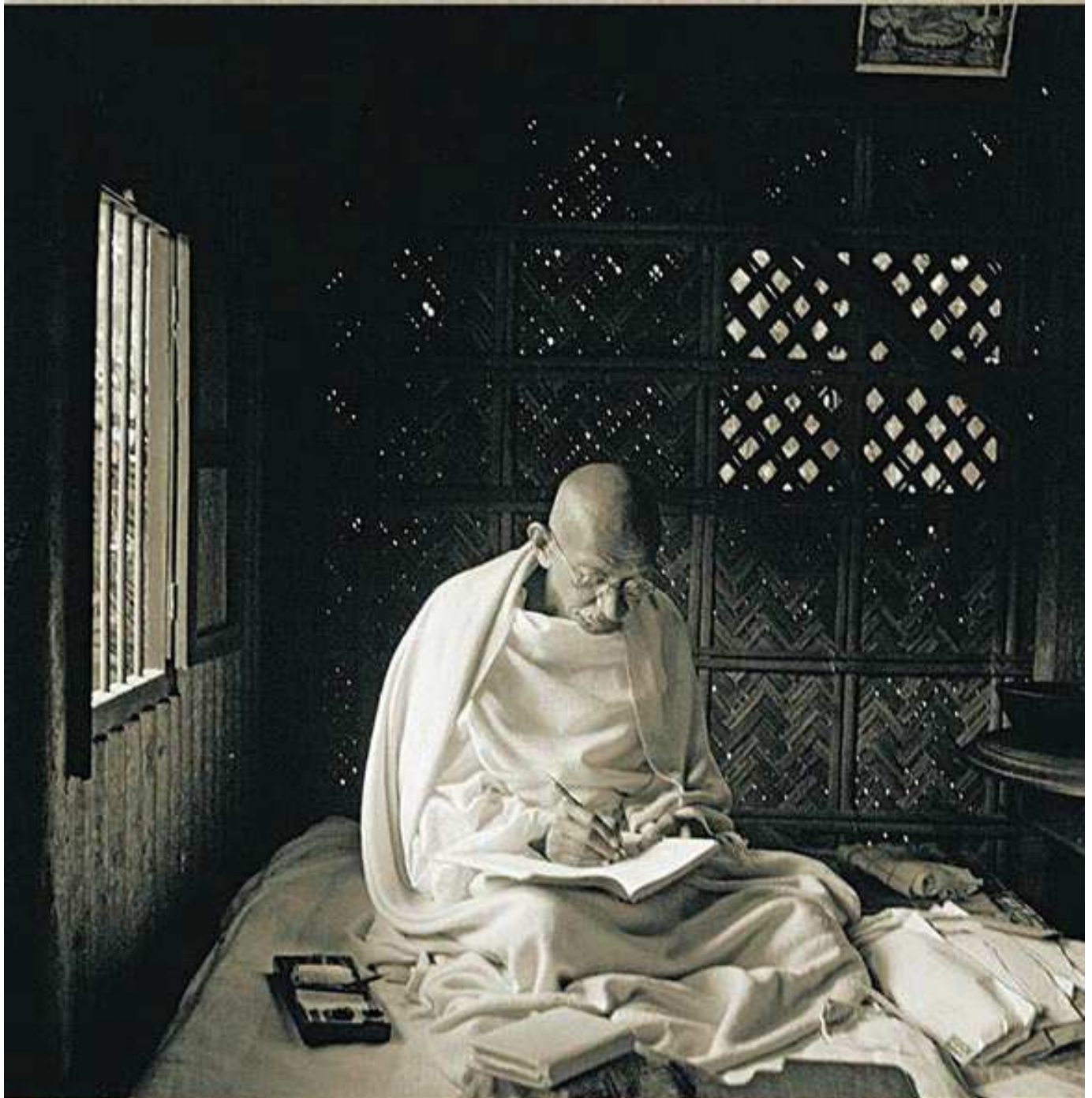


THE MIND OF MAHATMA GANDHI



Compiled and edited by
R. K. Prabhu & U. R. Rao

The Mind of Mahatma Gandhi

Encyclopedia of Gandhi's Thoughts

Compiled & Edited by: **R. K. Prabhu & U. R. Rao**

With Foreword by: **Acharya Vinoba Bhave & Dr. S. Radhakrishnan**

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44. CHOICE BEFORE LABOUR

TWO PATHS are open before India today, either to introduce the Western principle of "Might is Right" or to uphold the Eastern principle that truth alone conquers, that truth knows no mishap, that the strong and the weak have alike a right to secure justice.

The choice is to begin with the labouring class. Should the labourers obtain an increment in their wages by violence, even if that be possible? They cannot resort to anything like violence howsoever legitimate may be their claims.

To use violence for securing rights may seem an easy path, but it proves to be thorny in the long run. Those who live by the sword die also by the sword. The swimmer often dies by drowning. Look at Europe. No one seems to be happy there, for not one is contented. The labourer does not trust the capitalist and the capitalist has no faith in the labourer. Both have a sort of vigour and strength, but even the bulls have it. They fight to the very bitter end.

All motion is not progress. We have got no reason to believe that the people of Europe are progressing. Their possession of wealth does not argue the possession of any moral or spiritual qualities. King Duryodhana was a master of untold wealth, but with all that he was a pauper in comparison with Vidura and Sudama. Today the world adores Vidura and Sudama, whereas Duryodhana's name is remembered only as a by-word for the evil qualities one should shun...

Labour's Strength

In the struggle between capital and labour, it may be generally said that, more often than not, the capitalists are in the wrong box. But when labour comes fully to realize its strength, I know it can become more tyrannical than capital. The mill-owners will have to work on the terms dictated by labour if

the latter could command the intelligence of the former. It is clear, however, that labour will never attain to that intelligence. It is does, labour will cease to be labour and become itself the master. The capitalists do not fight on the strength of money alone. They possess intelligence and tact....

A third party has sprung up between these two parties. It has become the labourer's friend. There is need for such a party. Only to the extent to which this party has disinterested friendship for the labourers can it befriend them.

A time has come now when attempts will be made to use labour as a pawn in more ways than one. The occasion demands consideration at the hands of those that would take part in politics. What will they choose? Their own interest or the service of labour and the nation? Labour stands in sore need of friends. It cannot proceed without a lead. What sort of men give this lead will decide the conditions of labour.

Strikes, cessation of work and *hartal* are wonderful things no doubt, but it is not difficult to abuse them. Workmen ought to organize themselves into strong labour unions, and on no account shall they strike work without the consent of these unions.

Strikes should not be risked without negotiation with the mill-owners. If the mill-owners resort to arbitration, the principle of *Panchayat* should be accepted. And once the *pancha* are appointed, their decision must be accepted by both the parties alike, whether they like or not. (YI, 11-2-1920, pp. 7-8)