do picture to myself a time when the rich will spurn to enrich themselves at the expense of the poor, and the poor will cease to envy the rich. Even in a most perfect world, we shall fail to avoid inequalities,<sup>1</sup> but we

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1. "Nor do I believe in inequalities between human beings. We are all absolutely equal. But equality is of souls and not bodies. Hence it is a mental state. We need to think of and to assert equality because we see great inequa-

## TO BRIDGE THE GULF

can and must avoid strife and bitterness. There are numerous examples extant of the rich and the poor living in perfect friendliness. We have but to multiply such instances.

—*Young India* : Oct. 7, 1926.

## 12. TO BRIDGE THE GULF

**I** DO not grudge the prince his palace and the millionaire his mansion, but it is my earnest request to them to do something to bridge the gulf that separates them from the peasant.<sup>1</sup> Let them construct a bridge that would bring them closer to the poor agriculturist. Let their lives bear some proportion to the lives of the poor around them. I have been trying according to my lights to construct this bridge, a bridge which, I submit in all humility, you cannot construct by means of all your gold mines and Bhadravatis.

—*Young India* : Aug. 4, 1927.

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lities in the physical world. We have to realize equality in the midst of this apparent external inequality. Assumption of superiority by any person over any other is a sin against God and man."

—*Young India* : June 4, 1931.

1. "The gulf that separates the rich and the poor to-day is appalling. It has to be bridged. The rich must share all their amenities with the poor in the fullest measure."

—*Harijan* : Aug. 11, 1946.

### 13. TO THE RICH MEN

I VENTURE to suggest to you that you are not using your riches wisely, though you seem to be using them profusely.... Having been in my own days in possession of some amount of money, I want to present you with my own recipe. That recipe is nothing original that I am going to give you. It is really a part of our religion, and it is this: that no matter how much money we have earned, we should regard ourselves as trustees holding these moneys for the welfare of all our neighbours. There is a verse which says that he who eats without sacrifice, that is without giving, is a thief. If God gives us power and wealth, He gives us the same so that we may use them for the benefit of mankind and not for our selfish, carnal purpose.

#### Marriage Customs

I understand that some of your marriage customs are very bad. There is very often a price put upon the head of a bride as much as Rs. 30,000. I understand that you do not hesitate to spend as much as Rs. 50,000 per marriage; but the custom I consider to be immoral. There can be no price put either way in the matter of such a sacred contract as marriage. It must be as easy for a poor man to get a virtuous bride, as for a rich man. Merit and mutual love are the sole tests for marriage contracts. The expenses for marriage ceremonies, though I do

## TO THE RICH MEN

not consider them to be immoral, I do regard as a criminal waste.<sup>1</sup>

### Art of Amassing Wealth

It is not becoming a rich man to dangle his wealth before the multitude in the fashion in which he very often does. *The art of amassing riches becomes a degrading and despicable art, if it is not accompanied by the nobler art of how to spend wealth usefully..... Let not possession of wealth be synonymous with degradation, vice, and profligacy.*

### A Tragic Irony

And, is it not a tragic irony that in spite of these vices, you are also expending money lavishly in erecting what you flatter yourselves to believe as temples for gods to reside? Not every structure made by brick and mortar labelled temple is necessarily a temple. There are, I am sorry to say, many temples in our midst in this country, which are no better than brothels. Do you know that in our religion it is not possible to call any single place a temple, unless an elaborate ceremonial of purification has been made inside

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1. "In India, it must be held to be a crime to spend money on dinner and marriage parties, *tamashas* and other luxuries as long as millions of people are starving. We would not have a feast in a family if a member was about to die of starvation. If India is one family, we should have the same feeling as we would have in a private family."

—*Young India* : Dec. 22, 1920.

that building, and unless the spirit of God has been invoked by men full of piety, so that God may reside in it? And so I would urge you to restrain yourselves and not lavishly spend in building temples, but in the first place dedicate your own bodies to the service of God, and, for that reason, first of all purify by ridding yourselves of the evils to which I have drawn attention.

### Lavish Display

What do I see? Your houses choked with foreign furniture, your houses furnished with all kinds of foreign fineries and foreign things! Your houses contain many things for which, in this holy land of ours, there should be no room whatsoever. I tell you that I have felt oppressed with this excessive furniture. There is in the midst of it hardly any room to sit or breathe in. Some of your pictures are hideous, not worth looking at. I recall the many restrictions that even the rich men imposed on themselves in the time of the *Mahabharata*. Let us not wear our wealth so loudly as we seem to be doing. This temperate climate of our country really does not admit of lavish display of furniture. It obstructs the free play of fresh air and it harbours dirt and so many millions of germs that float in the air. If you gave me a contract for furnishing all the rich palaces, I should give you the same things for one-tenth of the money, and give you more comfort and fresh air and secure a certificate from the best artists in India that I had furnished

## NO FORCIBLE DISPOSSESSION

your houses in the most artistic manner possible. I feel that all your palaces are built anyhow without any sense of co-operation amongst yourselves and any sense of social welfare.

### Purity of Life

And you, who are rich, to you I would like to say: Whatever you do, don't spoil your purity of life. But I know that, generally speaking, it is the experience of the world that possession of gold is inconsistent with the possession of virtue; but though such is the unfortunate experience of the world, it is by no means an inexorable law. We have the celebrated instance of Janaka, who, being a great prince, was still one of the purest men of his age. And, even in our own age, I can cite from my own personal experience and tell you that I have the good fortune of knowing several monied men who do not find it impossible to lead a straight, pure life. What is possible for these few men is surely possible for every one of you. And I wish that my word can find an abiding place in your heart, and I know how much good it will do you and the society in which you are living.

—*Young India* : Oct. 6, 1927.

## 14. NO FORCIBLE DISPOSSESSION

**WE** may not forcibly dispossess the *Zamindars* and *Talukdars* of their thousands of *bighas*. And

among whom shall we distribute them? We need not dispossess them. They only need a change of the heart. When that is done, and when they learn to melt at their tenants' woe, they will hold their lands in trust for them, will give them a major part of the produce, keeping only sufficient for themselves. 'We had better wait for that day until the Greek Kalends', someone will say. I do not think so. I think that the world is moving towards peace, *i.e. Ahimsa*. The way of violence has been tried for ages and has been found wanting. Let no one believe that the people in Russia, Italy, and other countries are independent. The sword of Damocles is always hanging over their heads. Those who have the good of the Indian agriculturists at heart, must pin their faith on non-violence and plod on. Those who think of other methods are vainly flattering themselves with hope of success. The agriculturist never figures in their calculations, or, at any rate, they do not know his condition.

### The Remedy

What I have said above applies equally to the *sowkar* and other exploiters. Nothing but their own profit appeals to them. But there, too, the remedy is the moral education of both. The oppressed need no other education except in *Satyagraha* and non-co-operation. A slave is a slave because he consents to slavery. If training in physical resist-

## ADVICE TO THE RICH

ance is possible, why should that in spiritual resistance be impossible? If we know the use of the body, why can we not know the use and power of the soul?

—*Young India* : Feb. 4, 1926.

### 15. MY DREAM

**I**F only the rich people, whether titled or not, will act as trustees, they should soon be perfectly happy. The dream I want to realize is not spoilation of the property of private owners, but to restrict its enjoyment so as to avoid all pauperism, consequent discontent and the hideously ugly contrast that exists to-day between the lives and surroundings of the rich and the poor. The latter must be enabled to feel that they are co-partners with their *Zamindars* and not their slaves to be made to labour at the latter's sweet will, and to be made to pay all kinds of exactions on all conceivable occasions.

—*Young India* : Nov. 21, 1929.

### 16. ADVICE TO THE RICH

**I**F Indian society is to make real progress along peaceful lines, there must be a definite recognition on the part of the moneyed class that a *ryot* possesses the same soul that they do, and that their wealth gives them no superiority over the poor. They

must regard themselves, even as the Japanese nobles did, as trustees holding their wealth for the good of their wards, the *ryots*. Then they would take no more than a reasonable amount as commission for their labours. At present, there is no proportion between the wholly unnecessary pomp and extravagance of the moneyed class and the squalid surroundings and the grinding pauperism of the *ryots* in whose midst the former are living.

### Signs of the Times

If only the capitalist class will read the signs of the times, revise their notions of God-given right to all they possess, in an incredibly short space of time the seven hundred thousand dung-heaps which to-day pass muster as villages can be turned into abodes of peace, health and comfort. I am convinced that the capitalist, if he follows the Samurai of Japan, has nothing really to lose and everything to gain. There is no other choice then between voluntary surrender on the part of the capitalist, of superfluities and consequent acquisition of the real happiness of all on the one hand, and, on the other, the impending chaos into which, if the capitalist does not wake up betimes, awakened but ignorant, famishing millions will plunge the country and which, not even the armed force that a powerful government can bring into play, can avert. I have hoped that India will successfully avert the disaster.

—*Young India* : Dec. 5, 1929

## 17. HOW TO AVOID CLASS WAR

**Q** IF you will benefit the workers, the peasant and the factory hand, can you avoid class war?

**A.** I can, most decidedly, if only the people will follow the non-violent method. When the people adopt it as a principle of conduct, class war becomes an impossibility. By the non-violent method we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism.<sup>1</sup> We invite the capitalist to regard himself as trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention and increase of his capital. Nor need the worker wait for his conversion. If capital is power, so is work. Either power can be used destructively or creatively. Either is dependent on the other, Immediately the worker realizes his strength, he is in a position to become co-sharer with the capitalist instead of remaining his slave. If he aims at becoming the sole owner, he will most likely be killing the hen that lays golden eggs.

### The Fundamental Equality

Inequalities in intelligence and even opportunity will last till the end of time. A man living on the

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1. "Those who seek to destroy men rather than their manners, adopt the latter and become worse than those whom they destroy under the mistaken belief that the manners will die with the men. They do not know the root of the evil."

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

banks of a river has any day more opportunity of growing crops than one living in an arid desert. But if inequalities stare us in the face, the essential equality, too, is not to be missed. Every man has an equal right to the necessaries of life, even as birds and beasts have. And since every right carries with it a corresponding remedy for resisting any attack on it, it is merely a matter of finding out the corresponding duties and remedies to vindicate the elementary fundamental equality. The corresponding duty is to labour with my limbs and the corresponding remedy is to non-co-operate with him who deprives me of the fruit of my labour. And if I would recognize the fundamental equality, as I must, of the capitalist and the labourer, I must not aim at his destruction. I must strive for his conversion. My non-co-operation with him will open his eyes to the wrong he may be doing. Nor need I be afraid of someone else taking my place when I have non-co-operated. For, I expect to influence my co-workers so as not to help the wrong-doing of the employer.

### Slow—but Surest

This kind of education of the mass of workers is no doubt a slow process, but as it is also the surest, it is necessarily the quickest. It can be usually demonstrated that destruction of the capitalist must mean destruction in the end of the worker; and as no human being is so bad as to be beyond redemp-

## WEALTH OR WORK ?

tion, no human being is so perfect as to warrant his destroying him whom he wrongly considers to be wholly evil.

—*Young India* : March 26, 1931.

### No ill-will

I do not bear any ill to the capitalists; I can think of doing them no harm. But I want, by means of suffering, to awaken them to their sense of duty; I want to melt their hearts and get them to render justice to their less fortunate brethren. They are human beings; and my appeal to them will not go in vain. The history of Japan reveals many an instance of self-sacrificing capitalists.

—*Young India* : March 26, 1931.

## 18. WEALTH OR WORK ?

**I**F you want capital to be extinct or you want to abolish monied men or the capitalists, you will never succeed. What you must do is to demonstrate to the capitalists the power of labour and they will consent to be the trustees of those who toil for them. I do not want anything more for workers and peasants than enough to eat and house and clothe themselves and live in ordinary comfort as self-respecting human beings. After that condition of things is brought about, the brainiest amongst them will certainly manage to acquire more wealth than the rest.

### Hold Riches in Trust

But I have told you what I want. I want the rich to hold their riches in trust for the poor, or to give them up for them. Do you know that I gave up all my property when I founded Tolstoy Farm? Ruskin's *Unto This Last* inspired me and I built my farm on those lines. And what do you prize more—wealth or work? Suppose you were to be stranded in the desert of Sahara with cartloads of money, how would it help you? But if you work, you may not have to go hungry. How then is wealth to be preferred to work?

—*Young India* : April 2, 1931.

### 19. TO ZAMINDARS

**Y**OU will have to make your life correspond to your surroundings. In Bengal, some years ago, I was the guest of a *Zamindar* who served me my milk and fruit in gold bowls and plates. The good host naturally thought that he was doing me the greatest honour by placing before me his costliest plate. He could not know what was passing through my mind. 'Where did he get these golden plates from?' I was asking of myself, and the answer I got was: 'From the substance of the *ryots*.' How, then, could I reconcile myself to those costly luxuries? I would not mind your using gold plates provided your tenants were comfortable enough to

afford silver plates; but when their life is one long drawn out agony, how dare you have those luxuries? You will remember, how, fifteen years ago, on the occasion of the opening of the Hindu University, I shocked the *Rajas* and *Maharajas* by a reference to their glittering pomp and glory, and raised quite an uproar.<sup>1</sup> My views are the same to-day; only experience and life among the humble folk have confirmed them all the more.

—*Young India* : May 28, 1931.

## 20. ZAMINDARS V. TENANTS

**T**HE *Zamindars* would do well to take the time by the forelock. Let them cease to be mere rent-collectors. They should become trustees and trusted friends of their tenants. They should limit

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1. "I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen: 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India.' Whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say: 'Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists.'" Over 75 per cent. of the population are agriculturists, and they are the men who grow two blades of grass in the place of one. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it."

—*Speeches & Writings of M. Gandhi* : P. 322.

their privy purse. Let them forego the questionable perquisites they take from the tenants in the shape of forced gifts on marriage and other occasions, or *nazarana* on transfer of holdings from one *Kisan* to another, or on restoration to the same *Kisan* after eviction for non-payment of rent. They should give them fixity of tenure, take a lively interest in their welfare, provide well-managed schools for their children, night schools for adults, hospitals and dispensaries for the sick, look after the sanitation of villages and in a variety of ways make them feel that they, the *Zamindars*, are their true friends taking only a fixed commission for their manifold services. In short, they must justify their position.

The *Kisans* must reject the doctrine that their holdings are absolutely theirs to the exclusion of the *Zamindars*. They are or should be members of a joint family in which the *Zamindar* is the head, guarding their rights against encroachment. Whatever the law may be, the *Zamindari* to be defensible must approach the conditions of a joint family.

### Great Examples

I like the ideal of Rama and Janaka. They owned nothing against the people. Everything, including themselves, belonged to the people. They lived in their midst a life not above theirs, but in correspondence with theirs. But these may not be regarded as historical personages. Then, let us take the example of the great Caliph Omar. Though he was monarch

## POSITION OF PRIVILEGED CLASSES

of a vast realm, created by his great genius and amazing industry, he lived the life of a pauper and never considered himself owner of the vast treasures that lay at his feet. He was a terror to those officials who squandered people's money in luxuries.

—*Young India* : May 28, 1931.

## 21. POSITION OF PRIVILEGED CLASSES

**Q** HOW exactly do you think the Indian Princes, landlords, millowners and money-lenders and other profiteers are enriched?

*A.* At the present moment, by exploiting the masses.

*Q.* Can these classes be enriched without the exploitation of the Indian workers and peasants?

*A.* To a certain extent, yes.

*Q.* Have these classes any social justification to live more comfortably than the ordinary worker and peasant who does the work which provides their wealth?

*A.* No justification. My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or colour or degree of intelligence, etc., therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less. People with talents will have more,

and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the State. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earning must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father goes to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees. It may be that I would fail miserably in this. But that is what I am sailing for.

*Q.* Don't you think that the peasants and workers are justified in carrying on a class war for economic and social emancipation, so that they can be free once and for all from the burden of supporting parasitic classes in society?

*A.* No. I myself am carrying on a revolution on their behalf. But it is a non-violent revolution.

*Q.* How, then, will you bring about the trusteeship? Is it by persuasion?

*A.* Not merely by verbal persuasion. I will concentrate on my means. Some have called me the greatest revolutionary of my time. It may be false, but I believe myself to be a revolutionary—a non-violent revolutionary. My means are non-co-operation. No person can amass wealth without the co-operation, willing or forced, of the people concerned.

### Capitalists as Trustees

*Q.* Who constituted the capitalists trustees?

## POSITION OF PRIVILEGED CLASSES

Why are they entitled to a commission, and how will you fix the commission?

A. They will be entitled to a commission because money is in their possession. Nobody constituted them trustees. I am inviting them to act as trustees. I am inviting those people who consider themselves as owners to-day to act as trustees, *i.e.*, owners not in their own right, but owners in the right of those whom they have exploited. I will not dictate to them what commission to take, but ask them to take what is fair, *e.g.*, I would ask a man who possesses Rs. 100 to take Rs. 50, and give the other Rs. 50 to the workers. But to him who possesses Rs. 10,000,000 I would perhaps say take 1% yourself. So, you see that my commission would not be a fixed figure, because that would result in atrocious injustice.

### Individual *v.* The System

Q. The *Maharajas* and landlords sided with the British. But, you find your support in the masses. The masses, however, see in them their enemy. What would be your attitude if the masses decided the fate of these classes when they are in power?

A. The masses do not to-day see in landlords and other profiteers their enemy. But the consciousness of the wrong done to them by these classes has to be created in them.

I do not teach the masses to regard the capitalists as their enemies, but teach them that they are their own enemies. Non-co-operators never told the people

that the British or Gen. Dyer was bad, but that they were the victims of a system. So that, the system must be destroyed and not the individual.

—*Young India* : Nov. 26, 1931.

## 22. INSTITUTION OF KINGSHIP

**I**F the institution of kingship has a moral basis, princes are not independent proprietors, but only trustees of their subjects for revenue received from them. It can, therefore, be spent by them only as trust money. It may be said that this principle has been almost completely carried out in the English Constitution. Abu Bakar and Hazrat Umar collected revenue running into crores and yet personally they were as good as *fakirs*. They received not a pie from the public treasury. They were ever watchful to see that the people got justice. It was their principle that one may not play false even with the enemy, but must deal justly with him.

### Subjects are the Real Masters

That prince is acceptable to me who becomes a prince among his people's servants. The subjects are the real master. But what is the servant to do, if the master goes to sleep? . . . . The popular saying 'As is the king, so are the people' is only a half-truth. That is to say, it is not more true than its converse,

## INSTITUTION OF KINGSHIP

'As are the people, so is the prince'. Where the subjects are watchful, a prince is entirely dependent upon them for his status. Where the subjects are overtaken by sleepy indifference, there is every possibility that the prince will cease to function as a protector and become an oppressor instead. Those who are not wide awake have no right to blame their prince. The prince as well as the people are mostly creatures of the circumstances. Enterprising princes and peoples mould circumstances for their own benefit. Manliness consists in making circumstances subservient to ourselves. Those who will not heed themselves perish. To understand this principle is not to be impatient, not to reproach Fate, not to blame others. He who understands the doctrine of self-help blames himself for failure. It is on this ground that I object to violence. If we blame others where we should blame ourselves and wish for or bring about their destruction, that does not remove the root cause of the disease which, on the contrary, sinks all the deeper for the ignorance thereof.

—*Young India* : Jan. 8, 1925.

### Princes as Trustees

I would like the Princes to regard themselves, and be in fact, trustees for the people over whom they rule, drawing for themselves only a small and definite percentage of income. I have certainly not lost hope that the Princes will deem it a pride to become real

trustees of their people. I do not seek to destroy their status. I believe in the conversion of individuals and societies.

—*Press Report* : July, 1934.

### 23. APPEAL TO THE PRINCES

**F**OR my part, I desire not abolition but conversion of princes' autocracy into trusteeship, not in name but in reality. The arbitrary powers they enjoy should go. The liberty of the people should not depend upon the will of an individual, however noble and ancient may be his descent. Nor can any person, whether prince or a princely *Zamindar* or merchant, be the sole owner and disposer of possessions hereditary or self-acquired. Every individual must have the fullest liberty to use his talents consistently with equal use by his neighbours, but no one is entitled to the arbitrary use of the gains from the talents. He is part of the nation or, say, the social structure surrounding him. Therefore, he can only use his talents not for self only, but for the social structure of which he is but a part and on whose sufferance he lives. The present inequalities are surely due to people's ignorance. With a growing knowledge of their natural strength, the inequalities must disappear. If the revolution is brought about by violence, the position will be reversed but not altered for the better. With non-violence, *i.e.*, conversion, the new era which people

## ADVICE TO ZAMINDARS

hope for must be born. My approach and appeal are in terms of non-violence, pure and undefiled. The French have a noble motto in 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity'. It is a heritage not for the French only, but for all mankind. What the French never realized is open to us to do. Will the Princes and the princely landholders and merchants take the lead? It is for them to take the lead, not for the have-nots who have nothing to share with anybody except their pauperism and abjectness.

—*Harijan* : Aug. 2, 1942.

## 24. ADVICE TO ZAMINDARS

**L**ET me assure you that I shall be no party to dispossessing propertied classes of their private property without just cause. My objective is to reach your heart and convert you so that you may hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare. I am quite clear that if strictly honest and unchallengeable referendum of our millions were to be taken, they would not vote for the wholesale expropriation of the propertied classes. I am working for the co-operation and co-ordination of capital and labour, of landlord and tenant.

### A Warning

But I must utter a note of warning. I have

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

always told mill-owners that they are not exclusive owners of mills and workmen are equal sharers in ownership. In the same way, I would tell you that ownership of your land belongs as much to the *ryots* as to you, and you may not squander your gains in luxurious or extravagant living, but must use them for the well-being of *ryots*. Once you make your *ryots* experience a sense of kinship with you, and a sense of security that their interests as members of a family will never suffer at your hands, you may be sure that there cannot be a clash between you and them and no class war.

### *Rama Raj* of My Dream

Class war is foreign to the essential genius of India, which is capable of evolving communism on the fundamental rights of all on equal justice. *Rama Raj* of my dream ensures rights alike of prince and pauper. . . .

All your fears and misgivings, permit me to tell you, are those of guilty conscience. Wipe out injustices you may have been consciously or unconsciously guilty of. . . . The *ryots* themselves have no greater ambition than to live in peace and freedom, and they will never grudge your possession of property provided you use it for them.

—*Amrita Bazar Patrika* : Aug. 2, 1934.

25. THE CLASSES AND THE MASSES

**I** DO not believe that the capitalists and the landlords are all exploiters by an inherent necessity, or that there is a basic or irreconcilable antagonism between their interests and those of the masses. All exploitation is based on co-operation, willing or forced, of the exploited. However much we may detest admitting it, the fact remains that there would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiter. But self comes and we hug the chains that bind us. This must cease. What is needed is not the extinction of landlords and capitalists, but a transformation of the existing relationship between them and the masses into something healthier and purer.

**We Must Trust Capitalists**

I would like to use the landlords and the capitalists for the service of the masses. We must not sacrifice the interests of the masses to the capitalists. We must not play their game. We must trust them to the measure of their ability to surrender their gains for the service of the masses. Do you think that the so-called privileged classes are altogether devoid of nationalistic sentiment? If you think so, you will be doing grave injustice to them and disservice to the cause of the masses. Are not they, too exploited by the rulers? They are not insusceptible to the higher appeal. It has been my in-

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

variable experience that a kind word uttered goes home to them. If we win their confidence and put them at their ease, we will find that they are not averse to progressively sharing their riches with the masses.

### Bridging the Gulf

Moreover, let us ask ourselves how much we have done to identify ourselves with the masses. Have we bridged the gulf between the surging millions and us? Let us, who live in glass houses, not throw stones. To what extent do you share the life of the masses? I confess that with me it is still aspiration. We ourselves have not completely shed the habits of living that we say that the capitalists are notorious for.

### Not Inevitable

The idea of class war does not appeal to me. In India, a class war is not only not inevitable, but it is avoidable if we have understood the message of non-violence. Those who talk about class war as being inevitable, have not understood the implications of non-violence or have understood them only skin-deep.

—*Amrit Bazar Patrika* : Aug. 3, 1934.

## 26. HOW CAN RICH HELP THE POOR

**Q** HOW can the rich help the poor without the rich being poor themselves? Richness or capi-

## THE RICH AS TRUSTEES

talism is a system which tries to perpetuate the colossal difference between capital and labour in order to maintain its position and status. Is it, therefore, possible to effect any compromise between them without greatly injuring the interests of either?

A. The rich can help the poor by using their riches not for selfish pleasure, but so as to subserve the interests of the poor. If they do so, there will not be that unbridgeable gulf that to-day exists between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. Class divisions there will be, but they will then be horizontal, not vertical.

—*Amrita Bazar Patrika* : Aug. 3, 1934.

## 27. THE RICH AS TRUSTEES

**WHILE** we believe in the principle that we can control only the means, the end or result is not in our hands; the Socialists look to the end and are prepared to adopt any means to achieve it. But, if we shall fully preserve the purity of our means, I have no doubt that the leadership over the masses will remain with us; the Socialists will not succeed. If they get the power, they will resort to confiscation of property, repudiation of debts and similar extreme methods. But if we keep proper control over the means, power will never go to the Socialists.

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

At present, they will not be able to achieve anything beyond startling the propertied class by their unrestrained language. I do not want just to startle them, I want to reform them.

### Do Not Startle The Capitalists

So far what we have done is so very trivial indeed and yet we have been able to bring about some change in people like----- . Though to a very insignificant extent, they have begun to act as trustees. It is true that the amount of commissions which they take as trustees is on a royal scale, but, by and by, we shall succeed in getting that also reduced. -----has converted himself into a true trustee, and when the control of the Government passess into the hands of the masses, all of them (capitalists) will quickly accept their obligations, and will be willing to carry out the duties assigned to them. But if we needlessly startle them to-day, they will just organize themselves and establish Fascism in our country.

### Fascism

It is not that people would necessarily be unhappy under Fascism. We may leave aside Hitler, but under Mussolini, Italy is certainly better off than before. Some of the public utility works undertaken there are commendable. The standard of living has improved. But what does it all avail? There is no freedom there..... This is not a

## THE PROBLEM OF THE RICH

desirable condition of existence, even if people are economically well off. There is danger of this type of Fascism established in India, and I want to save the country from it by winning the rich over and making them our friends.

### Our Means Must Be Pure

So, in our efforts, we must strictly guard the means of attaining control over the masses. These must always be pure. If, at the time the people obtain control over Government the leadership is in our hands, there will be no difficulty in settling the problem of rural indebtedness. The moneyed class will readily accept the position of trustees. If we do not waste our wealth and energy, the climate and the natural resources of our country are such that we can become the happiest people in the world.

*(From a "Talk with Gandhiji" dated Aug. 22, 1934)*

—*Harijan*: Oct. 24, 1948.

## 28. THE PROBLEM OF THE RICH

**P**IERRE Ceresole :<sup>1</sup> Could one lay down a rule of life for the wealthy? That is to say, could one

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1. Founder—President of the International Voluntary Service.

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

define how much belongs to the rich and how much does not belong to them?

*Gandhiji*: Yes. Let the rich man take 5 per cent or 10 per cent, or 15 per cent.

*Pierre Ceresole*: But not 85 per cent?

*Gandhiji*: Ah! I was thinking of going up to 25 per cent. But not even an exploiter must think of taking 85 per cent!

*Pierre Ceresole*: My tangible difficulty is how long one should wait in order to carry conviction to the rich man?

*Gandhiji*: That is where I disagree with the Communist. With me, the ultimate test is non-violence. We have always to remember that even we were one day in the same position as the wealthy man. It has not been an easy process with us and as we bore with ourselves, even so should we bear with others. Besides, I have no right to assume that I am right and he is wrong. I have to wait until I convert him to my point of view. In the meanwhile, if he says: 'I am prepared to keep for myself 25 per cent and to give 75 per cent to charities,' I close with the offer. For I know that 75 per cent voluntarily given is better than 100 per cent surrendered at the point of bayonet; and, by thus being satisfied with 75 per cent, I render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. Non-violence must be the common factor between us.

You may argue that a man who surrenders by compulsion to-day will voluntarily accept the posi-

## THE PROBLEM OF THE RICH

tion to-morrow. That, to my mind, is a remote possibility on which I should not care to build much. What is certain is that if I use violence to-day, I shall be doubtless faced with greater violence. With non-violence as the rule, life will no doubt be a series of compromises. But it is better than an endless series of clashes.

### Legitimate Position

*Pierre Ceresole* : How would you, in a word, describe the rich man's legitimate position ?

*Gandhiji* : That of a trustee. I know a number of friends who earn and spend for the poor and who do not regard themselves as anything but trustees of their wealth.

*Pierre Ceresole* : I, too, have a number of friends, wealthy and poor. I do not possess wealth but accept money from my wealthy friends. How can I justify myself ?

*Gandhiji* : You will accept nothing for yourself personally. That is to say, you will not accept a cheque to go to Switzerland for a change, but you will accept a *lakh* of rupees for wells for Harijans or for schools and hospitals for them. All self has got to be eliminated and the problem is simplified.

*Pierre Ceresole* : But what about my personal expense ?

*Gandhiji* : You have to act on the principle that a labourer is worthy of his hire. You must not hesitate to accept your minimum wage. Every

one of us is doing the same thing. Bhansali's wage is just wheat-flour and *neem* leaves. We cannot all be Bhansalis, but we can try to approximate to that life. Thus I will be satisfied with having my livelihood, but I must not ask a rich man to accommodate my son. My only concern is to keep my body and soul together so long as I serve the community.

*Pierre Ceresole* : But so long as I draw that allowance from him, is it not my duty to remind him continually of the uneviability of his position and to tell him that he must cease to be owner of all that he does not need for his bare living?

*Gandhiji* : Oh yes, that is your duty.

### Draw a Line

*Pierre Ceresole* : But there are wealthy and wealthy. There are some who may have made their pile from alcoholic traffic.

*Gandhiji* : Yes, you will certainly draw a line. But whilst you will not accept money from a brewer, I do not know what will happen if you have made an appeal for funds. Will you tell the people that only those who have justly earned their money will pay? I would rather withdraw the appeal than expect any money on those terms. Who is to decide whether one is just or otherwise? And justice, too, is a relative term. If we will but ask ourselves, we will find that we have not been just all our lives. The *Gita* says in effect that everyone is tarred with the same brush; so rather than judge others, live in

## ON TRUSTEESHIP

the world untouched or unaffected by it. Elimination of self is the secret.

*Pierre Ceresole* : Yes, I see. But one sometimes finds himself in a most embarrassing position. I have met people in Bihar working from morning until evening for less than a couple of annas, sometimes less than an anna, and they have often told me that they would very much like to disposses the wealthy around them of their ill-gotten gains. I have stood speechless before them by reminding them of you.

—*Harijan* : June 1, 1935.

## 29. ON TRUSTEESHIP

**Q** IS love or non-violence compatible with possession or exploitation in any shape or form? If possession and non-violence cannot go together, then do you advocate the maintenace of private ownership of land or factories as an unavoidable evil which will continue so long as individuals are not ripe or educated enough to do without it? If it be such a step, would it not be better to own all the land through the State and place the State under the control of the masses?

*A.* Love and exclusive possession can never go together. Theoretically, when there is perfect love, there must be perfect non-possession. The body is our last possession. So, a man can only exercise perfect love and be completely dispossessed, if he is pre-

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

pared to embrace death and renounce his body for the sake of human service. But that is true in theory only. In actual life, we can hardly exercise perfect love, for the body as a possession will always remain with us. Man will ever remain imperfect, and it will always be his part to try to be perfect. So that perfection in love or non-possession will remain an unattainable ideal as long as we are alive, but towards which we must ceaselessly strive.

Those who own money now, are asked to behave like trustees, holding their riches on behalf of the poor. You may say that trusteeship is a legal fiction. But if people meditate over it constantly and try to act up to it, then life on earth would be governed far more by love than it is at present. Absolute trusteeship is an abstraction like Euclid's definition of a point, and is equally unattainable. But if we strive for it, we shall be able to go further in realizing a state of equality on earth than by any other method.

### Private Possession

*Q.* If you say that private possession is incompatible with non-violence, why do you put with it?

*A.* That is a concession one has to make to those who earn money, but who would not voluntarily use their earnings for the benefit of the mankind.

*Q.* Why, then, not have State-ownership in

## ON TRUSTEESHIP

place of private property and thus minimize violence?

*A.* It is better than private ownership. But that, too, is objectionable on the ground of violence. It is my firm conviction that if the State suppressed capitalism by violence, it will be caught in the evils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence. Hence, I prefer the doctrine of trusteeship.

### A Specific Instance

*Q.* Let us come to a specific instance. Suppose an artist leaves certain pictures to a son who does not appreciate their value for the nation and sells them or wastes them, so that the nation stands to lose something precious through one person's folly. If you are assured that the son would never be a trustee in the sense in which you would like to have him, do you think that the State would be justified in taking away those things from him with the minimum use of violence?

*A.* Yes, the State will, as a matter of fact, take away those things and I believe it will be justified if it uses the minimum of violence. But the fear is always there that the State may use too much violence against those who differ from it. I would be very happy indeed if the people concerned be-

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

haved as trustees; but if they fail, I believe we shall have to deprive them of their possessions through the State with the minimum exercise of violence. That is why I said at the Round Table Conference<sup>1</sup> that every vested interest must be subjected to scrutiny, and confiscation ordered where necessary—with or without compensation as the case demanded.

What I would personally prefer would be not a centralization of power in the hands of the State, but an extension of the sense of trusteeship, as, in my opinion, the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the State. However, if it is unavoidable, I would support a minimum of State-ownership.

### Power of The State

*Q.* Then, Sir, shall we take it that the fundamental difference between you and the Socialists is that you believe that men live more by self-direction or will than by habit, and they believe that men live more by habit than by will; that being the reason why you strive for self-correction while they try to build up a system under which men will find it possible to exercise their desire for exploiting others?

*A.* While admitting that man actually lives by habit, I hold that it is better for him to live by the exercise of will. I also believe that men are capable of developing their will to an extent that will reduce exploitation to a minimum. I look upon

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1. Round Table Conference—II held at London in 1931.

## ON TRUSTEESHIP

an increase of the power of the State with the greatest fear, because although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress. We know of so many cases where men have adopted trusteeship, but none where the State has really lived for the poor.

### Influence of Great Teachers

*Q.* But have not those cases of trusteeship, which you sometimes cite, been due to your personal influence rather than to anything else? Teachers like you come infrequently. Would it not be better, therefore, to trust to some organization to effect the necessary changes in man, rather than depend upon the casual advent of men like yourself?

*A.* Leaving men aside, you must remember that the influence of all great teachers of mankind has outlived their lives. In the teachings of each prophet like Mohammd, Buddha or Jesus, there was a permanent portion and there was another which was suited to the needs and requirements of the times. It is only because we try to keep up the permanent with the impermanent aspects of their teaching that there is so much distortion in religious practice to-day. But that apart, you can see that the influence of these men has sustained after they have passed away.

Moreover, what I disapprove of is an organization

based on force which a State is. Voluntary organization there must be.

—*The Modern Review* : Oct. 1935.

### 30. ILL-GOTTEN GAINS

**Q** HOW to dispossess people of ill-gotten gains, which is what the Socialists are out to do?

**A.** Who is to judge what gains or riches are ill-gotten or well-gotten? God alone can judge, or a complete authority appointed both by the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' can judge. Not anyone and everyone. But if you say that *all* property and possession is theft, all must give up property and wealth. Have we given it up? Let us make a beginning, expecting the rest to follow. For those who are convinced that their own possessions are ill-gotten, there is, of course, no other alternative but to give them up.

—*Harijan* : Aug. I, 1936.

### 31. CLASS CONFLICT

**I** EXPECT to convert the *Zamindars* and other lists 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 non-violence 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

## CLASS CONFLICT

*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. This 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* : Dec. 5, 1936.

### No Elimination of Zamindars

I do not want to destroy the *Zamindar*, but neither do I feel that the *Zamindar* is inevitable. I will illustrate how I work out my trusteeship theory here. In this village Jamnalal has a 75 per cent share. Of course, I have come here not by design but by accident. When I approached Jamnalalji for help, he built me the required hut and out-houses and said: 'Whatever profit there is from Segaoon,<sup>1</sup> you may take for the welfare of the village'. If I can persuade other *Zamindars* to do likewise, village improvement becomes easy.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 5, 1936.

## 32. DO NOT COVET POSSESSIONS

**I**F you believe that God pervades everything that He has created, you must believe that you can-

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1. Now Sevagram.

not enjoy anything that is not given by Him. And seeing that He is the Creator of His numberless children, it follows that you cannot covet anybody's possession. If you think that you are one of His numerous creatures, it behoves you to renounce everything and lay it at His feet. That means that the act of renunciation of everything is not a mere physical renunciation, but represents a second or new birth. It is a deliberate act, not done in ignorance. It is, therefore, a regeneration. And then since he who holds the body must eat and drink and clothe himself, he must naturally seek all that he needs from Him. And he gets it as a natural reward of that renunciation. If all the Princes would call themselves servants of God, they would be correctly describing themselves, but they cannot be servants of God unless they are servants of the people. And if *Zamindars* would treat themselves as trustees and perform the act of renunciation that I have described, this world would indeed be a blessed world to live in.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 30, 1937.

### 33. SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

**S**Ocialism and Communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in essential selfishness of human

## REAL SOCIALISM

nature. I do not subscribe to it, for I know that the essential difference between man and the brute is that the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute, and, therefore, superior to selfishness and violence, which belong to the brute nature and not to the immortal spirit of man. That is the fundamental conception of Hinduism, which has years of penance and austerity at the back of discovery of this truth. That is why, whilst we have had saints who have worn out their bodies and laid down their lives in order to explore the secrets of the soul, we have had none, as in the West, who laid down their lives in exploring the remotest or the highest regions of the earth. Our Socialism or Communism should, therefore, be based on non-violence and on harmonious co-operation of labour and capital, landlord and tenant.

—*Amrita Bazar Patrika* : Aug. 2, 1934.

### 34. REAL SOCIALISM

**R**REAL Socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught: "All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can, therefore, unmake it." Gopal literally means shepherd; it also means God. In modern language, it means the State, *i.e.*, the people. That the land to-day does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is

not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it.

I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence. The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the wheel with all its implications. Land and all property is his who will work it. Unfortunately, the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this simple fact.

—*Harijan* : Jan. 2, 1937.

### 35. NON-VIOLENT COMMUNISM

**Q** WHAT do you think of Communism? Do you think it would be good for India?

*A.* Communism of the Russian type, that is Communism which is imposed on a people, would be repugnant to India. I believe in non-violent Communism.

*Q.* But Communism in Russia is against private property. Do you want private property?

*A.* If Communism came without any violence, it would be welcome. For, then, no property would be held by anybody except on behalf of the people and for the people. A millionaire may have his millions, but he will hold them for the people. The State could take charge of them whenever they would need them for the common cause.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 13, 1937

### 36. 'EVEN UNTO THIS LAST'

**WHILST** I have the greatest admiration for the self-denial and spirit of sacrifice of our Socialist friends, I have never concealed the sharp difference between their method and mine. They frankly believe in violence and all that is in its bosom. I believe in non-violence through and through... I was a socialist before many of them were born. I carried conviction to a rabid socialist in Johannesburg, but that is neither here nor there. My claim will live when their socialism is dead.

My socialism means 'even unto this last'. I do not want to rise on the ashes of the blind, the deaf and the dumb. In their socialism, probably these have no place. Their one aim is material progress. For instance, America aims at having a car for every citizen. I do not. I want freedom for full expression of my personality. I must be free to build a staircase to Sirius, if I want to. That does not mean that I want to do any such thing. Under the other socialism, there is no individual freedom. You own nothing, not even your body.

—*Harijan* : Aug. 4, 1946.

### 37. SO-CALLED INCONSISTENCIES

**I** HAVE some very persistent correspondents who put posers before me. Here is a specimen letter from one such correspondent :

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

"Whenever economic troubles arise and whenever questions have been put to you on the economic relations of capital and labour, you have put forth the theory of trusteeship which has always puzzled me. You want the rich to hold all their property in trust for the poor and expend it for their benefit. If I ask you whether this is possible, you will tell me that my question arises from a belief in the essential selfishness of human nature and that your theory is based on the essential goodness of human nature.

"Your trusteeship theory sounds very much like the Divine Right theory of kings which has been exploded long ago. When one man, who was allowed to hold political power in trust for all the others and who derived it from them, mis-used it, people revolted against it and democracy was born. Similarly, now when a few, who ought to hold the economic power in trust for the others from whom they derive it, use it for their own self-aggrandisement and to the detriment of the rest, the inevitable result is the deprivation of the few of the means of economic power by the many, *i.e.*, the birth of Socialism.

"Hitherto violence was the only recognized means to attain anything good or bad. When violence is employed even with a view to achieve good, it brings evil in its train and compromises the good achieved. Now I take it that your definite contribution to the world lies in your having successfully demonstrated the efficacy of another means, namely, non-violence which is superior to violence and does not poison human relations. Therefore, my fondest hope is that you should fight and end the present economic order non-violently and help to create a new one."

I see no inconsistency in my treatment of capitalism or imperialism. My correspondent has been led into a confusion of thought. I have not talked

## SO-CALLED INCONSISTENCIES

or thought of what Kings, Imperialists or Capitalists claim and have claimed. I have talked and written of how capital may be treated. And then it is one thing to make a claim and another to live up to it. Not everyone like me (say) who claims to be a servant of the people becomes that by the mere assertion. And yet all would appreciate persons like me, if we were found to be living up to our claim. Similarly would all rejoice if a capitalist were to divest himself of exclusive ownership and declare himself to be in possession as a trustee for the people. It is highly probable that my advice will not be accepted and my dream will not be realized. But who can guarantee that the socialists' dream will be realized ?

### Scientific Socialism

Socialism was not born with the discovery of the misuse of capital by capitalists. As I have contended, socialism, even communism, is explicit in the first verse of *Ishopanishad*. What is true is that when some reformers lost faith in the method of conversion, the technique of what is known as scientific socialism was born. I am engaged in solving the same problem that faces scientific socialists. It is true, however, that my approach is always and only through unadulterated non-violence. It may fail. If it does, it will be because of my ignorance of the technique of non-

violence. I may be a bad exponent of the doctrine in which my faith is daily increasing. Trusteeship, as I conceive it, has yet to prove its worth. It is an attempt to secure the best use of property for the people by competent hands.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 20, 1937.

### 38. AN ANACHRONISM

**Q** CANT we say the system of *Zamindari* is an anachronism and should go, by non-violent means of course?

*A.* Of course, we can. The question is 'must we?' Why can we not say to the *Zamindars*: 'These are the evils which we ask you to remove yourselves?' I admit that this presumes trust in human nature.

*Q.* But don't you agree that the land belongs to him who tills it?

*A.* I do. But that need not mean that the *Zamindar* be wiped out. The man who supplies brains and metal is as much a tiller as the one who labours with his hands. What we aim at, or should be, is to remove the present terrible inequality between them.

*Q.* But the mending process may be very long.

*A.* Seemingly the longest process is often the shorest.

## MUTUAL TRUSTEES

Q. But why not parcel out the land among the tillers ?

A. That is a hasty thought. The land is to-day in their hands. But they know neither rights, nor how to exercise them. Supposing they were told neither to move out of the land nor to pay the dues to the *Zamindars*, do you think their misery would be over ? Surely, much will still remain to be done. I suggest that that should be undertaken now and the rest will follow as day follows night.

—*Harijan* : April 23, 1938.

## 39. MUTUAL TRUSTEES

**I**N fact, capital and labour will be mutual trustees, and both will be trustees of consumers. The trusteeship theory is not unilateral, and does not in the least imply superiority of the trustee. It is, as I have shown, a perfectly mutual affair, and each believes that his own interest is best safeguarded by safeguarding the interest of the other. 'May you propitiate the gods and may the gods propitiate you, and may you reach the highest good by this mutual propitiation' says the *Bhagvad Gita*. There is no separate species called gods in the universe, but all who have the power of production and will work

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

for the community using that power are gods—labourers no less than the capitalists.

—*Harijan*: June 25, 1938.

### 40. 'TRUSTEESHIP' EXPLAINED

**Q** THE 'trusteeship theory' is beyond the grasp of my intellect. Could you explain briefly?

**A.** Supposing I have come by a fair amount of wealth either by way of legacy, or by means of trade and industry—I must know that all that wealth does not belong to me; what belongs to me is the right to an honourable livelihood, no better than that enjoyed by millions of others. The rest of my wealth belongs to the community and must be used for the welfare of the community. I enunciated this theory when the socialist theory was placed before the country in respect of the possessions held by *Zamindars* and Ruling Chiefs. They would do away with these privileged classes. I want them to outgrow their greed and sense of possession and to come down in spite of their wealth to the level of those who earn their bread by labour. The labourer has to realize that the wealthy man is less owner of his wealth than the labourer is owner of his own, *viz.*, the power to work.

### Difficult of Practice

The question how many can be real trustees

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

according to this definition is beside the point. If the theory is true, it is immaterial whether many live up to it or only one man lives up to it. The question is of conviction. If you accept the principle of *Ahimsa*, you have to live up to it, no matter whether you succeed or fail. There is nothing in this theory which can be said to be beyond the grasp of intellect, though you may say it is difficult of practice.

—*Harijan* : June 3, 1939.

### 41. MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

I AM not ashamed to own that many capitalists are friendly towards me and do not fear me. They know that I desire to end capitalism almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced socialist or even communist.<sup>1</sup> But our methods differ, our languages differ. My theory of 'trusteeship' is no make-shift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all other theories. It has the sanction of

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1. "I have sought the friendship of the capitalists in order to induce them to regard themselves as trustees for the benefit of the labourers, and that they may take their own food after feeding them. To-day, capital is afraid of labour and labour scowls at capital. I want to replace that relationship by one of mutual trust and respect."

—*Young India* : August 20, 1925.

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

philosophy and religion behind it. That possessors of wealth have not acted up to the theory does not prove its falsity; it proves the weakness of the wealthy. No other theory is compatible with non-violence. In the non-violent method, the wrong-doer compasses his own end, if he does not undo the wrong. For, either through non-violent non-co-operation he is made to see his error, or he finds himself completely isolated.

—*Harijan* : Dec. 16, 1939.

## 42. SOCIAL JUSTICE

**I** HAVE always held that social justice, even unto the least and the lowliest, is impossible of attainment by force. I have further believed that it is possible by proper training of the lowliest by non-violent means to secure redress of the wrongs suffered by them. That means non-violent non-co-operation. At times, non-co-operation becomes as much a duty as co-operation. No one is bound to co-operate in one's own undoing or slavery.

I am quite sure that non-violent non-co-operation can secure what violence never can, and this by ultimate conversion of the wrong-doers.

### Art of Non-violence

But it must be realized that the reform cannot be rushed. If it is to be brought about by non-violent

## ZAMINDARS IN FREE INDIA

means, it can only be done by education both of the haves and the have-nots. The former should be assured that there never will be force used against them. The have-nots must be educated to know that no one can really compel them to be anything against their will, and that they can secure their freedom by learning the art of non-violence, *i.e.*, self-suffering. If the end in view is to be achieved, the education I have adumbrated has to be commenced now. An atmosphere of mutual respect and trust has to be established as the preliminary step. There can then be no violent conflict between the classes and the masses.

—*Harijan* : April 20, 1940.

### 43. ZAMINDARS IN FREE INDIA

**Q** (1) WHAT are the differences between a nationalist *Zamindar* and a nationalist non-*Zamindar*, in your opinion?

(2) What position do you assign to *Zamindars* and *Inamdars*, and the capitalists in a free and Independent India? Will these classes be allowed to fully play their proper and active part in national development? Can these two classes expect justice and fairplay in an Independent India?

**A.** (1) A nationalist *Zamindar* will try to live like non-*Zamindar*. He will regard his tenants as his co-proprietors: in other words, he will hold his

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

*Zamindari* in trust for his tenants, taking a moderate commission for the use of his labours and capital. A nationalist non-*Zamindar* will not regard the *Zamindar* as his natural enemy, but will seek redress of his wrongs by the process of conversion. I have shown before now that this is not a long drawn out agony.

(2) This is answered in the foregoing. Antagonism between the classes will be removed. I do not envisage a dead and artificial level among the people. There will be a variety among them as there is among the leaves of a tree. There will certainly be no have-nots, no unemployment, and no disparity between classes and masses such as we see to-day. I have no doubt whatsoever that if non-violence in its full measure becomes the policy of the State, we shall reach essential equality without strife.

—*Harijan* : April 27, 1940.

### 44. BENEVOLENT DICTATORSHIP

**Q** WHEN the rich become callous and selfish and the evil continues unchecked, a revolution of the masses, with all the attendant horrors, inevitably results. Since life, as you have put it, is often a choice between evils, won't you, in view of the lesson which the history of revolutions inculcates, welcome the rise of a benevolent dictatorship which would, with the minimum use of force, "soak the rich", give justice to the poor, and thereby serve both?

## DONATION OF TAINTED MONEY

A. I cannot accept benevolent or any other dictatorship. Neither will the rich vanish, nor will the poor be protected. Some rich men will certainly be killed out and some poor men will be spoon-fed. As a class, the rich will remain, and the poor also, in spite of dictatorship labelled benevolent. The real remedy is non-violent democracy, otherwise spelt true education of all. The rich should be taught the doctrine of stewardship, and the poor that of self-help.

—*Harijan* : June 8, 1940.

## 45. DONATION OF TAINTED MONEY

**Q** SUPPOSING a man has earned millions by exploiting millions of his poor brethren and made a gift of them to a *Mahatma* like you, and supposing you use that money for the benefit of humanity, is the exploiter absolved from sin? Does not some blame attach to you, too, for having accepted this ill-gotten wealth? How can one remain blameless in this unending vicious circle? How is *Ahimsa* to cope with this immoral exploitation?

A. Let us assume for the purpose of this riddle that I am really a *Mahatma*, and then try to solve it. The gift of what you assume to be ill-gotten gains cannot lessen the guilt of the exploiter. If he had kept the money for himself, that would have been an additional count against him. If instead

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

he makes a gift of it to me from pure motives, he escapes the additional sin. It is also likely that a good use of his gift may wean the exploiter from immoral means of making money. But no blame attaches to me for having accepted the gift. As the foul waters from the drains flowing into the sea partake of its purity, even so does tainted wealth become pure when put to the purest use. There is one condition, however, that we have assumed, *viz*, that the gift is made and accepted out of pure motives.

### Exploitation of the Poor

Exploitation of the poor can be extinguished not by effecting the destruction of a few millionaires, but by removing the ignorance of the poor and teaching them to non-co-operate with their exploiters. That will convert the exploiters also. I have even suggested that ultimately it will lead to both being equal partners. Capital as such is not evil; it is its wrong use that is evil. Capital, in some form or other, will always be needed.

—*Harijan* : July 20, 1940.

### 46. EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

**T**HE real implication of equal distribution is that each man shall have the wherewithal to supply all his natural needs and no more. For example,

## EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

if one man has a weak digestion and requires only a quarter of pound of flour for his bread and another needs a pound, both should be in a position to satisfy their wants. To bring this ideal into being, the entire social order has got to be reconstructed. A society based on non-violence cannot nurture any other ideal. We may not perhaps be able to realize the goal, but we must bear it in mind and work unceasingly to near it. To the same extent as we progress towards our goal, we shall find contentment and happiness, and to that extent, too, shall we have contributed towards the bringing into being of a non-violent society.

### Bar to Progress

It is perfectly possible for an individual to adopt this way of life without having to wait for others to do so. And if an individual can observe a certain rule of conduct, it follows that a group of individuals can do likewise. It is necessary for me to emphasise the fact, that no one need wait for anyone else in order to adopt a right cause. Men generally hesitate to make beginning, if they feel that the objective cannot be had in its entirety. Such an attitude of mind is, in reality, a bar to progress.

### The First Step

Now let us consider how equal distribution can be brought about through non-violence. The

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

first step towards it is for him who has made this ideal part of his being, to bring about the necessary changes in his personal life. He would reduce his wants to a minimum, bearing in mind the poverty of India. His earnings would be free of dishonesty. The desire for speculation would be renounced. His habitation would be in keeping with the new mode of life. There would be self-restraint exercised in every sphere of life. When he has done all that is possible in his own life, then only will he be in a position to preach this ideal among his associates and neighbours.

### Trusteeship of the Wealthy

Indeed, at the root of this doctrine of equal distribution must lie that of the trusteeship of the wealthy for the superfluous wealth possessed by them. For, according to the doctrine, they may not possess a rupee more than their neighbours. How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or, should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this, we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore, the non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth, of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs, and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. In this,

## EQUAL DISTRIBUTION

argument, honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed.

As soon as a man looks upon himself as a servant of society, earns for its sake, spends for its benefit, then purity enters into his earnings and there is *Ahimsa* in his venture. Moreover, if men's minds turn towards this way of life, there will come about a peaceful revolution in society, and that without any bitterness.

### Change in Human Nature

It may be asked whether history at any time records such a change in human nature. Such changes have certainly taken place in individuals. One may not perhaps be able to point to them in a whole society. But this only means that up till now there has never been an experiment on a large scale in non-violence. Somehow or other, the wrong belief has taken possession of us that *Ahimsa* is pre-eminently a weapon for individuals and its use should, therefore, be limited to that sphere. In fact, this is not the case. *Ahimsa* is definitely an attribute of society. To convince people of this truth is at once my effort and my experiment. In this age of wonders, no one will say that a thing or idea is worthless because it is new. To say it is impossible because it is difficult is again not in consonance with the spirit of the age. Things undreamt of are daily being seen,

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

the impossible is becoming possible. We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of non-violence. The history of religion is full of such examples. To try to root out religion itself from society is a wild goose chase. And were such an attempt to succeed, it would mean the destruction of society. Superstition, evil customs and other imperfections creep in from age to age and mar religion for the time being. They come and go. But religion itself remains because the existence of the world, in a broad sense, depends on religion. The ultimate definition of religion may be said to be the obedience to the Law of God. God and His Law are synonymous terms. Therefore, God signifies an unchanging and living Law. No one has ever really found Him. But *Avatars* and prophets have, by means of their *tapasya*, given to mankind a faint glimpse of the Eternal Law.

### Solution to the Riddle

If, however, in spite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term, and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle, I have alighted on non-violent non-co-operation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The

## ECONOMIC EQUALITY

rich cannot accumulate wealth without the co-operation of the poor in society. Man has been conversant with violence from the beginning, for he has inherited this strength from the animal in his nature. It was only when he rose from the state of a quadruped (animal) to that of a biped (man), that the knowledge of the strength of *Ahimsa* entered into his soul. This knowledge has grown within him slowly but surely. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.

—*Harijan* : Aug. 25, 1940.

### 47. ECONOMIC EQUALITY

**WORKING** for economic equality means abolishing the eternal conflict between capital and labour. It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth on the one hand, and a levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility, so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists. The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will

enjoy the same power as the richest in the land. A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day, unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good. I adhere to my doctrine of trusteeship in spite of the ridicule that has been poured upon it. It is true that it is difficult to reach. So is non-violence difficult to attain. But we made up our minds in 1920 to negotiate that steep ascent. We have found it worth the effort.

—*Constructive Programme* (1941) : p. 18.

#### 48. PLAIN LIVING AND HIGH THINKING

“**A**N ideal society is that in which every individual will be able to live a life of progressively increasing wants with a minimum output of labour.” Thus writes a friend from Ahmedabad. The proposition is pleasing and is backed by plausible argument which many may accept.

That everyone in this world should be able to maintain as high a standard of life as possible with the least possible output of labour, is just as fantastic as to expect a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. The writer's high living would appear to mean luxurious living which is an impossible proposition for any society as a whole. And when there is no limit to luxury, where shall we stop?

## THE DUTY OF THE RICH

All the scriptures of the world have taught the exact opposite. Plain living and high thinking is the ideal that has been placed before us. The vast majority recognize its truth, but are unable to get there because of human frailty. It is, however, perfectly possible to envisage such an existence.

### Happiness Lies in Contentment

Man falls from the pursuit of the ideal of plain living and high thinking the moment he wants to multiply his daily wants. History gives ample proof of this. Man's happiness really lies in contentment. He who is discontented, however much he possesses, becomes a slave to his desires. And there is really no slavery equal to that of his desires. All the sages have declared from the house-tops that man can be his own worst enemy as well as his best friend. To be free or to be a slave lies in his own hands. And what is true for the individual, is true for society.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 1, 1942.

## 49. THE DUTY OF THE RICH

**T**HE rich should ponder well as to what is their duty to-day. They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them. The moneyed classes have got

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

to learn how to fight either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence. For those who wish to follow the latter way, the best and most effective *mantram* is: तेन ह्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः (Enjoy the wealth by renouncing it). Expanded, it means: Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours, it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society.<sup>1</sup> This truth has hitherto not been acted upon; but, if the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who overpower them.

But I have visions that the end of this War<sup>2</sup> will mean also the end of the rule of capital. I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence. Let it be remembered that physical force is transitory, even as the body is transitory. But the power of the spirit is permanent, even as the spirit is everlasting.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 1, 1942.

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1. "Strictly speaking, all amassing or hoarding of wealth, above and beyond one's legitimate requirements, is theft. There would be no occasion for thefts and, therefore, no thieves, if there was a wise regulation of riches and absolute social justice prevailed."

—*Harijan* : Aug. 11, 1946.

2. The Great War II.

## 50. NOT NECESSARILY IMPURE

**Q** YOU say to the rich: 'Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs and use the remainder for society.' When I read this, the first question that arose in my mind was: Why first earn crores and then use them for society? As society to-day is constituted, the means of earning crores are bound to be impure; and one who earns crores by impure means cannot be expected to follow the *mantram* " तेन व्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः " because in the very process of earning crores by impure means, the man's character is bound to be tainted or vitiated. And, moreover, you have always been emphasizing the purity of means. But I am afraid that there is a possibility of people misunderstanding that you are laying an emphasis here more on the ends than on the means.

I request you to emphasize as much, if not more, the purity of means of earning money as on spending. If purity of means is strictly observed, then, according to me, crores could not be accumulated at all and the difficulty of spending for society will assume a very minor prospect.

**A.** I must demur. Surely, a man may conceivably make crores through strictly pure means, assuming that a man may legitimately possess riches. For

the purpose of my argument, I have assumed that private possession itself is not held to be impure. If I own a mining lease and I tumble upon a diamond of rare value, I may suddenly find myself a millionaire without being held guilty of having used impure means. This actually happened when Cullinan diamond, much more valuable than the Kohinoor, was found. Such instances can be easily multiplied. My argument was surely addressed to such men. I have no hesitation in endorsing the proposition that generally rich men, and for that matter most men, are not particular as to the way they make money.

### Good of All

In the application of the method of non-violence, one must believe in the possibility of every person, however depraved, being reformed under human and skilled treatment. We must appeal to the good in human beings and expect response. Is it not conducive to the well-being of society that every member uses all his talents, not only for personal aggrandisement but for the good of all? We do not want to produce a dead equality where every person becomes or is rendered incapable of using his ability to the utmost possible extent. Such a society must ultimately perish. I, therefore, suggest that my advice that moneyed men may earn their crores (honestly only, of course) but so as to

dedicate them to the service of all is perfectly sound. "तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीयाः" is a *mantra* based on uncommon knowledge. It is the surest method to evolve a new order of life of universal benefit, in the place of the present one where each one lives for himself without regard to what happens to his neighbour.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 22, 1942.

## 51. THE ETERNAL PROBLEM

**Q** WHY can't you see that whilst there is possession it must be defended against all odds? Therefore, your insistence that violence should be eschewed in all circumstances is utterly unworkable and absurd. I think non-violence is possible only for select individuals.

**A.** This question has been answered often enough in some form or other.... But it is an evergreen. I must answer it as often as it is put, especially when it comes from an earnest seeker as this one does.

I claim that even now, though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of non-violence, all the world over mankind lives and men retain their possessions on the sufferance of one another. If they had not done so, only the fewest and the most ferocious would have survived. But such is not the case. Families are bound together

by ties of love, and so are groups in the so-called civilized society called nations. Only they do not recognize the supremacy of the law of non-violence. It follows, therefore, that they have not investigated its vast possibilities. Hitherto out of sheer inertia, shall I say, we have taken for granted that complete non-violence is possible only for the few who take the vow of non-possession and the allied abstinences. Whilst it is true that the votaries alone can carry on research work and declare from time to time the new possibilities of the great eternal law governing man, if it is the law, it must hold good for all. The many failures we see are not of the law but of the followers, many of whom do not even know that they are under that law *willy-nilly*. When a mother dies for her child, she unknowingly obeys the law. I have been pleading for the past fifty years for a conscious acceptance of the law and its zealous practice even in the face of failures. Fifty years' work has shown marvellous results and strengthened my faith.

### Lawful Possessions

I do claim that by constant practice we shall come to a state of things when lawful possession will command universal and voluntary respect. No doubt, such possession will not be tainted. It will not be an insolent demonstration of the inequalities that surround us everywhere. Nor need the problem of unjust and unlawful possessions appal the

## RICHES *v.* POVERTY

votary of non-violence. He has at his disposal the non-violent weapon of *Satyagraha* and non-co-operation, which hitherto has been found to be a complete substitute of violence whenever it has been applied honestly in sufficient measure. I have never claimed to present the complete science of non-violence. It does not lend itself to such treatment. So far as I know, no single physical science does, not even very precise science of mathematics. I am but a seeker and I have fellow-seekers like the questioner whom I invite to accompany me in the very difficult but equally fascinating search.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 22, 1942.

## 52. RICHES *V.* POVERTY

**Q** HOW is it possible to earn lakhs in a righteous way? Moreover, however careful a rich man is, he is bound to spend more on himself than his actual requirements merit. Therefore, why not lay more stress on *not* becoming wealthy than on trusteeship of riches?

**A.** The question is apt and has been put to me before. . . . It is my conviction that it is possible to acquire riches without consciously doing wrong. For example, I may light on a gold mine in my one acre of land. But I accept the proposition that it is better not to desire wealth than to acquire it and become its trustee. I gave up my own long ago

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

which should be proof enough of what I would like others to do. But what am I to advise those who are already wealthy or who would not shed the desire for wealth? I can only say to them that they should use their wealth for service. It is true that generally the rich spend more on themselves than they need. But this can be avoided. I have come across innumerable rich persons who are stingy on themselves. For some it is part of their nature to spend next to nothing on themselves, and they do not think that they acquire merit in so doing.

### Inherited Riches

The same applies to the sons of the wealthy. Personally, I do not believe in inherited riches. The well-to-do should educate and bring up their children so that they may learn how to be independent. The tragedy is that they do not do so. Their children do get some education, they even recite verses in praise of poverty, but they have no compunction about helping themselves to parental wealth.<sup>1</sup> That being so, I exercise my common

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1. "Much of the present imbecility of the children of the wealthy will go, if the latter can but substitute the worthy ambition of educating their children to become independent for the unworthy ambition of making them slaves of ancestral property, which kills enterprise and feeds the passions which accompany idleness and luxury."

## A QUESTION

sense and advise what is practicable. Those of us, however, who consider it a duty to adopt poverty and believe in and desire economic equality may not be jealous of the rich, but should exhibit real happiness in our poverty which others may emulate. The sad fact is that those who are thus happy are few and far between.

—*Harijan* : March 8, 1942.

### 53. A QUESTION

**Q** FROM your writings, one gathers the notion that your 'trustee' is not anything more than a very benevolent philanthropist and donor, such as the first Parsi Baronet, the Tatas, the Wadias, the Birlas, Shri Bajaj and the like. Is that so? Will you please explain whom you regard as the primary or rightful beneficiaries of the possessions of a rich man? Is there to be a limit to the amount or part of the income and capital which he can spend upon himself, his kith and kin and for non-public purposes? Can one who exceeds such limit be prevented from doing so? If he is incompetent or otherwise fails to discharge his obligations as a trustee, can he be removed and called upon to render accounts by a beneficiary or the State? Do the same principles apply to Princes and *Zamindars*, or is their trusteeship of a different nature?

**A.** If the trusteeship idea catches, philanthropy, as we know it, will disappear. Of those

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

you have named, only Jamnalalji came near, but only near it. A trustee has no heir but the public. In a State built on the basis of non-violence, the commission of trustees will be regulated. Princes and *Zamindars* will be on a par with the other men of wealth.

—*Harijan* : April 12, 1942.

### 54. KISAN AND ZAMINDAR

**T**HE *Kisan* or the peasant, whether as a landless labourer or a labouring proprietor, comes first. He is the salt of the earth which rightly belongs or should belong to him, not to the absentee landlord or *Zamindar*. But, in the non-violent way, the labourer cannot forcibly eject the absentee landlord. He has so to work as to make it impossible for the landlord to exploit him. Closest co-operation amongst the peasants is absolutely necessary.

—*Press Report* : Oct. 28, 1944.

*Q.* You say that the earth rightly belongs or should belong to the peasant. By this, do you mean only that the peasant ought to gain control over the land he cultivates, or that he should also gain effective voice and power in society and over the State in which he is obliged to live?

*A.* I have no doubt that if we have democratic *Swaraj*, as it must be if freedom is won through non-

## A VICIOUS CIRCLE

violence, the *Kisan* must hold power in all its phases including political power.

Q. Am I right in interpreting your statement that "land should not belong to the absentee landlord or *Zamindar*", that ultimately the *Zamindari* system has to be abolished?

A. Yes. But you should remember that I visualize a system of trusteeship regulated by the State. In other words, I do not want to antagonize the *Zamindars*, and, for that matter, any class without cause.

—*Press Report* : Dec. 6, 1944.

## 55. A VICIOUS CIRCLE

**T**HE problem is not to set class against class, but to educate labour to a sense of its dignity. Moneyed men after all form a microscopic minority in the world. They will act on the square, immediately labour realizes its power and yet acts on the square. To inflame labour against moneyed men is to perpetuate class hatred and all the evil consequences flowing from it. The strife is a vicious circle to be avoided at any cost. It is an admission of weakness, a sign of inferiority complex. The moment labour recognizes its own dignity, money will find its rightful place, *i.e.*, it will be held in trust for labour. For, labour is more than money.

—*Harijan* : Oct. 16, 1945.

## 56. MEANING OF ECONOMIC EQUALITY

**Q** WHAT exactly do you mean by economic equality, and what is statutory trusteeship as conceived by you?

**A.** Economic equality of my conception does not mean that everyone will literally have the same amount. It simply means that everybody should have enough for his or her needs. For instance, I require two *shawls* in winter, whereas my grand-nephew Kanu Gandhi, who stays with me and is like my own son, does not require any warm clothing whatsoever. I require goat's milk, oranges and other fruit. Kanu can do with ordinary food. I envy Kanu, but there is no point in it. Kanu is a young man, whereas I am an old man of 76. The monthly expense of my food is far more than that of Kanu, but that does not mean that there is economic inequality between us. The elephant needs a thousand times more food than the ant, but that is not an indication of inequality. So, the real meaning of economic equality is: "To each according to his need". That is the definition of Marx. If a single man demanded as much as a man with wife and four children, that would be a violation of economic equality.

### Glaring Difference

Let no one try to justify the glaring difference between the classes and the masses, the prince and

## MEANING OF ECONOMIC EQUALITY

the pauper, by saying that the former need more. That will be idle sophistry and a travesty of my argument. The contrast between the rich and the poor to-day is a painful sight. The poor villagers are exploited by the foreign government and also by their own countrymen—the city-dwellers. They produce the food and go hungry. They produce milk and their children have to go without it. It is disgraceful. Everyone must have balanced diet, a decent house to live in, facilities for the education of one's children and adequate medical relief. That constitutes my picture of economic equality.<sup>1</sup> I do not want to taboo everything above and beyond the bare necessities, but they must come after the essential needs of the poor are satisfied. First things must come first.

—*Harijan* : Aug. 18, 1940.

### Statutory Trusteeship

As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make their choice between class war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of

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1. "Economic equality must never be supposed to mean possession of an equal amount of worldly goods by everyone. It does mean, however, that everyone will have a proper house to live in, sufficient and balanced food to eat, and sufficient *Khadi* with which to cover himself. It also means that the cruel inequality that obtains to-day will be removed by purely non-violent means."

—*Harijan* : Aug. 18, 1940.

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

their wealth. They would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sakes, but for the sake of the nation and, therefore, without exploitation. The State would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to society. Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it.

Supposing India becomes a free country tomorrow, all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees. But such a statute will not be imposed from above. It will have to come from below. When the people understand the implications of trusteeship and the atmosphere is ripe for it, the people themselves, beginning with *Gram Panchayats*, will begin to introduce such statutes. Such a thing, coming from below, is easy to swallow. Coming from above, it is liable to prove a dead weight.

—*Harijan* : March 31, 1946.

### 57. MY DIFFERENCE WITH THE SOCIALISTS

**Q** WHAT is the difference between your technique and that of the Communists or Socialists for realizing the goal of economic equality?

**A.** The Socialists and Communists say that they can do nothing to bring about economic equality

## THE NON-VIOLENT SANCTION

to-day. They will just carry on propaganda in its favour, and, to that end, they believe in generating and accentuating hatred. They say: 'When we get control over the State, we will enforce equality'. Under my plan, the State will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate to them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view, but will straightaway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception, if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of the ten *bighas* of land. For that, I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor. That is what I have been trying to do for the last fifty years or more, and so I claim to be a foremost Communist although I make use of cars and other facilities offered to me by the rich. They have no hold on me and I can shed them at a moment's notice, if the interests of the masses demand it.

—*Harijan* : March 31, 1946.

### 58. THE NON-VIOLENT SANCTION

**Q** WHAT is the place of *Satyagraha* in making the rich realize their duty towards the poor?

**A.** The same as against the foreign power.

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

*Satyagraha* is a law of universal application. Beginning with the family, its use can be extended to every other circle. Supposing a landowner exploits his tenants and mulcts them of the fruit of their toil by appropriating it to his own use. When they expostulate with him, he does not listen and raises objections that he requires so much for his wife, so much for his children and so on. The tenants, or those who have espoused their cause and have influence, will make an appeal to his wife to expostulate with her husband. She would probably say that for herself she does not need his exploited money. The children will say likewise that they would earn for themselves what they need.

Supposing further, that he listens to nobody or that his wife and children combine against the tenants, they will not submit. They will quit if asked to do so, but they will make it clear that the land belongs to him who tills it. The owner cannot till all the land himself and he will have to give in to their just demands. It may, however, be that the tenants are replaced by others. Agitation short of violence will then continue till the replacing tenants see their error and make common cause with the evicted tenants. Thus, *Satyagraha* is a process of educating public opinion, such that it covers all the elements of society and, in the end, makes itself irresistible. Violence interrupts the process and prolongs the real revolution of the whole social structure.

## ABOUT TRUSTEESHIP

The conditions necessary for the success of *Satyagraha* are : (1) The *Satyagrahi* should not have any hatred in his heart against the opponent. (2) The issue must be true and substantial. (3) The *Satyagrahi* must be prepared to suffer till the end for his cause.

—*Harijan* : March 31, 1946.

### 59. ABOUT TRUSTEESHIP

**Q** IS it possible to defend by means of non-violence anything which can only be gained through violence?

*A.* What is gained by violence can not only not be defended by non-violence, but the latter requires the abandonment of the ill-gotten gains.

*Q.* Is the accumulation of capital possible except through violence, whether open or tacit?

*A.* Such accumulation by private persons is impossible except through violent means, but accumulation by the State in a non-violent society is not only possible, it is desirable and inevitable.

*Q.* Whether a man accumulates material or moral wealth, he does so only through the help or co-operation of other members of society. Has he then the moral right to use any of it mainly for personal advantage?

*A.* No, he has no moral right.

*Q.* How would the successor of a trustee be determined? Will he only have the right of pro-

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

posing a name, the right of finalization being invested in the State?

*A.* Choice should be given to the original owner who becomes the first trustee, but the choice must be finalized by the State. Such arrangement puts a check on the State as well as the individual.

### Ownership of Property

*Q.* When the replacement of private by public property thus takes place through the operation of the theory of trusteeship, will the ownership vest in the State, which is an instrument of violence, or in associations of a voluntary character like village communes and municipalities, which may, of course, derive their final authority from State-made laws?

*A.* This question involves some confusion of thought. Legal ownership in the transformed condition vests in the trustee, not in the State. It is to avoid confiscation that the doctrine of trusteeship comes into play, retaining for the society the ability of the original owner in his own right. Nor do I hold that the State must always be based on violence. It might be so in theory, but the practice of the theory demanded a State which would, for the most part, be based on non-violence.

—*Harijan*: Feb. 16, 1917.

## 60. STATE OWNERSHIP

**A**S a believer in non-violence, I believe in trusteeship. I want a peaceful conversion of mill-

## MORE ABOUT TRUSTEESHIP

owners, so that the millowners and their employees would all come under social control voluntarily. That means that though, for instance, X might continue to be the legal owner, he would only take such commission out of the profits for himself as was warranted by his services and sanctioned by the people. The real owners would be the labourers in the mills.

—*Harijan*: Oct. 20, 1946.

## 61. MORE ABOUT TRUSTEESHIP

**Q** YOU have asked rich men to be trustees. Is it implied that they should give up private ownership in their property and create out of it a trust valid in the eyes of the law and managed democratically? How will the successor of the present incumbent be determined on his demise?

**A.** I adhere to the position taken by me years ago that everything belongs to God and is from God. Therefore, it is for His people as a whole, not for a particular individual. When an individual has more than his proportionate portion, he becomes a trustee of that portion for God's people.

God, who is All-Powerful, has no need to store. He creates from day to day; hence men also should, in theory, live from day to day and not stock things. If this truth is imbibed by the people generally, it

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

would become legalized and trusteeship would become a legalized institution. I wish it becomes a gift from India to the world. Then, there would be no exploitation and no reserves, as in Australia and other countries, for white men and their posterity. In these distinctions lies the seed of a war more virulent than the last two. As to the successor, the trustee in office will have the right to nominate his successor subject to legal sanction.

—*Harijan* : Feb. 23, 1947.

## 62. TO LANDLORDS AND PEASANTS

**I** AM no lover of the *Zamindari* system. I have often spoken against it; but I frankly confess that I am not the enemy of the *Zamindars*. I own no enemies. The best way to bring about reform in the economic and social systems, whose evils are admittedly many, is through the royal road of self-suffering. Any departure from it only results in merely changing the form of the evil that is sought to be liquidated violently. Violence is incapable of destroying the evil, root and branch.

—*Harijan* : Mar.30, 1947.

### Be Trustees of the Poor

If what is said against the landlords is true, I would warn them that their days are numbered. They

## TO LANDLORDS AND PEASANTS

can no longer continue as lords and masters. They have a bright future if they become the trustees of the poor *Kisans*. I have in mind not trustees in name, but in reality. Such trustees would take nothing for themselves that their labour and care did not entitle them to. Then they would find that no law would be able to touch them. The *Kisans* would be their friends.

—*Harijan* : May 4, 1947.

### Lawlessness is Criminal

The *Zamindars*, among other things, have complained of growing lawlessness among the peasantry and labour. Such lawlessness is criminal and is bound to involve the very peasantry and labour in ruin, let alone the *Zamindars* who are after all a mere handful. I fervently hope that the lesson of the past thirty years in the virtue of non-violence would not be lost upon the people. I am quite prepared to say for the sake of argument that the *Zamindars* are guilty of many crimes and of omissions and commissions. But that is no reason for the peasant and the labourer, who are the salt of the earth, to copy crime. If salt loses its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

—*Harijan* : May 4, 1947.

### Senseless Policy

I am told that the Indian *Zamindars* exploit their *ryots* economically, terrorize them through their

## MY THEORY OF TRUSTEESHIP

officials and escape due punishment through collusion with the authorities. If it is true, the *Zamindars* are digging their own graves. Their future lies only in being the trustees for their tenants.

But as a man of truth and of justice, I must also dwell on the other side of the picture presented to me by the *Zamindars* who recognize me as a friend because of my universal friendliness, although they know my identity with the masses. They tell me that, with the coming Congress *Raj*, drawing its sanction from the masses, the *ryots* felt that they could commit all sorts of excesses, disposses *Zamindars* of their entire property, destroy their crops and terrorize them by other acts of violence. Similarly, labourers in mills thought, under the influence of false propaganda, that they could become the masters of the mills by damaging them.

As one of the masses I can only say to the peasants and industrial labour that they are only harming their own cause by this senseless policy. They are the real masters, but they must realize their strength, and know its use. By going mad, the millions could easily destroy a handful of *Zamindars*, but ultimately their madness would turn against themselves.

—*Harijan* : June 1, 1947.

### 63. TRUSTEESHIP IS INEVITABLE

**Q** YOU say that a *Raja*, a *Zamindar* or a capitalist should be a trustee for the poor. Do you think

## RIGHTS OR DUTIES ?

that any such exists to-day ? Or, do you expect them to be so transformed ?

A. I think that some very few exist even to-day, though not in the full sense of the term. They are certainly moving in that direction. It can, however, be asked whether the present *Rajas* and others can be expected to become trustees of the poor. If they do not become trustees of their own accord, force of circumstances will compel the reform unless they court utter destruction. When *Panchyat Raj* is established, public opinion will do what violence can never do. The present power of the *Zamindars*, the capitalists and the *Rajas* can hold sway only so long as the common people do not realize their own strength. If the people non-co-operate with the evil of *Zamindari* or capitalism, it must die of inanition. In *Panchyat Raj*, only the *Panchayat* will be obeyed and the *Panchayat* can only work through the law of their making.

—*Harijan* : June 1, 1947.

## 64. RIGHTS OR DUTIES ?

I WANT to deal with one great evil that is afflicting society to-day. The capitalist and the *Zamindar* talk of their rights, the labourer on the other hand of his, the prince of his divine right to rule, the *ryot* of his to resist it. If all simply insist on rights and no duties, there will be utter confusion and chaos.

If, instead of insisting on rights, everyone does

his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind. There is no such thing as the divine right of kings to rule, and the humble duty of the *ryots* to pay respectful obedience to their masters. Whilst it is true that these hereditary inequalities must go, as being injurious to the well-being of society, the unabashed assertion of rights of the hitherto down-trodden millions is equally injurious, if not more so, to the same well-being. The latter behaviour is probably calculated<sup>1</sup> to injure the millions, rather than the few claimants of divine or other rights. They could but die a brave or cowardly death, but those few dead would not bring in the orderly life of blissful contentment. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the correlation of rights and duties.

### Rights Flow from Duties

I venture to suggest that rights that do not flow directly from duty well-performed, are not worth having. They will be usurpations, sooner discarded the better.<sup>1</sup> A wretched parent, who claims obedience

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1. "All rights to be deserved and preserved come from duty well done. Thus the very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world. From this very fundamental statement perhaps it is easy enough to define the duties of men and women, and correlate every right to some corresponding duty to be first performed. Every other right can be shown to be a usurpation hardly worth fighting for."

—*Harijan*: June 8, 1947.

from his children without first doing his duty by them, excites nothing but contempt. It is distortion of religious precept for a dissolute husband to expect compliance in every respect from his dutiful wife. But the children who flout their parent, who is ever ready to do his duty towards them, would be considered ungrateful and would harm themselves more than their parent. The same can be said about husband and wife. If you apply this simple and universal rule to employers and labourers, landlords and tenants, the princes and their subjects or the Hindus and the Muslims, you will find that the happiest relations can be established in all walks of life without creating disturbance in and disclocation of life and business which you see in India as in the other parts of the world.

### Right of Service

The same rule applies to the Princes and the *ryots*. The former's duty is to act as true servants of the people. They will rule not by right granted by some outside authority, never by the right of the sword. They will rule by right of service, of greater wisdom. They will then have the right to collect taxes voluntarily rendered, not for themselves but for the sake of the people under their care. If they fail to perform this simple and primary duty, the *ryots* not only owe no return duty, but the duty devolves on them of resisting the princely usurpation. It may be otherwise said that the *ryots* earn the right

of resisting the usurpation or misrule. But the resistance will become a crime against man in terms of duty if it takes the form of murder, rapine and plunder. Force that performance of duty naturally generates is the non-violent and invincible force that *Satyagraha* brings into being.

—*Harijan* : July 6, 1947.

### 65. 'TRUSTEESHIP' FORMULA

**T**HE following 'simple, practical trusteeship formula' has had the approval of Gandhiji :

1. Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

2. It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property, except in as much as it may be permitted by society for its own welfare.

3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.

4. Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.

5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed

## 'TRUSTEESHIP' FORMULA

for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so that the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

6. Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.

(*Pyarelal*)

—*Harijan*: Oct. 25, 1952.

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