

THE  
COLLECTED  
WORKS  
OF  
MAHATMA  
GANDHI

VOLUME FOURTEEN



THE PUBLICATIONS DIVISION

THE  
COLLECTED  
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OF  
MAHATMA  
GANDHI

XIV  
(1917-1918)

GANDHI - XIV



lies in cheerful submission to the suffering that may follow it. The more a satyagrahi suffers, the more thoroughly he is tested.

[From Gujarati]

*Ek Dharmayuddha*

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

March 15, 1918<sup>1</sup>

##### LEAFLET NO. 14

As the weapon of the rich is money, that of the workers is their labour. Just as a rich man would starve if he did not employ his wealth, even so if the worker did not employ his wealth—did not work—he would also starve. One who does not work is not a worker. A worker who is ashamed of working has no right to eat. If, therefore, the workers desire to fulfil their pledge in this great struggle, they should learn to do some work or other. Those who collect funds and, remaining idle, maintain themselves out of them do not deserve to win. Workers are fighting for their pledge. Those who want food without working for it do not, it may be said, understand what a pledge means. He alone can keep his pledge who can feel shame or has self-respect. Is there anyone who will not look down on those who desire to be maintained on public funds without doing any work? It behoves us, therefore, that we maintain ourselves by doing some work. If a worker does not work, he is like sugar which has lost its sweetness. If the sea-water lost its salt, where would we get our salt from? If the worker did not work, the world would come to an end.

This struggle is not merely for a 35 per cent increase; it is to show that workers are prepared to suffer for their rights. We are fighting to uphold our honour. We have launched on this struggle in order to better ourselves. If we start using public funds improperly, we shall grow worse and not better. Consider the matter from any angle you choose, you will see that we must maintain ourselves by our own labour. Farhad<sup>2</sup> broke stones for the sake of Shirin, his beloved. For the workers, their pledge is their Shirin. Why should they not break stones for its sake? For the sake of truth, Harishchandra<sup>3</sup> sold himself; why should workers not suffer

<sup>1</sup> The leaflet was issued on the day Gandhiji commenced his fast.

<sup>2</sup> Central figure in a Persian poem

<sup>3</sup> Legendary king of Ayodhya who went through many ordeals for the sake of truth

hardships for upholding their pledge? For the sake of their honour, Imam Hassan and Hussain suffered greatly. Should we not be prepared even to die for our honour? If we get money while we remain idle at home and fight with that money, it would be untrue to say that we are fighting.

We hope, therefore, that every worker will work to maintain himself so that he may be able to keep his oath and remain firm. If the struggle lengthens, it will be because of weakness on our part. So long as the mill-owners believe that workers will not take to any labour and, therefore, will eventually succumb, they will have no compassion and will continue to resist [the demand]. So long as they are not convinced that workers will never give in, they will not be moved by compassion and will continue to oppose the workers even at the sacrifice of their own profits. When, however, they feel certain that the workers will, under no circumstances, give up their resolve, they will show compassion enough and welcome the workers back. Today the employers believe that the workers will not do any manual labour and so are bound to succumb soon. If the workers depend on others' money for their maintenance, the mill-owners will think that the source is bound to be exhausted sooner or later, and so will not take the workers seriously. If, on the other hand, workers who have no [other] means of subsistence begin to do manual work, the employers will see that they will lose their workers unless they grant the 35 per cent increase forthwith. Thus, it is for us to shorten or lengthen the struggle. We shall be free the sooner by enduring greater suffering just now. If we flinch from suffering, the struggle is bound to be protracted. Those who have weakened will, we hope, consider all these points and become strong again.

#### SPECIAL INSTRUCTION

Some workers are inclined to believe that those who have weakened cannot be persuaded to become strong. This is a wrong impression altogether. It is the duty of us all—yours and ours—to try, with gentleness, to persuade those who have weakened for one reason or another. It is also our duty to educate those who do not know what the struggle means. What we have been saying is that we may not use threats, tell lies, or resort to violence, or exert pressure in any manner to keep anyone away from work. If, despite persuasion, anyone resumes work, that is no reason for us to lose heart. Even if only one person holds out, we shall never forsake him.

[From Gujarati]

*Ek Dharmayuddha*