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from the author

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The Quest

From
A FARMER'S SON

Residencia
de Estudiantes

To You

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Chapter 1

The Idyll

RAJAJI SWAGTAM !

A child asks "Where is my home?" The father stands aghast; his eyes wander over the distant horizon, across the azure sky, over the roving stars, till they recoil from beyond the realm of thought. The universe echoes the question "Where is my home?"

History repeats. The field of Kurukshetra reflects the scene lost and forgotten in the debris of centuries. Men, women and children uprooted from anchorage pine and wither in silence. The question "Where is my home?" stares in the face again.

From out of the tumult and the feverish quest, a voice whispers "The home is here or it is nowhere". Only a few hear. They rush, they pursue till they reach Nilokheri where the voice gets merged in the swamps. The dust, sand and mud, the 'Lu' of the summer, and the blizzard wind of the winter offer the Baptism in the jungle. Men, women and children wield the muscles on the dance at creation of the home long lost but glimpsed afresh.

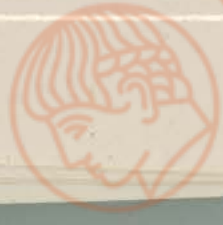
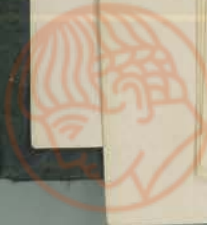
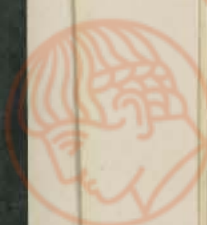
Rajaji! "Mazdoor Manzil" is the answer that Kurukshetra offers to a world torn by strifes and slaughter. It is charged with all that the Hindus dreamt and yearned for. Nilokheri is the effort to purvey the dream. Nilokheri welcomes you to the song that the rustling winds sing.

In ancient times kings came to conquer or pillage or on hunting errands. The gratitude of Nilokheri is beyond expression, for you have come to hearten the forgotten Mazdoors, that they are not alone in this sacrament of dust and sand, that sovereignty has acquired a new meaning, a new symbol, merging it in the common pool of life in the "Maha Yajna" in which the world as a whole is today unwittingly engaged.

The avalanche came on August 15, 1947. The deluge is still on. The scum will subside. India shall emerge stronger and richer out of the ferment. The highest symbol of the state that takes out of the transition its silent but steady shape, to you, the born savant and philosopher, Rajaji Swagtam!



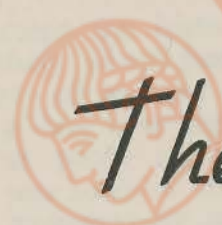
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Chapter 2

The Quest



Chapter 2



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THE NILOKHERI SCHEME

August 1947 brought freedom to the country, chaos and misery to many and a new outlook to all the people. After the deluge which rendered millions homeless, the spirit of the nation shaken by the nightmare, looked up and within in quest of a solution. However, instead of a solution it met with a challenge.

Industrial towns in the country, particularly the ones in Northern India, were threatened with extinction because there were hardly any artisans to fill the gap created by the emigration of the Muslim labour which had virtual monopoly of all skilled artisanship, the Hindu counterparts of the Muslim artisans having lived content for centuries in their role of the middlemen thriving by the quick turnover of the silver coin and its invariable multiplication with every transaction.

To accept the historic challenge was one matter, to cope with it, particularly when faced with millions whose only claims on the means of an easy and affluent livelihood were the ability to fight a law case right or wrong, to run a shop or a contract at profit regardless of how the customer fared in the bargain, was however quite a different matter. The idling minds and the progressively atrophying muscles presented besides, an additional psychic problem.

In the midst of this chaos and desperation was born on the field of Kurukshetra, the conception of the Vocational Training Centre. The centre believed in three cardinal principles for the rehabilitation of the uprooted and for the restoration of India. They are:-

- I. The muscles can do it.
- II. They must be trained to do it.
- III. Conditions must be created to do it.

On the 13th of December 1947, the Ministry of Relief & Rehabilitation, Government of India, sanctioned a capital expenditure of Rs.17,000/- for the starting of a vocational training centre for refugees at Kurukshetra. The centre was intended

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to start training immediately in weaving, dyeing and calico printing, tailoring and soap making, the products of these sections being in acute need for the half-clad in the camp. Refugees were pouring in by the tens of thousands. There was hardly a day to be lost. But it proved impossible to get immediate delivery from the market of the handlooms which constituted the essential equipment for weaving, the basic craft for the centre. It was therefore decided to start a carpentry section at an additional capital cost of approximately Rs.2,500/- with a view to the immediate production, locally at the centre itself, of the handloom and the accessories. When in the market for the purchase of carpentry tools and equipment it was discovered that these were not readily available either. This led to the decision to open a blacksmithy section for the production of carpentry equipment and tools out of spring steel collected from the salvage depots. As an irony, the same difficulty repeated for the blacksmithy section as it proved difficult to get a blower for the smithy hearth. This naturally led to the foundry section and thus gradually to the fitting shop and then to the machine shop. The motor mechanics section came in for the maintenance of the transport vehicles which had to be purchased from Disposals for the procurement of supplies for the centre. Various other trades and industries followed along the same line. Once in operation, the centre aroused such a warm response from the inmates of the camp that the Ministry of Relief & Rehabilitation sanctioned a supersession of the original scheme by one involving a capital expenditure of Rs.5,00,000. The new scheme came into operation on January 10, 1948.

NILOKHERI

The Nilokheri scheme owes its inception to the visit of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, to the camp at Kurukshetra in April 1948, during which he expressed the desire to see, springing across the expanse of India, a thousand townships humming with the music of the muscles active at work such as he saw at the vocational training centre there. Strictly in this spirit a township started taking shape over the Muslim evacuated jungle land of Nilokheri between the Grand Trunk Road and the Railway line, 11 miles from Karnal towards Ambala and opposite to the 85th. mile post from Delhi. The work at Nilokheri started with the transfer of the vocational training centre from Kurukshetra towards the end of July 1948.

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The remaining months of the Government financial year 1948-1949, namely upto March 1949, were spent mostly in the following operations:-

1. The clearance of a substantial portion of the jungle, infested with snakes and wild animals of various descriptions, which covered the area of Nilokheri throughout.
2. The building of four workshop sheds of 110' x 96' to house the various crafts, industries and workshops as also the vocational training centre which was to constitute "The foundry to cast the men who were to build Nilokheri and similar towns elsewhere".
3. The installation of temporary electric supply facilities without which the necessary sense of security was lacking in the colony.
4. The organisation of the offices and residential accommodation in tents for the workers employed in the scheme.
5. The organisation of a brick-kiln with fuel from the jungle as coal could not be readily procured at the time.
6. The starting of the nucleus of a dairy, a poultry and a piggery.
7. Reclamation of land for agriculture and horticulture utilising both human and animal labour as also mechanical labour such as the aid of tractors.
8. The creation of a model farm in the heart of the thickest jungle in the colony.
9. The planning of the township including the actual layout of the roads.
10. The training of the basic number of artisans for the community at Nilokheri for its manifold activities.

The beginning of the financial year 1949-50 started with a blitz speed of activities in every direction. Construction of houses, industrial buildings, the overhaul of the electric generators

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and machine tools procured almost exclusively from Disposals, received primary attention.

The end of the financial year 1949-50 visualises the physical completion in final shape of the following:-

- i) About 500 residential houses to accommodate a large section of the workers with their families.
- ii) The various workshops, transport and printing press buildings, dairy and poultry sheds, the shopping centre etc.
- iii) The organisation of the electric power house and the engineering and wood working shops.
- iv) The organisation of tannery as a basic industry at Nilokheri.
- v) The organisation of a market where the inhabitants of the surrounding villages can market their surplus and receive in turn the surplus of the consumption goods produced by this colony.
- vi) The organisation of collective agricultural farming.

The population of Nilokheri which stands at about 6000 today is expected to reach about 7500 by March 1950. The township is being designed, for a population of about 10,000 with scope for eventual expansion up to 15,000. The overall cost of rehabilitation per capita including housing, the means of occupation, training and administration during the period of construction, is estimated at Rs. 1000/-.

The activities of the centre have been designed to be based on cooperation and have for the time being been divided into three wings:-

- I. The Construction Wing
- II. The Rehabilitation Wing
- III. The Welfare Wing

1. The Construction Wing encompasses the activities of the Construction Division which is responsible for all construction in the colony including the building of houses, community buildings, and buildings workshops to house industries, shops etc. and sanitation. The work is done departmentally, workers themselves being formed

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into cooperative groups taking up contracts for construction at specified rates to the complete elimination of the middleman contractor who has hitherto taken the lion's share of the cost of construction. The cost of construction per square foot of floor area on comparative specifications are accordingly lower, by 25 to 33 per cent, than construction carried on elsewhere in the country through the normal contract agencies. The Construction Division also shares the responsibility of the training of its entire requirements of personnel such as engineers, overseers, brick-moulders and mates etc.

2. The Rehabilitation Wing encompasses activities which are permanent to the township and which are expected to continue producing for the market and providing the means of livelihood to all workers. As the activities of the Construction Wing tend to come to a close the workers of the Construction Wing are intended to be converted into workers for the rehabilitation industries and crafts. This Wing is broadly divided into three sectors:-

- I. The Production Sector.
- II. The Technical Training Sector.
- III. The Administrative Sector.

The Production Sector is further divided into two parts:-

- (1) The Central Producers' Cooperative.
- (2) The Planning & Production Control Bureau.

A. The Central Producers' Co-operative comprises autonomous departments as follows:-

- (i) Engineering Industries Department.
- (ii) Arts, Crafts & Cottage Industries Department.
- (iii) Farms.
- (iv) Allied Industries Department.
- (v) Electrical Department.
- (vi) Printing Press Department.
- (vii) Tannery.
- (viii) Leather Department.
- (ix) Transport Department.

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(i) Engineering Industries Department.

This Department is responsible for all engineering works specialising in mechanised and/or mass production. It consists primarily of:-

- a) A mechanised wood-working shop equipped for the production of joinery and furniture on a large scale.
- b) An engineering workshop fully equipped with necessary machine-tools and accessories to produce agricultural and allied equipment such as chaff-cutters, sugar-cane crushers, Persian wheels and other agricultural appliances as also pipe fittings on a large scale. Coupled with the foundry shop the workshop is capable of undertaking the job work of all types and is already engaged accordingly.

(ii) Arts, Crafts & Cottage Industries Department.

This department has been designed to organise cottage and small scale industries working as self-contained cooperative enterprises producing normal consumption goods such as cloth, hosiery products, leather products, toys, embroidered goods, tailored garments, bakery products etc.

(iii) Farms.

This department is responsible for all agricultural and allied activities in the centre based both on individual as well as collective effort, including agriculture, horticulture, poultry, dairy, piggyery and sheep breeding. About 600 acres of land is expected to be covered by this programme which will include a Model Farm run as a small scale co-operative, a collective farm, a horticultural garden in an area of about 15 acres of land. Workers belonging to this department will be living chiefly in three new model villages which are being planned to be set up as accessories to the township.

(iv) Allied Industries Department.

This department will be in charge of a chemist and will include the production of oil by mechanised ghanis, soap, silicate, glue, fat and other chemicals as by-products of the various industries in the colony.

(v) Electrical Department.

This department is responsible for running the electric power house which has been fitted with the diesel electric generators all

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procured from Disposals as also for the distribution of electricity for industrial and lighting purposes.

(vi) Printing Press Department

This department is being developed into a publishing house which will accept printing work from outside including the publication of books, weekly journals, and eventually the publication of a daily paper from Nilokheri.

(vii) Tannery Department

There being no tannery in this part of the country this department is expected to produce enough leather for local requirements leaving the surplus, if any, for export.

(viii) Leather Department

The leather department is being designed to make use of the maximum of leather produced from the tannery, for the manufacture of leather wares such as shoes both for local use as also for export outside of the unit.

(ix) Transport Department

This department will have a monopoly of the transport requirements of the local industries as also of the citizens in general and is being designed to maintain a service workshop and to run a bus service on the Grand Trunk Road for meeting the specific requirements of the colony.

A 2. The Planning & Production Bureau will consist of a managerial group headed by the Works Manager. Each member of the group will be an expert in a specific line and will usually be the head, on behalf of Government, of the respective commercial division or department in the colony. The function of this bureau is to receive from the respective divisions or departments plans and recommendations for industries. These will be scrutinized by this Central Bureau and decisions will be taken accordingly. The Bureau will have the further responsibility of controlling production on strictly commercial lines consistent with modern standards of efficiency in all the production units in the Centre.

B. Technical Training Sector

The Technical Training Sector consists of the following:-

- (a) Vocational Training.
- (b) Polytechnic.

The Vocational Training Centre will offer training in:-

- i. Weaving.
- ii. Dyeing & Calico Printing.
- iii. Tailoring.
- iv. Hosiery.
- v. Making of shoes and other leather goods.
- vi. Embroidery.
- vii. Toy Making.
- viii. Painting.
- ix. Cane & Chicks.
- x. Polishing.

The purpose of training in the Vocational Training Centre will be to produce semi-skilled craftsmen who will undergo further practical training in the various crafts functioning in the colony as commercial cooperatives.

The Polytechnic will offer courses in:-

- i. Blacksmithy.
- ii. Tinsmithy.
- iii. Foundry.
- iv. Fitter Shop.
- v. Machine Shop.
- vi. Motor Mechanics.
- (7) Electrician and Wireman trade.
- (8) Overseers' Course.
- (9) Printing Press.
- (10) Book Binding.
- (11) Stenography.
- (12) Accountancy.
- (13) Typewriting.

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The courses in the polytechnic will be of two kinds. The primary course, which will extend over a period of six months to a year, will be designed to produce trained artisans and assistants in the respective subjects. The secondary course, which will extend on an average over a period of 18 months, will be designed to produce trained technicians who can function not only as skilled workers in their respective trades but also as supervisors.

The Technical Training Sector is being developed to produce engineering technical and vocational workers and supervisors of a type such as will learn their trade through the use of their muscles and will be an antithesis of the white collared technicians this country has so far produced through her schools and colleges. The programme of training is so designed as to usher in the long overdue movement for work with the hands instead of through the purse. Besides professional work the trainees receive training on a compulsory basis in:-

- a. First Aid.
- b. Fire Fighting.
- c. Citizenship.

and optional training of an extra-curricular nature in

- a. Wrestling.
- b. Sports, indigenous as well as foreign.
- c. Yogic and other physical exercises including swimming.
- d. Music.

The duration of the course for the various arts, crafts and trades and industries is being kept considerably lower than the counterparts of these courses in other institutions as the courses have been designed so as to produce the maximum results in the minimum period of time. The reduction in the duration of training is compensated for by long and hard working hours simulating as far as possible actual conditions of work in factories. The institution offers neither degrees nor diplomas but it claims to give precision and speed in workmanship and to infuse in the trainees an indomitable sense of self-confidence based on a knowledge of the trade, skill in the handling of tools and the will and the ability to excel in the profession with further practice.

The Technical Training Sector hopes to grow into a university,—a university of workers open to all who are willing to sub-

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scribe to the three cardinal principles. It will be a seat of learning in practice and of practice while learning.

C. The Administrative Sector

The Administrative Sector is divided in the following divisions:—

- (i) Accounts Division.
- (ii) Sales Division.
- (iii) Supplies Division.
- (iv) Establishment & Co-ordinating Division.
- (v) Statistics Division.
- (vi) Visitors' Division.

(i) Accounts Division. This division will be responsible for the maintenance of the accounts for all the activities of the centre as also for the financial control of the various schemes under implementation at Nilokheri.

(ii) Sales Division. This division will be responsible for the organisation of the sales of the products of the centre both in the internal and external markets. The methods of sale followed will be entirely different from those in current practice in as much as the sales efforts will be confined to the distribution of products which are in general need, which are pure in quality and which conform to specifications rigidly. The pushing of sales by the methods of mere external embellishment, publicity and propaganda will be a practice foreign to this organisation.

(iii) Supplies Division. This division will be responsible for the procurement of supplies and stores pertaining to all the industrial enterprises in the colony.

(iv) Establishment & Co-ordinating Division. This will be responsible for the staff establishment at Nilokheri as also for the correlation of the activities of the various divisions.

(v) Statistics. This division will be responsible for maintaining the statistics of all the activities of the centre with a view to their transmission to workers in allied fields.

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(vi) Visitors' Division. This division will be designed to attend to all guests and visitors and to interpret to them the aims, objects and meaning behind the activities of the various institutions in the colony.

3. **The Welfare Wing** encompasses all such institutions as will function for the general welfare of the community such as:—

- (a) Health Services.
- (b) Education.
- (c) Panchayat.
- (d) The Consumers' Cooperative etc.

(a) The Health Services will include public health activities as also medical aid—Allopathic, Homœopathic, Ayurvedic, Unani and Naturo-Yogic system.

(b) Education will include the normal education of the children in the schools as also the education of the adults including all other cultural activities of a recreative nature.

(c) The Panchayat will be a local institution which is being designed to take the responsibility for internal law and order in the colony as also for all the welfare activities of the citizens.

(d) The Consumers' Co-operative is an institution which will control the distribution of all the requirements of the citizens in consumption goods including the management of shops run both on individual and co-operative lines.

Nilokheri was a swamp to start with. Effort has throughout been made to purchase equipment, tools and accessories as far as possible from Disposals and preferably from Salvage Depots. The intention has been to resurrect values from scraps thereby paying back into the Government Treasury the optimum of the expenditure involved, and at the same time giving an opportunity to the trainees, the workers and the administration in the centre, to acquire the skill and the self-confidence which such nerve-wrecking experiences alone can engender.

Mazdoor Manzil

'Mazdoor Manzil', a road to 'New India' is the title of the scheme under implementation at Nilokheri under the auspices of the Ministry of Rehabilitation, Government of India. It visualises the creation of a new republic in the spirit of the Gandhian concept and it is planned to house a population between five to ten thousand in the central township and to encompass a

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surrounding rural population to about four times this number. The plan when implemented in full, promises to achieve, full self-sufficiency for the unit in all essential requirements of life except iron and steel, coal and cement, petroleum and allied products. The income per capita is planned to be increased to 200%. This is expected to be achieved by the following methods:—

- a. By training the people to work according to their native propensities.
- b. By providing the people scope for full time work.
- c. By reducing, to the minimum, transport and middle-man activities thus enabling the transaction between the consumer and the producer to approach a virtual barter.

The scheme is based on a composite economy between the township and the villages both co-existing as complements to each other, each drawing on the surplus of the other but neither living on the other's vitals.

'Mazdoor Manzil' aims to be an institution dedicated to the ideal of creation beyond space and time, as its insignum signifies and professes to conform to the simple fundamentals such as follows:—

- a. That Nilokheri shall harbour only those who work for a living, who do not earn a rental on other peoples' toil and who do not have earnings other than the open return of their own labour.
- b. That all citizens of Nilokheri shall be equal outside the sphere of work.
- c. That all citizens shall have equal opportunities for the fulfilment of self in the scale of life.
- d. That no citizen who is willing to work shall starve while a single other citizen has a surplus of food or the wherewithals for the procurement of the same.
- e. That children shall have equal rights to education.
- f. That the sick shall receive equal medical aid.
- g. That religion shall be a private affair of the individual and shall have no compartmental place in the group life of the community.

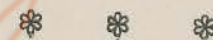
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- h. That no man or woman shall dictate love, affection or respect from an individual or the community other than what is offered as a spontaneous gift for personal services received by the community.

Road To New India

However much one may try, the sea-coast soil in South India will not produce the pine nor will the heights of the Himalayas produce the pine-apples. India will have to rebuild herself on her own moorings. Effort at literal imitation of an alien nation will be futile, if not disastrous. The great India of the past somehow, found a taste for everything. She made a happy synthesis of all; from the devil to the saint, from the epicurean to the stoic. For each one she had a lesson; to each one she furnished a quarter. If she declined from this historic harmony which she achieved for her people, the lesson must be learnt from where the road was missed. Yet a literal revival of the past cannot provide the answer. The ancestor of man is supposed to have been the cousin of the ape. Try however he may, he can no longer develop the ape's hair as a covering against the weather. Wisdom dictates therefore that it is cheaper to weave a woollen cover. The bullock cart has a place in the economy of India. The motor transport also is indispensable. To have the bullock cart and the motor transport to travel on the trunk road is a strain on both. Wisdom dictates individual roads for both, but moving parallel as complements to each other. If India is to survive in the world of today, she has to move with the rest but her anchorage must be kept intact.

Far too long has the soul of the nation been corroded by the sense of guilt hurled at it from all directions. It is high time, some fresh air, some freedom even to be a sinner be conceded to this prisoner of centuries. The Mazdoor Manzil has discovered the point from where the nation digressed. So, to vigorous manhood, vigorous womanhood, with vibrant health, with appetite for a life rich with natural food, natural sex, with spontaneous urge for work at creation and then to sleep like a child. 'Mazdoor Manzil' aims to create work for men and women in which they can function as natural artists and which will preclude the perversity resulting from somnambulism—the disease of the potent brain in an impotent physique.



The Deluge And After

The sky was overcast, the air was without breath; life was getting too hard to sustain till the clouds burst and it poured in torrents for days. The river got full; the bund on the bank stood as a dam. The outline of the hills against the distant horizon was lost in the haze with the torrents still on. The dam could no longer stand the onslaught of the rising tide. It gave way. Lo! an avalanche rushed from the mad river till the bund, the fields, the drainage canals in the village, the homestead courtyards, all became one—a sea of water. Men and animals sought shelter on the high land marks. Free movement became an impossibility except for those who were resourceful enough to build rafts on which they could cut across the sea of water. The air got foul with the odour of the rubbish heaps merged in the onrush of water. Drinking water got mixed with that of drainage; epidemic followed in the wake. The ready harvest was wiped off, all, overnight. It looked as if the world was coming to an end.

Slowly but steadily the flood began to subside. The scum that rose to the surface began to ferment and settle down on the soil till the sea was no more, till the land became dry again, with a brown thick crust, on top of river sediments, of the refuse of the village, all kneaded into a free compost. The harvest next season and many more thereafter were of the bumper type. The transitional misery was soon forgotten. Joy and laughter became the ruling passion again.

A deluge such as this did overtake the political horizon of India on August 15, 1947. The harvest that accompanied the avalanche has been no different. The fury of the floodtide however is over. The soil is soon getting dry. January 26, 1950, the day of the proclamation of the Republic is a day of baptism after two thousand years of sloth and serfdom. The new age is about to usher in, although the turmoil still remains. The motto of the hour could not have been uttered in apter words than conveyed by Rajaji during his visit to us mid-last week. "Here you have the Kurukshetra battle fought over again. The battle of Kurukshetra now going on is between idleness and work. Idleness must be defeated, work must succeed. I give you my most hearty good wishes and I give

these blessings not only for your own sake but that you may be an example to the rest of India."

Nilokheri is charged now with a double mission. She was ordered into being by the Master behind, to be a pilot experiment on the road to "New India." She is now charged afresh, to be an example to the rest of India, by the Head of the State.

Nilokheri must succeed. Idleness, polemics and other hurdles to the regeneration of the nation, from whichever source they may spring, must take a defeat. Nilokheri has received a fresh license to carry on the battle—a fresh confirmation, that hers is the right approach.

The baptismal fire is on. The citizens of Nilokheri have all they want for the voyage ahead. The fateful hour approaches. Let us be ready for the pledge—the pledge already enunciated in the charters of the 'Mazdoor Manzil', the pledge further that we "do or die" in battling to arrive at the Manzil. The country is gathering round. We have the blessings of the mighty. Let us be heartened.

The deluge recedes. A new tide of the bumper crop awaits ahead. Nilokheri started as the vanguard. She has but to march on. The crest of the 'Manzil' is already in sight. Even the faint-hearted have begun to have the glimpse. Let us ahead and, when the fateful hour arrives, let us not fail to redeem the pledge.

* * *