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your real training lie in spinning khaddar. Why do I say that? Because you have to deal with millions of people and you have to make two blades of grass grow where only one blade is growing today. If you want to add to the wealth of the country and its output, then believe me that the spinning-wheel is the only salvation. The classes alone read the *shlokas* of Kalidasa or even of Rabindranath Tagore. I know the life of Bengal and can say that these things are read only in the classes. How to link the classes with the masses is for me one of the greatest problems. I have hundreds and thousands of students in the Gujarat Vidya-pith for whose welfare I am supposed to be one of the trustees. This problem puzzles me. But I consider that their real work lies not in the big cities where they receive education, but in going out to villages after finishing their education and in spreading the message that they have learnt into the villages, thereby establishing a living relationship with the villagers. I defy anybody to say how that can be established except on their own terms. The villagers want bread—and not butter—and disciplined work, some work that will supplement their agricultural avocations which do not go on for all the 12 months. My friends, if you will seriously consider your avocation in life, let this be the foundation of your work and I am sure you will do it. (Loud cheers.)

*The Hindu*, 23-3-1925

## 206. SPEECH AT LABOURERS' MEETING, MADRAS<sup>1</sup>

*March 22, 1925*

FRIENDS AND FELLOW LABOURERS,

I thank you for the address that you have presented to me. I thank also the Madras Literary Academy for its address. I call you fellow-labourers, that is, I call myself a labourer because I take pride in calling myself a spinner, weaver, farmer and scavenger. I have thrown in my lot with you so far as a man like me could do, and I have done so because I feel that India's salvation lies through you. I have done so also because I feel that India's salvation lies in labour, in manual labour, which is not

<sup>1</sup> Addresses of welcome were presented at the meeting by the Choolai Congress and the Madras Literary Academy. Gandhiji's speech was translated into Tamil, sentence by sentence, by M. S. Subramania Iyer.

to be had by reading books or mental gymnastics. I have realized and I am realizing it day after day that man is born to labour with his own body for his bodily sustenance. In mixing with a spinner, weaver and other labourers, I insistently tell them never to cease to be labourers but to add to their bodily labour mental education. But I know that the joy that I can derive from labour is not your lot. Labour to most of you is painful toil without pleasure. It is so, and it is painful toil, partly because your labour is exploited by moneyed men but mostly because of your own defects and limitations. The third reason, therefore, why I have become a labourer is to be able to draw, from the same level that you occupy, your attention to these limitations and defects. You know that I am practically living with thousands of labourers in Ahmedabad. I know the whole of their life and I do not suppose that you are very different from them. There I have observed that these labourers, and probably you also, are given to the drink habit. Many of you gamble away your money. You do not live at peace with your neighbour but quarrel with one another. You are often jealous of one another. You often do not do the work allotted to you in an honest manner. You often place yourselves under the guidance of those who do not lead you in the proper channel and, I know, become impatient of any wrong that is done to you. You sometimes think that you can remove that wrong by using violence. Those of you who do not belong to the *Panchama* classes regard your *Panchama* brethren with despite and contempt. If night-schools are opened for you, you will not attend them. If schools are opened for your little children, you will not send your children to those schools. You do not very often know what a nation is. Instead of living for the nation, very often you are satisfied with living merely for yourself. That is not the kind of labourer I call myself or want to be. You do not even think of your still poorer countrymen and women and, therefore, do not use hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar. Therefore, I am never tired of speaking, when I speak to labour gatherings such as these, of drawing the attention of the labourers to their own limitations.

I want you, therefore, to recognize and realize that you are not and you should be in no way inferior to any other class of people in this country. I want you to be able to develop the capacity for understanding national affairs. If you will do all these things, you must give up drink. You should give up insanitation and filth. Whether you are living in houses for which

you are paying rent and whether you are living in houses built for you by your employers, you should decline positively to live in dirty houses where there is no sunshine and where there is no air. You must keep your houses and yards absolutely clean of all dirt, of insanitation. You must keep your own bodies clean by washing them properly every day, and as your bodies and surroundings must be absolutely clean so should your life be chaste. You must never gamble. Send your children to schools that may be started or made by you, not so that your children may become clerks and cease to be labourers, but that they may remain labourers and be able to use their intelligence also. If you have no temples, if you are Hindus, if you have no mosques, if you are Mohammedans, you should lay by a certain sum and build these places of worship for yourselves. Those of you who are Hindus should not regard any body of Hindus as untouchables, *Panchamas* or Pariahs. No man dare cast his lustful eyes upon another's woman and lastly, as to your wearings—I know many of you are wearing foreign clothes, whether it comes from Manchester or Japan or even from Bombay and Ahmedabad, you must cease to wear them and wear only hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar. I ask you to wear khaddar because every yard of khaddar that you buy means a few annas, two or three annas, into the pockets of labourers like yourselves.

I am asking every labourer of India to learn and practise everyday hand-spinning, carding and, if possible, even weaving. There is a special reason for my asking the labourers to do so. In 1918, when the first strike of mill-hands took place in Ahmedabad, I refused to lead that strike upon public subscription. But I called upon them to labour elsewhere in order to be able to bring the strike to a successful end, without troubling the public. Since then, I have learned better and now I ask the labourers to learn these so that if they have to embark upon strikes they can live to an indefinite length of time upon spinning, carding and weaving. If you are sufficiently industrious, you can weave your own cloth. I hope you will take in all that I have said to you tonight. You should endeavour to do everything that I have told you. Early in the morning, getting up at four o'clock, ask God, before you do anything else, to help you to do the things that I have referred to this evening.

I thank you for coming to this meeting and listening to me with so much patience. May God bless you and enable you to lead pure and good lives! (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

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