

# **SIR, YOURS, IS NOT OUR PROBLEM!**

## **Intent of the Story**

- ✓ *How should we treat our servants and employees?*
- ✓ *Questioning: "Should there be servants and employees at all?"*
- ✓ *Which should our first priority be: labor or capital?*

## **Story**

Some farmers were traveling by train in a crowded compartment. With great enthusiasm they were talking of their work and farming.

One of the farmers told the others: "I have four big cows. I built for them a lovely shed with plenty of air and lots of water. I give my cows all the grass they want and I keep them clean. I want them to be happy and healthy. You know, they are very good to me. They give me plenty of milk and manure."

"And I," another farmer added, "I have a poultry farm. I take good care of my birds. They are very delicate. I have built a little hencoop for them. I have even fixed a bulb for them for the night. In return; they give me lots of eggs. I am very happy with them. They are very good to me."

A third farmer said: "I got two oxen to plough my field. I want them to be strong and happy. I give them not only grass to eat, but also grain and cattle feed. Of late, I took them to the Animal Doctor. They weren't too well. I look after them like my own children. I am very happy with my oxen. They are so good to me!"

An industrialist, owner of a big factory, happened to travel in the same compartment. With disbelief he was listening to the farmers talk. Finally, he joined in and asked:

Do your cows, fowls and oxen give you any trouble? Do they go on strikes? I am a businessman. I have forty or fifty workers in my factory and they give me no end of trouble"

In his simplicity, one of the farmers asked him:" Sir, what do you mean by trouble? What are strikes?" Well, the Industrialist explained, "Strikes means that my workers refuse to do their work. They do not produce what they are expected to produce. Do your cows, fowls and oxen so that?"

Looking at each other, the farmers asked the businessman: "Sir, have you built some sheds or houses for your workers that they may live there with their families? You know, we build sheds and stables for our animals!"

In a temper the industrialist replied: "No! I'll never do that. Why should I? It's none of my business to build houses for them! I give them Rs. 100/- day for the work they are supposed to do. This is a lot, you know? That's more than enough."

The farmers went on inquiring: "Sir, do you feed your workers well? Do you try to make them, happy and satisfy their needs? We do it with our beasts!"

In anger, the Saheb, raising his voice, said: "Have I not told you that I give them Rs. 100/- a day? They have to feed themselves and look after their needs and those of their families. To do that is their duty, not mine!"

The Farmers kept on pressing Sir, when your workers are sick, do you take them to the doctor and give them medicines? We take our animals to the Vet! Do you not want your workers to be healthy and strong?"

At last, the industrialist lost his temper and yelled: "What do you think I am? Am I their father and mother? I am nothing to them, and they are nothing to me! If they fall sick they have to manage themselves. What have I to do with it? I told you already, can't you understand? I give them Rs. 100/- a day! Yes 100/- rupees is a lot! I assure you, my workers are wicked, always disgruntled, ungrateful and greedy! They are hungry for money and comforts. They are lazy. I do not know what to do with them. They are a pain in my neck."

The farmers looked at each other in amazement, shrugged their shoulders and said: "Sir, as far as our animals are concerned, they are better than your workers. They do not give us any trouble. They are happy, and we are happy! **Sir, yours is not 'our problem'.**"

### **Poin't's for Reflection and Discussion**

1. Mention some of the bad examples you have seen in the way people treat their servants and employees.
2. Were you a servant or an employee, how would you feel were you treated like that? Guess what your feelings would be and express them.
3. Give an honest answer to this point: How do you treat your servants at home?
4. How do you talk and deal, for instance, with the School peons, sweepers, dhobis, etc?
5. How should we treat them and why? How would you like to be treated?
6. How is it that many of us treat our pets more kindly than our servants? What does this tells of us?
7. Do servants have rights? Why?
8. Write down a list or a charter of the Servants' Rights.
9. Quote some Gospel texts about "masters and servants"? Mention them and comment on them.
10. Discuss the following statements:
  - The Directors of a pharmaceutical company said: "We do not care for health, but for wealth" What your reply would be to them?

- Explain: All powerful empires – even the commercial ones - have been glued together with an unequal mixture of blood and money. What could the ratio be?
- Retort to: “It’s not labor, but money that keeps the world turning” (*Turning what?*)

**And now some Challenging Questions:**

- 1st. Why there are servants in our homes and in our world?
- 2nd. Who made them servants?
- 3rd. Should there be servants at all? Is it fair? Is it just?
- 4th. What assumptions-misconceptions-prejudices are there in our minds to justify that there should be servants among us?
- 5th. Can you think of a world without "servants" and even without "employees" but only partners, companions and cooperators?
  - ✓ How would that world be?
  - ✓ How would it feel?
  - ✓ On what principles would it function?

**A Few Thoughts for a Mini-input**

- It is not only money, our servants and employees need, but also and even more love, consideration and understanding.
- By birth, all persons are equal; they are our partners in life, they are our brothers and sisters.
- Servants and workers are not tools or machines we can hire and fire.
- They are human beings with hearts like ours, and with equal human needs and longings craving for satisfaction.
- If we make others happy, they will also make us happy.
- Factories, business, workshops, institutions are for people, not the other way around.
- The welfare of the servants and employees in any business should be the first priority, profits should come second
- Labor’s interests should be safeguarded and equated at least to the capital’s interests.
- Gain and profit is not the end-all and the be-all of any commercial or industrial concern.

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