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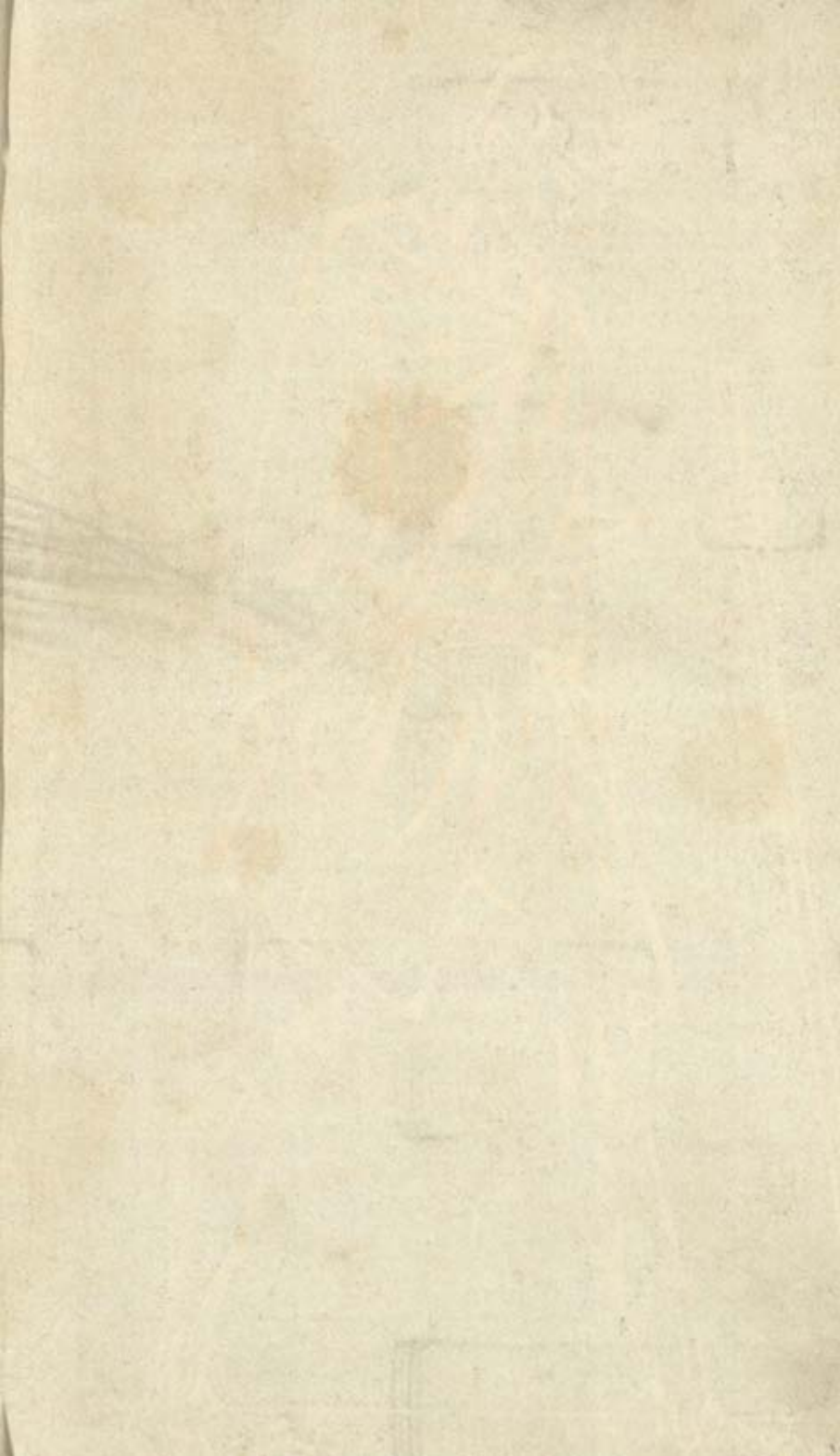
M. K. G A N D H I  
SELECT SPEECHES



*By the same author*

FACETS OF GANDHI

FACETS OF NEHRU





# M. K. GANDHI

SELECT SPEECHES



48419

*Edited by*

B. K. AHLUWALIA

808.850954

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SAGAR PUBLICATIONS  
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TO MY PARENTS

TO MY PARENTS  
TO MY PARENTS  
TO MY PARENTS  
TO MY PARENTS  
TO MY PARENTS





## INTRODUCTION

Shri B. K. Ahluwalia, of the Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, offers in this handy volume a representative selection of Gandhiji's speeches covering the whole span of his public life from 1906 to 1948. The task undertaken was truly formidable as everyone of Gandhiji's innumerable speeches possesses a high intrinsic value, whether personal or historical.

No anthology can satisfy all critics. A glance at the contents of this volume and the list of sources, will, however, show what a wide and rich variety of themes it covers. The reader will find in it, for example, the sensational speech at the Banaras Hindu University (1916), the carefully prepared discourses on swadeshi at Madras and on economic v. moral progress at Allahabad, the speech at the Sessions trial at Ahmedabad (1922), the Congress Presidential Address at Belgaum (1924), the speech on the eve of the Dandi March (1930), the little sermon on voluntary poverty in London (1931), the speech on Gita—the Mother (1934), the Quit-India speeches at the A.I.C.C., Bombay (August 8, 1942), and the speech at the Asian Inter-relations Conference (1947).

The speeches have been chosen and edited with great care, and arranged in chronological order. Running through them all is an earnest concern for humanity and for the destiny of man, coupled with an unwavering faith in the spiritual and moral values upon which Gandhiji's whole life was based

and which he strove to instill into our individual and public life. The general reader, for whom this anthology is primarily intended, will find in it rewarding fare.

PYARELAL

September 27, 1969

## PREFACE

It is yet too early to say whether, or to what extent, the martyrdom of Gandhi will be a factor in moulding the future destiny of India and the world. Martyrs, it has been said, must choose between being forgotten, mocked, or made use of. If one were to go by appearances, such might well be the fate of Gandhi. To be sure, there is no diminishment of the gusto with which public men everywhere have been proclaiming their fealty to the ideals for which Gandhi stood ; there is no slackening of the studied diligence with which, in season and out of season, they have been striking anguished attitudes in the name of these same ideals ; there is no abatement of the flood of pious words that has been inundating the press and the platform. But public life goes on much as it would have done had Gandhi never lived. Men, interests and nations, in their dealings with other men, other interests and other nations, continue to be guided as ever exclusively and irrationally by considerations of narrow self-interest. Gandhi's words live, but only in the mouths of men, not in their hearts.

Gandhi's political impact on recent history is hardly a matter of dispute. He was one of the major forces that determined the course of events during the first half of the present century. In India, as the country's supreme leader in its fight for freedom for a full three decades and more, his role was decisive. Before Gandhi's advent, the political scene in India was a chaos. Political activity was marked by fumbling and groping. It lacked direction and purpose. Political campaigning seldom went beyond ceremonious



speeches and ponderous memoranda submitted to the alien authority from time to time accompanied by loud declarations of loyalty to the Sovereign. Political issues largely reflected the interests of the educated, urbanized middle class. The vast masses of the rural population hardly came into the picture. Gandhi was quick to see the futility of this kind of exercise. He knew that if political activity was to lead anywhere, it must be related to the interests of the masses. The focus must be not the city but the village, where India really lived, and freedom that was sought must be defined and explained in terms of the basic needs of food and clothing for the hundreds of millions of India's peasantry. In any political activity, therefore, direct participation of the rural masses was of the essence. Thus, Gandhi addressed himself to this task of identifying himself completely with the poorest of India's peasants, living among them, living like them, serving them, educating them, rousing them to an awareness of their state and to the need to resist oppression and injustice and providing leadership to such resistance. Most of the thirty-two years during which he led the country were thus spent in India's villages and cities—perpetually on the move, perpetually touring, perpetually speaking. Gandhi perhaps of all the leaders known to history made the largest number of speeches and on the widest variety of themes.

For all his prodigious amount of public speaking, Gandhi was never a demagogue, never a mob-rouser, a word-spinner. It was necessity rather than inclination that made of him a public speaker. The reason why eager crowds flocked to him, surrounded him wherever he went and hung on to every word he uttered lay, therefore, not in the manner but in the matter of his orations. Gandhi had an astounding capacity for going to the heart of the matter and reducing the most complex and complicated questions to their basic

human elements. He hated exaggeration, flourish, dramatic gestures and mere rhetoric. He hardly ever raised his voice. He could use the strongest possible language without varying the pitch of delivery. He liked to state the plainest truth as he saw it in the simplest language his audiences could understand.

Another notable thing about Gandhi as a speaker was that he practically never prepared the texts of his speeches in advance. He hardly ever consulted notes. Thus, at the end of his parleys with Irwin in March 1930, he spoke to the Press for full 90 minutes, covering some of the most baffling political issues of the time. The statement was wholly extempore, and when the script was shown to him later, he did not feel the need to change even a word of what he had said! His speeches at the Round Table Conference in 1931 were similarly delivered extempore. It shows what a complete mastery Gandhi had over his thought and its expression.

As has been well said, it would be difficult to find a parallel in history of any one individual having said so much on so many themes to so many people. The mass of his spoken words is truly staggering. The task, therefore, of making a selection for a handy volume has not been an easy one. Which to take and which to leave out? Any kind of selection must thus be somewhat arbitrary, must leave out something precious. It is not claimed, that the fifty-four speeches included in this book possess any virtue which is not to be found in the other speeches of Gandhi. All Gandhi's speeches are good and reflect the greatness of the man. The sole claim made for the selection is that it represents the various moods—moods of anxiety and anguish, of hope and confidence—that Gandhi passed through, the various stresses and strains to which his indomitable spirit was subject, the various crises—political,



social, moral—which the nation in its long and arduous journey to freedom faced and passed through. They are stills taken from the cinematograph of our recent history and record some of the most dramatic moments in our heroic age. Care has been taken to see that every theme that interested Gandhi is covered. Occasionally, where a speech seemed too long, only extracts have been given.

I owe a deep sense of gratitude to Prof. K. Swaminathan, Chief Editor, Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, who guided and helped me at every turn despite his other demanding tasks. I am grateful to Mr. J. P. Uniyal and Mr. P. R. Kaikini for the help which I received from them at various stages during the production of the book.

My thanks are also due to Mr. N. K. Sagar, the publisher, for taking great pains to bring out the book in time.

B. K. AHLUWALIA

September 10, 1969  
70-E, Kamla Nagar  
Delhi-7

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## IN THE NAME OF GOD

I wish to explain to this meeting that there is a vast difference between this resolution and every other resolution we have passed up to date and that there is a wide divergence also in the manner of making it. It is a very grave resolution we are making, as our existence in South Africa depends upon our fully observing it. The manner of making the resolution suggested by our friend is as much of a novelty as of a solemnity. I did not come to the meeting with a view to getting the resolution passed in that manner, which redounds to the credit of Sheth Haji Habib as well as it lays a burden of responsibility upon him. I tender my congratulations to him. I deeply appreciate his suggestion, but if you adopt it you too will share his responsibility. You must understand what is this responsibility, and as an adviser and servant of the community, it is my duty fully to explain it to you.

We all believe in one and the same God, the differences of nomenclature in Hinduism and Islam notwithstanding. To pledge ourselves or to take an oath in the name of that God or with him as witness is not something to be trifled with. If having taken such an oath we violate our pledge we are guilty before God and man. Personally I hold that a man who deliberately and intelligently takes a pledge and then breaks it forfeits his manhood. And just as a copper coin treated with mercury not only becomes valueless when

found out but also makes its owner liable to punishment, in the same way a man who lightly pledges his word and then breaks it becomes a man of straw and fits himself for punishment here as well as hereafter. Sheth Habib is proposing to administer an oath of such a serious character. There is no one in this meeting who can be classed as an infant or as wanting in understanding. You are all well advanced in age and have seen the world ; many of you are delegates and have discharged responsibilities in a greater or lesser measure. No one present, therefore, can ever hope to excuse himself by saying that he did not know what he was about when he took the oath.

I know that pledges and vows are, and should be, taken on rare occasions. A man who takes a vow every now and then is sure to stumble. But if I can imagine a crisis in the history of the Indian community of South Africa when it would be in the fitness of things to take pledges, that crisis is surely now. There is wisdom in taking serious steps with great caution and hesitation. But caution and hesitation have their limits, which we have now passed. The Government has taken leave of all sense of decency. We would only be betraying our unworthiness and cowardice if we cannot stake our all in the face of the conflagration which envelops us and sit watching it with folded hands. There is no doubt, therefore, that the present is a proper occasion for taking pledges. But every one of us must think out for himself if he has the will and the ability to pledge himself. Resolutions of this nature cannot be passed by a majority vote. Only those who take a pledge can be bound by it. This pledge must not be taken with a view to producing an effect on outsiders. No one should trouble to consider what impression it might have upon the local Government, the Imperial Government, or the Government of India. Everyone must



only search his own heart, and if the inner voice assures him that he has requisite strength to carry him through, then only should he pledge himself and then only would his pledge bear fruit.

A few words now as to the consequences. Hoping for the best, we may say that, if a majority of the Indians pledge themselves to resistance and if all who take the pledge prove true to themselves, the Ordinance may not even be passed and, if passed, may be soon repealed. It may be that we may not be called upon to suffer at all. But if on the one hand one who takes a pledge must be a robust optimist, on the other hand he must be prepared for the worst. It is therefore that I would give you an idea of the worst that might happen to us in the present struggle. Imagine that all of us present here numbering 3,000 at the most pledge ourselves. Imagine again that the remaining 10,000 Indians take no such pledge. We will only provoke ridicule in the beginning. Again, it is quite possible that in spite of the present warning some or many of those who pledge themselves might weaken at the very first trial. We might have to go to jail, where we might be insulted. We might have to go hungry and suffer extreme heat or cold. Hard labour might be imposed upon us. We might be flogged by rude warders. We might be fined heavily and our property might be attached and held up to auction if there are only a few resisters left. Opulent today, we might be reduced to abject poverty tomorrow. We might be deported. Suffering from starvation and similar hardships in jail, some of us might fall ill and even die. In short, therefore, it is not at all impossible that we might have to endure every hardship that we can imagine, and wisdom lies in pledging ourselves on the understanding that we shall have to suffer all that and worse. If someone asks me when and how the struggle

may end, I may say that, if the entire community manfully stands the test, the end will be near. If many of us fall back under storm and stress, the struggle will be prolonged. But I can boldly declare, and with certainty, that so long as there is even a handful of men true to their pledge, there can only be one end to the struggle, and that is victory.

A word about my personal responsibility. If I am warning you of the risks attendant upon the pledge, I am at the same time inviting you to pledge yourselves, and I am fully conscious of my responsibility in the matter. It is possible that a majority of those present here might take the pledge in a fit of enthusiasm or indignation but might weaken under the ordeal, and only a handful might be left to face the final test. Even then there is only one course open to the likes of me, to die but not to submit to the law. It is quite unlikely but even if everyone else flinched leaving me alone to face the music, I am confident that I would never violate my pledge. Please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying it out of vanity, but I wish to put you, especially the leaders upon the platform, on your guard. I wish respectfully to suggest it to you that, if you have not the will or the ability to stand firm even when you are perfectly isolated, you must not only not take the pledge yourselves but you must declare your opposition before the resolution is put to the meeting and before its members begin to take pledges and you must not make yourselves parties to the resolution. Although we are going to take the pledge in a body, no one should imagine that default on the part of one or many can absolve the rest from their obligation. Everyone should fully realize his responsibility, then only pledge himself independently of others and understand that he himself must be true to his pledge even unto death, no matter what others do.



## THE SETTLEMENT EXPLAINED

It is God in whom I placed my trust while launching on this struggle and advising the people to do likewise; it is He who has given us this unexpected victory, and it is to Him therefore that we must give our thanks. It is because I have always believed that God helps the cause of truth that I started this movement in His name. The success we have achieved is there for all of us to see. What has made the Government remit the sentences and open the prison gates and let the people out? Surely our truthfulness and strength. I used to say that, if we scrupulously followed the path of truth, the white Colonists themselves would veer to our side, and that is exactly what has happened. We are also thankful to the whites for the pains they took to further our just cause. They did so because they were inspired by God within to have sympathy for His oppressed devotees, and to fight on their behalf.

I need not refer to the remark General Smuts made in the course of a speech that it was impossible to send everyone to jail. All these things indicate that, if the Indian community remains united, it will always win through. We will now register voluntarily for purposes of identification and the scrutiny of our rights of domicile and the Government has accepted this offer. That means that the obnoxious law\* will die altogether. The stigma that attached

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Speech at a public meeting, Johannesburg, January 31, 1908

\* Asiatic Registration Act



to us under the law will now disappear. Under the proposed arrangement, the Government will accept signatures by educated persons and by owners of property, but unlettered people have to give ten finger-prints on the application forms. Though I am against this myself and will strive with the Government to the best of my ability to have the requirement waived, I see nothing wrong in having to give finger-impressions if the Government does not come round. For after all we shall be giving them of our own free choice. They must not be given if they are made compulsory. And the Government has allowed us a period of three months for the matter to be settled. I will therefore strive to obtain the best terms that I can for the Indian community.

Under the law the Government wanted the compulsory registration of children, and this provision, too, has now been dropped. The question of amending the law suitably will be taken up when Parliament meets in Pretoria. For the present, however, the sentences of imprisonment against us have been set aside, and it is now up to us to prove that we are honourable men. It will be no use having anything in writing from the Government, since the final authority is that of Parliament. We have thus to depend only on what Parliament does. Just as Lord Roberts and others used to make promises to us on behalf of the Imperial Parliament, so has the Colonial Secretary set us free in anticipation of Parliament's approval. When Parliament meets, we shall be delivered from this law. That is, the Act will be repealed and the Immigration Bill will be suitably amended. The object of the Government will thus be secured, and we shall get the freedom that we have been demanding.

The reason why we have won is that people went to jail—150 from Johannesburg, 25 from Pretoria and many

persons from other towns as well. Women did their true duty. The pickets in particular displayed unsurpassed skill which even the Government could not help admiring; the self-same Government which had resisted our demands earlier came round clearly because it perceived the strength of the community. A campaign that is carried on in the name of God cannot but end in success. I am hopeful that I shall succeed in the matter of finger-prints also.

We have, however, no reason to feel triumphant over the measure of success that we have achieved, neither have the whites any cause to complain against the Government. Even God is won over by humility. It is, therefore, humility which will ensure our success in a just struggle. We must not play foul with the Government; rather, by adopting the highest standard of conduct for ourselves, we must convince the Government and the white Colonists that we do respect laws which uphold our dignity. If, through an oversight on the part of the Government, the door is left open and there is scope for some kind of fraud, our duty will be to shut that door. The Government will see for itself that we do not practise deception. When we have thus created a favourable impression on the minds of the Colonists by acquitting ourselves as befits us, the redress of our grievances is bound to follow.

Equally, the Government will be unable to go back on its commitment to us, for we have the great weapon of passive resistance. That was the weapon with which we brought the Government to its senses. Whatever the Government does now, it will do with the consent of our people. As long as we are ready to go to jail and fight on, we shall wield sufficient power over the Government to make it do the right thing.



Whatever we plan to do now must be kept wholly confidential. Should anyone among us be found carrying information to the Government or some other party, he will have proved himself a veritable traitor. Nothing can be gained by playing the spy to the Government; on the contrary, it will be of advantage to remain with the community. Even those who have taken out registration under the new law may gain their freedom if they take out registration under the proposed arrangement. We must also prove ourselves to be as good as our word, and thus furnish an earnest of our sincerity. As soon as Parliament meets, the Asiatic Registration Act will be repealed and the immigration law amended. That is to say, domicile certificates will be issued as they are in Durban.

We have to thank those who gave us real help. We should pass a resolution expressing our gratitude to Mr. Polak, Mr. Ritch, and Mr. Cartwright, the editor of *The Transvaal Leader*, as also to the others who joined the struggle.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. VIII*

## BREACH OF COMPROMISE

The receipt of so many telegrams shows the unanimity with which the object of this meeting has been received, but though I have read these telegrams to you, it is due to this meeting, due to the executive of the British Indian Association, and due to the Transvaal public to state also that there is, at this meeting, electricity in the air, and these telegrams by no means demonstrate the whole truth. The whole truth is that there is, even in this meeting, a number of Indians who are seething with discontent over what the leaders have done, and over what especially I myself have done, in connection with the compromise. There are a number of Indians in this meeting who believe, as the Chairman has stated in his speech, that the whole Indian community has been sold for selfish purposes. The Chairman has repudiated the charge, and so do I, but I do not blame my countrymen who bring that charge against me especially.

Some of my countrymen tell me and, perhaps, with some justification, that I did not take them into confidence when I approached General Smuts on the strength of the letter that was placed before me in the jailyard, and it is better that I myself should voice their complaints. I believe that, in seeing General Smuts as I saw him, I acted correctly and in accordance with my conscience, but time has shown that they were right, time has shown also that I need not have gone to General Smuts as I did. What I did was simply



and solely to accept voluntary registration that was placed before him for over a year by the whole Indian community. I felt that I was yielding nothing, not a single new principle, not a single concession, in accepting this voluntary compromise. I believed that I had full instructions from my countrymen to do so, but believed too much. I did not know what was to come after. I did not know that there was to be repudiation of the emphatic promise that was made in connection with the repeal of the Act. I know now that the compromise is not to be respected by the Government.

General Smuts says that he never made any promise of repeal, but there are documents, which the world will see, which will show, at least, that there was a talk and a conversation with reference to the repeal of the Act. There are witnesses also in connection with it, but as the Chairman has rightly said, that is left for the lawyers to decide. The Indian community only knows that the repeal of the Act was the object, and that was the object which was to be gained by undergoing voluntary registration, but today the Indian community finds that voluntary registration has not sufficed for the purpose. It finds also that it has become necessary to hold this mass meeting again, and it has become necessary again, perchance, if it is the will of God, to undergo the same measure of suffering, only far more bitterly.

If, therefore, you find there is electricity in the air, I do plead guilty. I am responsible for it, responsible because I had too great faith in the statesmanship of General Smuts, in his honesty, and in his integrity. If my countrymen today believe that I have sold them, they have good reason to believe so, although there is no justification for it in my own estimation. They can only judge me by the results obtained. They cannot judge, the world is not today so

constituted that it will judge men by the motives they ascribe to themselves, but by the result of their actions; and they judge me by the result of my action, the result of having foisted the compromise on the whole of the Indian community, and I include also the Chinese community, because although there were two other gentlemen who signed the letter that was addressed to General Smuts, they did so fully believing in my own good faith, fully believing that what I was doing was what they were all working for, namely, the repeal of the Act not only in word but in deed, not in deed to secure a revised edition of the Act, but to obliterate the Act and all its consequences, if the Indian community and the Chinese community voluntarily proved that they were capable of being trusted without any legal restraint. If they proved that the large majority of the Asiatics had entered the Transvaal with perfect right, and if they proved that the documents that they held were correct documents and were properly obtained by them, and were not fraudulent documents, then they undoubtedly believed that the Act would be repealed, that their position was to be much better than it would have been under the Asiatic Act. They believed also that they had fought for 16 months, not merely to secure a nominal repeal of the Act, but to secure recognition for themselves as human beings, to secure a voice in the management of their own affairs, to secure a voice in the legislation that may be passed so far as they are concerned; not a voting paper by any means—a voting paper for the Indians or the Asiatics may not be worth the paper on which the signature might be put—but they wanted a real voting paper, they wanted to be consulted before any legislation was passed.

And what did they find? They found that there was a Gold Law, they found that there was a Municipal Bill, both



these Bills still further curtailing the rights of those having a right to remain in this country. Have they not every reason to believe that Gandhi has misled them? Have they not every reason to believe that they have no longer any business to suffer because Gandhi advises them to suffer?

I see before me a warrior, a military man, who was my fellow-prisoner. He tells me "How shall I trust you? You have misled your countrymen, you have given 18 finger-impressions. I have not. I hold my medals, and that is my registration."

Another of his fellow-religionists, or a fellow-Pathan, has assaulted me. He deserves every thanks for having assaulted me because he believed that I was selling the community. He had no grudge against me, he was my client. He had a perfect right to do what he did, as I find now from the consequences that have been entailed on the whole of the Asiatic communities.

Gentlemen, those who are here and whose influence reaches far beyond the four corners of this building, go away from this meeting knowing full well what the consequence of General Smuts' act will be—General Smuts' act undertaken in the name of the white communities. I may understand, I may distinguish, but, just as my fellow-countrymen could not distinguish and they only had the remedy of assaulting me, another had the remedy of telling me that I had sold my countrymen; similarly, it is not possible for them to distinguish between one white man's word and another white man's word, especially when that word happens to be the word of almost the highest man in the State.

I state most emphatically and definitely that General Smuts did promise that he was going to repeal the Act, in the

presence of the Registrar of Asiatics if the Asiatic communities abided fully, frankly, and freely by the terms of the compromise, if the Asiatic communities enabled General Smuts to identify every Asiatic in the Asiatic communities, enabled General Smuts to see to it that there was no Asiatic who could surreptitiously enter into the country and not be found out by his police. These terms the Asiatic communities have fulfilled, and yet we find today, we meet this afternoon to find out that this Act is not to be repealed as it should be repealed, and that the promise of repeal is hedged in on all sides by such restrictions as could never be accepted by any self-respecting man.

The passive resistance movement has been undertaken only to gain rights for the whole of the Asiatics who have a right to remain in this country and not for a chosen few, and if there is one man, whom I can recall, who is in Ladysmith, who came to the country in 1885 and paid £25 to the Boer Government for remaining in this country, carried on a trade, and possesses European credentials—if he cannot enter this country, I for one do not wish to remain in this country, if my countrymen before that time do not remove this head which seems to have done grievous wrong to them.

*Indian Opinion*, 4-7-1908



## LOYALTY TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE

When the learned Advocate-General came to me and asked me to propose this toast, I must confess that I was taken aback a little. I don't think he noticed it himself, but I make that confession to you. I felt that I was invited to be present here as at one time I belonged to the profession to which you or most of you belong and as I happen to be in Madras, but that I would be allowed to remain a silent spectator of what was going on here. But when he mentioned the thing I did not hesitate to say, "Yes, I shall be pleased to speak to this toast." During my three months' touring in India as also in South Africa, I have been often questioned how I, a determined opponent of modern civilization and an avowed patriot, could reconcile myself to loyalty to the British Empire of which India was such a large part, how it was possible for me to find it consistent that India and England could work together for mutual benefit. It gives me the greatest pleasure this evening at this very great and important gathering to re-declare my loyalty to this British Empire and my loyalty is based upon very selfish grounds. As a passive resister I discovered that I could not have that free scope which I had under the British Empire. I know that a passive resister has to make good his claim to passive resistance, no matter under what circumstances he finds ideals with which I have fallen in love, and one of those ideals is that every subject of the British Empire has the freest scope possible for his energies and efforts and whatever he thinks

is due to his conscience. I think that this is true of the British Empire as it is not true of any other Governments that we see. I feel as you have perhaps known that I am no lover of any Government and I have more than once said that that Government is best which governs least, and I have found that it is possible for me to be governed least under the British Empire. Hence my loyalty to the British Empire. And may I, before I sit down and ask you to drink to the prosperity of the British Empire, remind you of one singular incident that happened during this campaign in far-off South Africa. General Beyers, the trusted Commander of one of the Forces of the British Empire, rose against that Empire in open rebellion. It was only possible for him under that Empire and that Empire alone, not to have himself shot at sight. General Smuts wrote to him in a memorable letter that he himself was at one time a rebel. He wrote to General Beyers that it was only under the British Empire that it was possible for him to save his life. Hence my loyalty to the British Empire.

*The Hindu, 26-4-1915*



## SPIRITUALIZING POLITICS

Madras has well-nigh exhausted the English vocabulary in using adjectives of virtue with reference to my wife and myself and, if I may be called upon to give an opinion as to where I have been smothered with kindness, love and attention, I would have to say: it is Madras. But, as I have said so often, I believed it of Madras. So it is no wonder to me that you are lavishing all these kindnesses with unparalleled generosity, and now the worthy President of the Servants of India Society—under which Society I am going through a period of probation—has, if I may say so, capped it all. Am I worthy of these things? My answer from the innermost recesses of my heart is an emphatic "No". But I have come to India to become worthy of every adjective that you may use, and all my life will certainly be dedicated to prove worthy of them, if I am to be a worthy servant.

And so it is that you have sung that beautiful national song, on hearing which all of us sprang to our feet. The poet has lavished all the adjectives that he possibly could to describe Mother India. He describes Mother India as sweet-smelling, sweet-speaking, fragrant, all-powerful, all-good, truthful, a land flowing with milk and honey, and having ripe fields, fruits and grains, and inhabited by a race of men of whom we have only a picture in the great Golden Age. He pictures to us a land which shall embrace in its possession the whole of the world, the whole of humanity by the might



or right not of physical power but of soul-power. Can we sing that hymn? I ask myself, "Can I, by any right, spring to my feet when I listen to that song?" The poet no doubt gave us a picture for our realization the words of which simply remain prophetic, and it is for you, the hope of India, to realize every word that the poet has said in describing this Motherland of ours. Today I feel that these adjectives are very largely misplaced in his description of the Motherland, and it is for you and for me to make good the claim that the poet has advanced on behalf of his Motherland.

#### THE REAL EDUCATION

You—the students of Madras as well as students all over India—are you receiving an education which will make you worthy to realize that ideal and which will draw the best out of you, or is it an education which has become a factory for making Government employees or clerks in commercial offices? Is the goal of the education that you are receiving that of mere employment whether in the Government departments or other departments? If that be the goal of your education, if that is the goal that you have set before yourselves, I feel and I fear that the vision which the poet pictured for himself is far from being realized. As you have heard me say perhaps, or as you have read, I am and I have been a determined opponent of modern civilization. I want you to turn your eyes today upon what is going on in Europe and if you have come to the conclusion that Europe is today groaning under the heels of modern civilization, then you and your elders will have to think twice before you can emulate that civilization in our Motherland. But I have been told: "How can we help it, seeing that our rulers bring that culture to our Motherland?" Do not make any mistake about it at all. I do not for one moment believe that

it is for any rulers to bring that culture to you unless you are prepared to accept it, and if it be that the rulers bring that culture before us, I think that we have forces within ourselves to enable us to reject that culture without having to reject the rulers themselves. I have said on many a platform that the British race is with us. I decline to go into the reasons why that race is with us, but I do believe that it is possible for India, if she would but live up to the tradition of the sages of whom you have heard from our worthy President, to transmit a message through this great race, a message not of physical might, but a message of love. And then, it will be your privilege to conquer the conquerors not by shedding blood but by sheer force of spiritual predominance. When I consider what is going on today in India, I think it is necessary for us to say what our opinion is in connection with the political assassinations and political dacoities. I feel that these are purely a foreign importation which cannot take root in this land. But you the students would have to beware, lest mentally or morally you give one thought of approval to this kind of terrorism. I as a passive resister will give you another thing very substantial for it. Terrorize yourself ; search within ; by all means resist tyranny wherever you find it ; by all means resist encroachment upon your liberty, but not by shedding the blood of the tyrant. That is not what is taught by our religion. Our religion is based upon ahimsa, which in its active form is nothing but love, love not only to your neighbours, not only to your friends but love even to those who may be your enemies.

One word more in connection with the same thing. I think that if we were to practise truth, to practise ahimsa, we must immediately see that we also practise fearlessness. If our rulers are doing what in our opinion is wrong, and if we feel it our duty to let them hear our advice even though it



may be considered sedition, I urge you to speak sedition—but at your peril. You must be prepared to suffer the consequences. And when you are ready to suffer the consequences and not hit below the belt, then I think you will have made good your right to have your advice heard even by the Government.

### RIGHTS AND DUTIES

I ally myself with the British Government, because I believe that it is possible for me to claim equal partnership with every subject of the British empire. I today claim that equal partnership. I do not belong to a subject race. I do not call myself a member of a subject race. But there is this thing it is not for the British governors to give you; it is for you to take the thing. I want and I can take the thing. That I want only by discharging my obligations. Max Mueller has told us—we need not go to Max Mueller to interpret our own religion—but he says, our religion consists of the four letters “D-u-t-y” and not the five letters “R-i-g-h-t”. And if you believe that all that we want can grow from better discharge of our duty, then think always of your duty and, fighting along those lines, you will have no fear of any man, you will fear only God. That is the message that my master if I may say so, your master, too—Mr. Gokhale has given to us. What is that message then? It is in the constitution of the Servants of India Society and that is the message by which I wish to be guided in my life. The message is to spiritualize the political life and the political institutions of the country. We must immediately set about realizing it in practice. The students cannot be away from politics. Politics is as essential to them as religion. Politics cannot be divorced from religion. Politics divorced from religion becomes debasing. Modern culture and modern civilization are such politics. My views may not be acceptable to you, I know. All the same I can



only give you what is stirring me to my very depths. On the authority of my experiences in South Africa, I claim that your countrymen who had not that modern culture but who had that strength of the rishis of old, who have inherited the tapascharya performed by the rishis, without having known a single word of English literature and without knowing anything whatsoever of the present modern culture, they are able to rise to their full height. And what has been possible for the uneducated and illiterate countrymen of ours in South Africa is ten times possible for you and for me today in this sacred land of ours. May that be your privilege and may that be my privilege!

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

## TURNING THE SEARCHLIGHT INWARD

Friends, I wish to tender my humble apology for the long delay that took place before I was able to reach this place. And you will readily accept the apology when I tell you that I am not responsible for the delay nor is any human agency responsible for it. The fact is that I am like an animal on show and my keepers in their over-kindness always manage to neglect a necessary chapter in this life and that is pure accident. In this case, they did not provide for the series of accidents that happened to us—to me, my keepers and my carriers. Hence this delay.

Friends, under the influence of the matchless eloquence of the lady (Mrs. Besant) who has just sat down, pray, do not believe that our University has become a finished product and that all the young men who are to come to the University that has yet to rise and come into existence, have also come and returned from it finished citizens of a great empire. Do not go away with any such impression and if you the student world to which my remarks are supposed to be addressed this evening, consider for one moment that the spiritual life, for which this country is noted and for which this country has no rival, can be transmitted through the lip, pray, believe me you are wrong. You will never be able merely through the lip to give the message that India, I hope, will one day deliver to the world. I myself have been "fed up" with speeches and lectures. I accept the lectures that have been delivered



here during the last two days from this category because they were necessary. But I do venture to suggest to you that we have now reached almost the end of our resources in speech-making, and it is not enough that our ears are feasted, that our eyes are feasted, but it is necessary that our hearts have got to be touched and that our hands and feet have got to be moved. We have been told during the last two days how necessary it is, if we are to retain our hold upon the simplicity of Indian character, that our hands and feet should move in unison with our hearts. But this is only by way of preface. I wanted to say it is a matter of deep humiliation and shame for us that I am compelled this evening under the shadow of this great college, in this sacred city, to address my countrymen in a language that is foreign to me. I know that if I was appointed an examiner to examine all those who have been attending during these two days this series of lectures, most of those who might be examined upon these lectures would fail. And why? Because they have not been touched. I was present at the sessions of the great Congress in the month of December. There was a much vaster audience, and will you believe me when I tell you that the only speeches that touched that huge audience in Bombay were the speeches that were delivered in Hindustani? In Bombay, mind you, not in Banaras where everybody speaks Hindi. But between the vernaculars of the Bombay Presidency on the one hand and Hindi on the other, no such great dividing line exists as there does between English and the sister languages of India; and the Congress audience was better able to follow the speakers in Hindi. I am hoping that this University will see to it that the youths who come to it will receive their instruction through the medium of their vernaculars. Our language is the reflection of ourselves, and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence, the



better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India? (Cries of "Never".) Why this handicap on the nation? Just consider for one moment what an unequal race our lads have to run with every English lad. I had the privilege of a close conversation with some Poona professors. They assured me that every Indian youth, because he reached his knowledge through the English language, lost at least six precious years of life. Multiply that by the number of students turned out by our schools and colleges and find out for yourselves how many thousand years have been lost to the nation. The charge against us is that we have no initiative. How can we have any if we are to devote the precious years of our life to the mastery of a foreign tongue? We fail in this attempt also. Was it possible for any speaker yesterday and today to impress his audience as was possible for Mr. Higginbotham? It was not the fault of the previous speakers that they could not engage the audience. They had more than substance enough for us in their addresses. But their addresses could not go home to us. I have heard it said that after all it is English-educated India which is leading and which is doing all the things for the nation. It would be monstrous if it were otherwise. The only education we receive is English education. Surely we must show something for it. But suppose that we had been receiving during the past fifty years education through our vernaculars, what should we have today? We should have today a free India, we should have our educated men, not as if they were foreigners in their own land but speaking to the heart of the nation, they would be working amongst the poorest of the poor, and whatever they would have gained during the past 50 years would be a heritage for the nation. Today even our wives are not the sharers in our best thought. Look at Professor Bose and Professor Ray and their brilliant

researches. Is it not a shame that their researches are not the common property of the masses ?

Let us now turn to another subject.

The Congress has passed a resolution about self-government and I have no doubt that the All-India Congress Committee and the Moslem League will do their duty and come forward with some tangible suggestions. But I for one must frankly confess that I am not so much interested in what they will be able to produce as I am interested in anything that the student world is going to produce or the masses are going to produce. No paper contribution will ever give us self-government. No amount of speeches will ever make us fit for self-government. It is only our conduct that will fit us for it. And how are we trying to govern ourselves? I want to think audibly this evening. I do not want to make a speech and if you find me this evening speaking without reserve, pray, consider that you are only sharing the thoughts of a man who allows himself to think audibly, and if you think that I seem to transgress the limits that courtesy imposes upon me, pardon me for the liberty I may be taking. I visited the Viswanath temple last evening and as I was walking through those lanes, these were the thoughts that touched me. If a stranger dropped from above on to this great temple and he had to consider what we as Hindus were, would he not be justified in condemning us? Is not this great temple a reflection of our own character? I speak feelingly as a Hindu. Is it right that the lanes of our sacred temple should be as dirty as they are? The houses round about are built anyhow. The lanes are tortuous and narrow. If even our temples are not models of roominess and cleanliness, what can our self-government be? Shall our temples be abodes of



holiness, cleanliness and peace as soon as the English have retired from India, either of their own pleasure or by compulsion, bag and baggage?

I entirely agree with the President of the Congress that before we think of self-government, we shall have to do the necessary plodding. In every city there are two divisions, the cantonment and the city proper. The city mostly is a stinking den. But we are people unused to city life. But if we want city life, we cannot reproduce the easy-going hamlet life. It is not comforting to think that people walk about the streets of Indian Bombay under the perpetual fear of dwellers in the storeyed buildings spitting upon them. I do a great deal of railway travelling. I observe the difficulty of third-class passengers. But the Railway Administration is by no means to blame for all their hard lot. We do not know the elementary laws of cleanliness. We spit anywhere on the carriage floor, irrespective of the thought that it is often used as sleeping space. We do not trouble ourselves as to how we use it; the result is indescribable filth in the compartment. The so-called better-class passengers overawe their less fortunate brethren. Among them I have seen the student world also. Sometimes they behave no better. They can speak English and they have worn Norfolk jackets and therefore claim the right to force their way in and command seating accommodation. I have turned the searchlight all over and as you have given me the privilege of speaking to you, I am laying my heart bare. Surely we must set these things right in our progress towards self-government. I now introduce you to another scene. His Highness the Maharaja who presided yesterday over our deliberations spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress upon it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy?



Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to these noblemen: "There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India." I am sure it is not the desire of the King-Emperor or Lord Hardinge that in order to show the truest loyalty to our King-Emperor, it is necessary for us to ransack our jewellery-boxes and to appear bedecked from top to toe. I would undertake at the peril of my life to bring to you a message from King George himself that he expects nothing of the kind. Sir, whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say: "Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists." Over 75 per cent of the population are agriculturists and Mr. Higginbotham told us last night in his own felicitous language that they are the men who grow two blades of grass in the place of one. But there cannot be much spirit of a self-government about us if we take away or allow others to take away from them almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it.

Now, last but not the least, it is my bounden duty to refer to what agitated our minds during these two or three days. All of us have had many anxious moments while the Viceroy was going through the streets of Banaras. There were detectives stationed in many places. We are horrified. We asked ourselves: "Why this distrust? Is it not better that even Lord Hardinge should die than live a living death?"

But a representative of a mighty Sovereign may not. He might find it necessary even to live a living death. But why was it necessary to impose these detectives on us? We may foam, we may fret, we may resent but let us not forget that India of today in her impatience has produced an army of anarchists. I myself am an anarchist, but of another type. But there is a class of anarchists amongst us, and if I was able to reach this class, I would say to them that their anarchism has no room in India if India is to conquer the conqueror. It is a sign of fear. If we trust and fear God, we shall have to fear no one, not Maharajas, not Viceroy, not the detectives, not even King George. I honour the anarchist for his love of the country. I honour him for his bravery in being willing to die for his country; but I ask him: Is killing honourable? Is the dagger of an assassin a fit precursor of an honourable death? I deny it. There is no warrant for such methods in any scriptures. If I found it necessary for the salvation of India that the English should retire, that they should be driven out, I would not hesitate to declare that they would have to go, and I hope I would be prepared to die in defence of that belief. That would, in my opinion, be an honourable death. The bomb-thrower creates secret plots, is afraid to come out into the open, and when caught pays the penalty of misdirected zeal. I have been told: "Had we not done this, had some people not thrown bombs, we should never have gained what we have got with reference to the partition movement." (Mrs. Besant: Please stop it). This was what I said in Bengal when Mr. Lyon presided at the meeting. I think what I am saying is necessary. If I am told to stop I shall obey. (Turning to the Chairman) I await your orders. If you consider that by my speaking as I am, I am not serving the country and the empire, I shall certainly stop. (Cries of "Go on".) (The Chairman: Please explain your object.) I am explaining my object. I am simply



(another interruption). My friends, please do not resent this interruption. If Mrs. Besant this evening suggests that I should stop, she does so because she loves India so well, and she considers that I am erring in thinking audibly before you young men. But even so, I simply say this that I want to purge India of the atmosphere of suspicion on either side; if we are to reach our goal, we should have an empire which is to be based upon mutual love and mutual trust. Is it not better that we talk under the shadow of this college than that we should be talking irresponsibly in our homes? I consider that it is much better that we talk these things openly. I have done so with excellent results before now. I know that there is nothing that the students are not discussing. There is nothing that the students do not know. I am therefore turning the searchlight towards ourselves. I hold the name of my country so dear to me that I exchange these thoughts with you and submit to you that there is no reason for anarchism in India. Let us frankly and openly say whatever we want to say to our rulers and face the consequences if what we have to say does not please them. But let us not abuse. I was talking the other day to a member of the much-abused Civil Service. I have not very much in common with the members of that Service, but I could not help admiring the manner in which he was speaking to me. He said : "Mr. Gandhi, do you for one moment suppose that all we Civil Servants are a bad lot, that we want to oppress the people whom we have come to govern?" "No," I said. "Then, if you get an opportunity put in a word for the much-abused Civil Service." And I am here to put in that word. Yes; many members of the Indian Civil Service are most decidedly overbearing; they are tyrannical, at times thoughtless. Many other adjectives may be used. I grant all these things and I grant also that after having lived in India for a certain number of years,



some of them become somewhat degraded. But what does that signify? They were gentlemen before they came here, and if they have lost some of the moral fibre, it is a reflection upon ourselves. (Cries of "No".) Just think out for yourselves, if a man who was good yesterday has become bad after having come in contact with me, is he responsible that he has deteriorated or am I? The atmosphere of sycophancy and falsity that surrounds them on their coming to India demoralizes them as it would many of us. It is well to take the blame sometimes. If we are to receive self-government, we shall have to take it. We shall never be granted self-government. Look at the history of the British Empire and the British nation; freedom-loving as it is, it will not be a party to giving freedom to a people who will not take it themselves. Learn your lesson if you wish to from the Boer War. Those who were enemies of that empire only a few years ago have now become friends.\*

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

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\* At this point there was an interruption and there was a movement on the platform to leave; the speech therefore ended abruptly.

## THE CULT OF SWADESHI

It was not without much diffidence that I undertook to speak to you at all. And I was hard put to it in the selection of my subject. I have chosen a very delicate and difficult subject. It is delicate because of the peculiar views I hold upon swadeshi, and it is difficult because I have not that command of language which is necessary for giving adequate expression to my thoughts. I know that I may rely upon your indulgence for the many shortcomings you will no doubt find in my address, the more so when I tell you that there is nothing in what I am about to say that I am not either already practising or am not preparing to practise to the best of my ability. It encourages me to observe that last month you devoted a week to prayer in the place of an address. I have earnestly prayed that what I am about to say may bear fruit and I know that you will bless my words with a similar prayer.

After much thinking, I have arrived at a definition of swadeshi that perhaps best illustrates my meaning. Swadeshi is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. Thus, as for religion, in order to satisfy the requirements of the definition, I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion. That is the use of my immediate religious surroundings. If I find it defective, I should serve it by purging it of its defects. In the domain of politics, I should

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Speech at the missionary conference, Madras, February 14, 1916



make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. In that of economics, I should use only things that are produced by my immediate neighbours and serve those industries by making them efficient and complete where they might be found wanting. It is suggested that such swadeshi, if reduced to practice, will lead to the millennium. And as we do not abandon our pursuit after the millennium because we do not expect quite to reach it within our time, so may we not abandon swadeshi even though it may not be fully attained for generations to come.

Let us briefly examine three branches of swadeshi as sketched above. Hinduism has become a conservative religion and therefore a mighty force because of the swadeshi spirit underlying it. It is the most tolerant because it is non-proselytizing, and it is as capable of expansion today as it has been found to be in the past. It has succeeded not in driving, as I think it has been erroneously held, but in absorbing Buddhism. By reason of the swadeshi spirit, a Hindu refuses to change his religion not necessarily because he considers it to be the best, but because he knows that he can complement it by introducing reforms. And what I have said about Hinduism is, I suppose, true of the other great faiths of the world, only it is held that it is specially so in the case of Hinduism. But here comes the point I am labouring to reach. If there is any substance in what I have said, will not the great missionary bodies of India, to whom we owe a deep debt of gratitude for what they have done and are doing, do still better and serve the spirit of Christianity better, by dropping the goal of proselytizing but continuing their philanthropic work? I hope you will not consider this to be an impertinence on my part. I make the suggestion in all sincerity and with due humility. Moreover, I have some



claim upon your attention. I have endeavoured to study the Bible. I consider it as part of my scriptures. The spirit of Sermon on the Mount competes almost on equal terms with the *Bhagavad Gita* for the domination of my heart. I yield to no Christian in the strength of devotion with which I sing, "Lead, kindly Light" and several other hymns of a similar nature. I have come under the influence of noted Christian missionaries belonging to different denominations. And I enjoy to this day the privilege of friendship with some of them. You will perhaps therefore allow that I have offered the above suggestion not as a biased Hindu but as a humble and impartial student of religion with great leanings towards Christianity. May it not be that the "Go Ye All the World" message has been somewhat narrowly interpreted and the spirit of it missed? It will not be denied, I speak from experience, that many of the conversions are only so called. In some cases, the appeal has gone not to the heart but to the stomach. And in every case, a conversion leaves a sore behind it which, I venture to think, is avoidable. Quoting again from experience, a new birth, a change of heart, is perfectly possible in every one of the great faiths. I know I am now treading upon thin ice. But I do not apologize, in closing this part of my subject, for saying that the frightful outrage that is just going on in Europe, perhaps, shows that the message of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Peace, has been little understood in Europe, and that light upon it may have to be thrown from the East.

I have sought your help in religious matters, which it is yours to give in a special sense. But I make bold to seek it even in political matters. I do not believe that religion has nothing to do with politics. The latter divorced from religion is like a corpse only fit to be buried. As a matter of fact, in your own silent manner, you influence politics not a

little. And I feel that if the attempt to separate politics from religion had not been made, as it is even now made, they would not have degenerated, as they often appear to do. No one considers that the political life of the country is in a happy state. Following out the swadeshi spirit, I observe the indigenous institutions and the village panchayats hold me. India is really a republican country, and it is because it is that that it has survived every shock hitherto delivered. Princes and potentates, whether they were Indian-born or foreigners, have hardly touched the vast masses except for collecting revenue. The latter in their turn seem to have rendered unto Caesar what was Caesar's and for the rest have done much as they have liked. The vast organization of caste answered not only the religious wants of the community, but it answered too its political needs. The villagers managed their internal affairs through the caste system, and through it they dealt with any oppression from the ruling power or powers. It is not possible to deny of a nation that was capable of producing the caste system its wonderful power of organization. One had but to attend the great Kumbha Mela at Hardwar last year to know how skilful that organization must have been which, without any seeming effort, was able effectively to cater for more than a million pilgrims. Yet is it the fashion to say that we lack organizing ability. This is true, I fear, to a certain extent, of those who have been nurtured in the new traditions. We have laboured under a terrible handicap owing to an almost fatal departure from the swadeshi spirit. We educated classes have received our education through a foreign tongue. We have therefore not reacted upon the masses. We want to represent the masses, but we fail. They recognize us not much more than they recognize the English officers. Their hearts are an open book to neither. Their aspirations are not ours. Hence there is a break. And you witness not in reality failure to organize,



but want of correspondence between the representatives and the represented. If during the last fifty years we had been educated through the vernaculars, our elders and our servants and our neighbours would have partaken of our knowledge ; the discoveries of a Bose or a Ray would have been household treasures as are the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. As it is, so far as the masses are concerned, those great discoveries might as well have been made by foreigners. Had instruction in all the branches of learning been given through the vernaculars, I make bold to say that they would have been enriched wonderfully. The question of village sanitation, etc., would have been solved long ago. The village panchayats would be now a living force in a special way, and India would almost be enjoying self-government suited to her requirements and would have been spared the humiliating spectacle of organized assassination on her sacred soil. It is not too late to mend. And you can help if you will, as no other body or bodies can.

And now for the last division of swadeshi. Much of the deep poverty of the masses is due to the ruinous departure from swadeshi in economic and industrial life. If not an article of commerce had been brought from outside India, she would be today a land flowing with milk and honey. But that was not to be. We were greedy and so was England. The connection between England and India was based clearly upon an error. But she (England) does not remain in India in error. It is her declared policy that India is to be held in trust for her people. If this be true, Lancashire must stand aside. And if the swadeshi doctrine is a sound doctrine, Lancashire can stand aside without hurt, though it may sustain a shock for the time being. I think of swadeshi not as a boycott movement undertaken by way of revenge. I conceive it as a religious principle to be followed by all. I am



no economist, but I have read some treatises which show that England could easily become a self-sustained country, growing all the produce she needs. This may be an utterly ridiculous proposition, and perhaps the best proof that it cannot be true is that England is one of the largest importers in the world. But India cannot live for Lancashire or any other country before she is able to live for herself. And she can live for herself only if she produces and is helped to produce everything for her requirements within her own borders. She need not be, she ought not to be, drawn into the vortex of mad and ruinous competition which breeds fratricide, jealousy and many other evils. But who is to stop her great millionaires from entering into the world competition? Certainly, not legislation. Force of public opinion, proper education, however, can do a great deal in the desired direction. The handloom industry is in a dying condition. I took special care during my wanderings last year to see as many weavers as possible, and my heart ached to find how they had lost, how families had retired from this once-flourishing and honourable occupation. If we follow the swadeshi doctrine, it would be your duty and mine to find out neighbours who can supply our wants and to teach them to supply them where they do not know how to, assuming that there are neighbours who are in want of healthy occupation. Then every village of India will almost be a self-supporting and self-contained unit exchanging only such necessary commodities with other villages where they are not locally producible. This may all sound nonsensical. Well, India is a country of nonsense. It is nonsensical to parch one's throat with thirst when a kindly Mahomedan is ready to offer pure water to drink. And yet thousands of Hindus would rather die of thirst than drink water from a Mahomedan household. These nonsensical men can also, once they are convinced that their religion demands that they should wear

garments manufactured in India only and eat food only grown in India, decline to wear any other clothing or eat any other food. Lord Curzon set the fashion for tea-drinking. And that pernicious drug now bids fair to overwhelm the nation. It has already undermined the digestive apparatus of hundreds of thousands of men and women and constitutes an additional tax upon their slender purses. Lord Hardinge can set the fashion for swadeshi and almost the whole of India will forswear foreign goods. There is a verse in the *Bhagavad Gita*, which, freely rendered, means follow the classes. It is easy to undo the evil if the thinking portion of the community were to take the swadeshi vow even though it may for a time cause considerable inconvenience. I hate interference in any department of life. At best, it is the lesser evil. But I would tolerate, welcome, indeed plead for, stiff protective duty upon foreign goods. Natal, a British colony, protected its sugar by taxing the sugar that came from another British colony, Mauritius. England has sinned against India by forcing free trade upon her. It may have been food for her, but it has been poison for this country.

It has often been urged that India cannot adopt swadeshi in the economic life at any rate. Those who advance this objection do not look upon swadeshi as a rule of life. With them, it is a mere patriotic effort not to be made if it involved any self-denial. Swadeshi, as defined here, is a religious discipline to be undergone in utter disregard of the physical discomfort it may cause to individuals. Under its spell, the deprivation of a pin or a needle, because these are not manufactured in India, need cause no terror. A swadeshi will learn to do without hundreds of things which today he considers necessary. Moreover, those who dismiss swadeshi from their minds by arguing the impossible forget



that swadeshi, after all, is a goal to be reached by steady effort. And we would be making for the goal even if we confined swadeshi to a given set of articles, allowing ourselves as a temporary measure to use such things as might not be procurable in the country.

There now remains for me to consider one more objection that has been raised against swadeshi. The objectors consider it to be a most selfish doctrine without any warrant in the civilized code of morality. With them, to practise swadeshi is to revert to barbarism. I cannot enter into a detailed analysis of the proposition. But I would urge that swadeshi is the only doctrine consistent with the law of humility and love. It is arrogance to think of launching out to serve the whole of India when I am hardly able to serve my own family. It were better to concentrate my effort upon the family and consider that through them I was serving the whole nation and, if you will, the whole of humanity. This is humility and it is love. The motive will determine the quality of the act. I may serve my family regardless of the sufferings I may cause to others ; as, for instance, I may accept an employment which enables me to extort money from people, enrich myself thereby and then satisfy many unlawful demands of the family. Here I am neither serving the family nor the State. Or I may recognize that God has given me hands and feet only to work with for my sustenance and for that of those who may be dependent upon me. I would then at once simplify my life and that of those whom I can directly reach. In this instance, I would have served the family without causing injury to anyone else. Supposing that everyone followed this mode of life, we would have at once an ideal State. All will not reach that state at the same time. But those of us who, realizing its truth, enforce it in practice will clearly anticipate and accelerate the coming of that happy day. Under this plan of life, in seeming



to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature. *Sic utere tuo ut alienum non laedas*\* is not merely a legal maxim, but it is a grand doctrine of life. It is the key to a proper practice of ahimsa or love. It is for you, the custodians of a great faith, to set the fashion and show by your preaching, sanctified by practice, that patriotism based on hatred "killeth" and that patriotism based on love "giveth life".

*The Hindu*, 28-2-1916

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\* This Latin legal maxim means : "Use your property in such a way as not to damage that of others."

## ASHRAM VOWS

I have so often said that I am not myself fond of hearing my own voice and I assure you that this morning also I retained the same position. It was only, if you will believe me, my great regard for the students, whom I love, whom I respect and who I consider are the hope of the future of India that moved me to accept this invitation to speak to you this morning. I did not know what subject to choose. A friend has handed me a slip here asking me whether I would enlighten the students on the Banaras incident. I fear I shall have to disappoint that friend and those of you who associate yourselves with that view. I don't think that you need lay any stress upon that incident. These are the passing waves which will always come and go. I should therefore this morning fear rather if I can possibly do so and pour my soul out to you with reference to something which I treasure so much above everything else.

To many of the students who came here last year to converse with me, I said I was about to establish an institution—an Ashram—somewhere in India, and it is about that place that I am going to talk to you this morning. I feel and I have felt during the whole of my public life that what we need, what any nation needs, but we perhaps of all the nations of the world need just now, is nothing else and nothing less than character-building. And this is the view propounded by the great patriot Mr. Gokhale. As you know, in many of



his speeches, he used to say that we would get nothing, we would deserve nothing unless we had character to back what we wished for. Hence his founding of that great body, the Servants of India Society. And as you know, in the prospectus that has been issued in connection with the Society, Mr. Gokhale has deliberately stated that it was necessary to spiritualize the political life of the country. You know also that he used to say so often that our average was less than the average of so many European nations. I do not know whether that statement by him, whom, with pride, I consider to be my political guru, has really foundation in fact, but I do believe that there is much to be said to justify it in so far as educated India is concerned; not because we, the educated portion of the community, have blundered, but because we have been creatures of circumstances. Be that as it may, this is the maxim of life which I have accepted, namely, that no work done by any man, no matter how great he is, will really prosper unless he has a religious backing. But what is religion?—the question will be immediately asked. I, for one, would answer, not the religion which you will get after reading all the scriptures of the world, it is not really a grasp by the brain, it is a heart-grasp. It is a thing which is not alien to us, but it is a thing which has to be evolved out of us. It is always within us, with some consciously so; with others, quite unconsciously. But it is there : and whether we wake up this religious instinct in us through outside assistance or by inward growth, no matter how it is done, it has got to be done if we want to do anything in the right manner and anything that is going to persist.

Our scriptures have laid down certain rules as maxims of life and as axioms which we have to take for granted as self-demonstrated truths. The shastras tell us that without living according to those maxims, we are incapable even of having a



reasonable perception of religion. Believing in these implicitly for all these long years and having actually endeavoured to reduce to practice these injunctions of the shastras, I have deemed it necessary to seek the association of those who think with me in founding this institution. And I shall venture this morning to place before you the rules that have been drawn up and that have to be observed by everyone who seeks to be a member of that Ashram.

Five of these are known as *Yamas*, and the first and the foremost is

#### THE VOW OF TRUTH

Not truth simply as we ordinarily understand it, that as far as possible we ought not to resort to a lie, that is to say, not truth which merely answers the saying "Honesty is the best policy"—implying that if it is not the best policy, we may depart from it. But here Truth, as it is conceived, means that we have to rule our life by this law of Truth at any cost. And in order to satisfy the definition, I have drawn upon the celebrated illustration of the life of Prahlad. For the sake of Truth, he dared to oppose his own father, and he defended himself, not by retaliation, by paying his father back in his own coin, but in defence of Truth, as he knew it, he was prepared to die without caring to return the blows that he had received from his father or from those who were charged with his father's instructions. Not only that: he would not in any way even parry the blows. On the contrary, with a smile on his lips, he underwent the innumerable tortures to which he was subjected, with the result that at last, Truth rose triumphant, not that Prahlad suffered the tortures, because he knew that some day or other in his very lifetime he would be able to demonstrate the infallibility of the law of Truth. That

fact was there; but if he had died in the midst of torture, he would still have adhered to Truth. That is the Truth that I would like us to follow. There was an incident I noticed yesterday. It was a trifling incident, but I think these trifling incidents are like straws which show which way the wind is blowing. The incident was this : I was talking to a friend who wanted to talk to me aside and we were engaged in a private conversation. A third friend dropped in and he politely asked whether he was intruding. The friend to whom I was talking said : " Oh, no, there is nothing private here." I felt taken aback a little, because, as I was taken aside, I knew that so far as this friend was concerned, the conversation was private. But he immediately, out of politeness, I would call it over-politeness, said there was no private conversation and that he (the third friend) could join. I suggest to you that this is a departure from my definition of Truth. I think that the friend should have, in the gentlest manner possible, but still openly and frankly, said: "Yes, just now, as you properly say, you would be intruding" without giving the slightest offence to the person if he was himself a gentleman and we are bound to consider everybody to be a gentleman unless he proves to be otherwise. But I may be told that the incident, after all, proves the gentility of the nation. I think that it is over-proving the case. If we continue to say these things out of politeness, we really become a nation of hypocrites. I recall a conversation I had with an English friend. He was comparatively a stranger. He is a principal of a college and has been in India for several years. He was comparing notes with me, and he asked me whether I would admit that we, unlike most Englishmen, would not dare to say "No" when it was "No" that we meant. And I must admit that I immediately said "Yes". I agree with the statement. We do hesitate to say "No", frankly and boldly when we want to pay due regard to the sentiments of the person whom we are addressing. In



this Ashram, we make it a rule that we must say "No" when we mean "No", regardless of consequences. This, then, is the first rule. Then we come to the

### DOCTRINE OF AHIMSA

Literally speaking, ahimsa means non-killing. But to me it has a world of meaning and takes me into realms much higher, infinitely higher, than the realm to which I would go, if I merely understood by ahimsa non-killing. Ahimsa really means that you may not offend anybody, you may not harbour an uncharitable thought even in connection with one who may consider himself to be your enemy. Pray notice the guarded nature of this thought; I do not say "whom you consider to be your enemy," but "who may consider himself to be your enemy". For one who follows the doctrine of ahimsa, there is no room for an enemy; he denies the existence of an enemy. But there are people who consider themselves to be his enemies, and he cannot help that circumstance. So, it is held that we may not harbour an evil thought even in connection with such persons. If we return blow for blow, we depart from the doctrine of ahimsa. But I go further. If we resent a friend's action or the so-called enemy's action, we still fall short of this doctrine. But when I say we should not resent, I do not say that we should acquiesce; but by resenting I mean wishing that some harm should be done to the enemy, or that he should be put out of the way, not even by any action of ours, but by the action of somebody else, or, say, by Divine agency. If we harbour even this thought, we depart from this doctrine of ahimsa. Those who join the Ashram have literally to accept that meaning. That does not mean that we practise that doctrine in its entirety. Far from it. It is an ideal which we have to reach, and it is an ideal to be reached even at this very moment, if we are capable of doing



so. But it is not a proposition in geometry to be learnt by heart : it is not even like solving difficult problems in higher mathematics; it is infinitely more difficult than solving those problems. Many of you have burnt the midnight oil in solving those problems. If you want to follow out this doctrine, you will have to pass many a sleepless night, and go through many a mental torture and agony before you can reach, before you can even be within measurable distance of this goal. It is the goal, and nothing less than that, you and I have to reach if we want to understand what a religious life means. I will not say much more on this doctrine than this : that a man who believes in the efficacy of this doctrine finds in the ultimate stage, when he is about to reach the goal, the whole world at his feet, not that he wants the whole world at his feet, but it must be so. If you express your love—ahimsa—in such a manner that it impresses itself indelibly upon your so-called enemy, he must return that love. Another thought which comes out of this is that, under this rule, there is no room for organized assassinations, and there is no room for murders even openly committed, and there is no room for any violence even for the sake of your country, and even for guarding the honour of precious ones that may be under your charge. After all, that would be a poor defence of honour. This doctrine of ahimsa tells us that we may guard the honour of those who are under our charge by delivering *ourselves* into the hands of the man who would commit the sacrilege. And that requires far greater physical and mental courage than the delivering of blows. You may have some degree of physical power—I do not say courage—and you may use that power. But after that is expended, what happens? The other man is filled with wrath and indignation, and you have made him more angry by matching your violence against his; and when he has done you to death, the rest of his violence is delivered against your charge. But if you do not retaliate, but stand

your ground, between your charge and the opponent, simply receiving the blows without retaliating, what happens ? I give you my promise that the whole of the violence will be expended on you, and your charge will be left unscathed. Under his plan of life, there is no conception of patriotism which justifies such wars as you witness today in Europe. Then there is

### THE VOW OF CELIBACY

Those who want to perform national service, or those who want to have a glimpse of the real religious life, must lead a celibate life, no matter if married or unmarried. Marriage but brings a woman closer together with the man, and they become friends in a special sense, never to be parted either in this life or in the lives that are to come. But I do not think that in our conception of marriage our lusts should necessarily enter. Be that as it may, this is what is placed before those who come to the Ashram. I do not deal with that any length. Then we have

### THE VOW OF CONTROL OF THE PALATE

A man who wants to control his animal passions easily does so if he controls his palate. I fear this is one of the most difficult vows to follow. I am just now coming after having inspected the Victoria Hostel. I saw there, not to my dismay, though it should be to my dismay, but I am used to it now, that there are so many kitchens, not kitchens that are established in order to serve caste restrictions, but kitchens that have become necessary in order that people can have the condiments, and the exact weight of the condiments, to which they are used in the respective places from which they come. And therefore we find that for the Brahmins



themselves there are different compartments and different kitchens catering for the delicate tastes of all these different groups. I suggest to you that this is simply slavery to the palate, rather than mastery over it. I may say this : Unless we take our minds off from this habit, and unless we shut our eyes to the tea shops and coffee shops and all these kitchens, and unless we are satisfied with foods that are necessary for the proper maintenance of our physical health, and unless we are prepared to rid ourselves of stimulating, heating and exciting condiments that we mix with our food, we will certainly not be able to control the over-abundant, unnecessary, exciting stimulation that we may have. If we do not do that, the result naturally is, that we abuse ourselves and we abuse even the sacred trust given to us, and we become less than animals and brutes. Eating, drinking and indulging passions we share in common with the animals, but have you ever seen a horse or a cow indulging in the abuse of the palate as we do ? Do you suppose that it is a sign of civilization, a sign of real life that we should multiply our eatables so far that we do not even know where we are ; and seek dish after dish until at last we have become absolutely mad and run after the newspaper sheets which give us advertisements about these dishes ? Then we have

#### THE VOW OF NON-THIEVING

I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use, and keep it, I thief it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality, so long we are thieving. I am no socialist



and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions ; but I do say that, personally, those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow the rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody. I should then be departing from the rule of ahimsa. If somebody else possesses more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated, I do say that I dare not possess anything which I do not want. In India we have got three millions of people having to be satisfied with one meal a day, and that meal consisting of a *chapati* containing no fat in it, and a pinch of salt. You and I have no right to anything that we really have until these three million are clothed and fed better. You and I, who ought to know better, must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation in order that they may be nursed, fed and clothed. Then there is the vow of non-possession which follows as a matter of course. Then I go to

### THE VOW OF SWADESHI

The vow of swadeshi is a necessary vow. But you are conversant with the swadeshi life and the swadeshi spirit. I suggest to you we are departing from one of the sacred laws of our being when we leave our neighbour and go out somewhere else in order to satisfy our wants. If a man comes from Bombay here and offers you wares, you are not justified in supporting the Bombay merchant or trader so long as you have got a merchant at your very door, born and bred in Madras. That is my view of swadeshi. In your village, so long as you have got your village-barber, you are bound to support him to the exclusion of the finished barber who may come to you from Madras. If you find it necessary that your village-barber should reach the attainment of the barber from Madras, you may train him to that. Send him to Madras by all means, if you wish, in order that he may learn his calling.

Until you do that, you are not justified in going to another barber. That is swadeshi. So, when we find that there are many things that we cannot get in India, we must try to do without them. We may have to do without many things which we may consider necessary, but believe me, when you have that frame of mind, you will find a great burden taken off your shoulders, even as the Pilgrim did in that inimitable book, *Pilgrim's Progress*. There came a time when the mighty burden that the Pilgrim was carrying on his shoulders unconsciously dropped from him, and he felt a freer man than he was when he started on the journey. So will you feel freer men than you are now, immediately you adopt this swadeshi life. We have also

#### THE VOW OF FEARLESSNESS

I found, throughout my wanderings in India, that India, educated India, is seized with a paralyzing fear. We may not open our lips in public; we may not declare our confirmed opinion in public; we may hold these opinions; we may talk about them secretly; and we may do anything we like within the four walls of our house, —but those are not for public consumption. If we had taken a vow of silence, I would have nothing to say. When we open our lips in public, we say things which we do not really believe in. I do not know whether this is not the experience of almost every public man who speaks in India. I then suggest to you that there is only one Being, if Being is the proper term to be used, Whom we have to fear, and that is God. When we fear God, we fear no man, no matter how high-placed he may be. And if you want to follow the vow of truth in any shape or form, fearlessness is the necessary consequence. And so you find, in the *Bhagavad Gita*, fearlessness is declared as the first essential quality of a Brahmin. We fear consequences, and, therefore, we are afraid



to tell the truth. A man who fears God will certainly not fear any earthly consequence. Before we can aspire to the position of understanding what religion is, and before we can aspire to the position of guiding the destinies of India, do you not see that we should adopt this habit of fearlessness? Or shall we overawe our countrymen even as we are overawed? We thus see how important this "fearlessness vow" is. And we have also

#### THE VOW REGARDING THE UNTOUCHABLES

There is an ineffaceable blot that Hinduism today carries with it. I have declined to believe that it has been handed to us from immemorial times. I think that this miserable, wretched enslaving of "untouchableness" must have come to us when we were, in the cycle of our lives, at our lowest ebb, and that evil has still stuck to us and it still remains with us. It is, to my mind, a curse that has come to us, and as long as that curse remains with us, so long I think we are bound to consider that every affliction that we labour under in this sacred land is a fit and proper punishment for this great and indelible crime that we are committing. That any person should be considered untouchable because of his calling passes one's comprehension; and you, the student world, who receive all this modern education, if you become a party to this crime, it were better that you received no education whatsoever.

Of course, we are labouring under a very heavy handicap. Although you may realize that there cannot be a single human being on this earth who should be considered to be untouchable, you cannot react upon your families, you cannot react upon your surroundings, because all your thought is conceived in a foreign tongue, and all your



energy is devoted to that. And so we have also introduced a rule in this Ashram that we shall receive our

### EDUCATION THROUGH THE VERNACULARS

In Europe, every cultured man learns, not only his language, but also other languages, certainly three or four. And even as they do in Europe, in order to solve the problem of language in India, we, in this Ashram, make it a point to learn as many Indian vernaculars as we possibly can. And I assure you that learning these languages is nothing compared to the trouble that we have to take in mastering the English language. We never master the English language; with some exceptions, it has not been possible for us to do so; we can never express ourselves as clearly as we can in our own mother tongue. How dare we rub out of our memory all the years of our infancy? But that is precisely what we do when we commence our higher life, as we call it, through the medium of a foreign tongue. This creates a breach in our life for bridging which we shall have to pay dearly and heavily. And you will see now the connection between these two things—education and untouchableness—this persistence of the spirit of untouchableness even at this time of the day in spite of the spread of knowledge and education. Education has enabled us to see the horrible crime. But we are seized with fear also and, therefore, we cannot take this doctrine to our homes. And we have got a superstitious veneration for our family traditions and for the members of our family. You say, "My parents will die if I tell them that I, at least, can no longer partake of this crime." I say that Prahlad never considered that his father would die if he pronounced the sacred syllables of the name of Vishnu. On the contrary, he made the whole of that household ring, from one corner to another, by repeat-

ing that name even in the sacred presence of his father. And so you and I may do this thing in the sacred presence of our parents. If, after receiving this rude shock, some of them expire, I think that would be no calamity. It may be that some rude shocks of the kind might have to be delivered. So long as we persist in these things which have been handed down to us for generations, these incidents may happen. But there is a higher law of Nature, and in due obedience to that higher law, my parents and myself should make that sacrifice, and then we follow

### HAND-WEAVING

You may ask : "Why should we use our hands ?" And say "Manual work has got to be done by those who are illiterate. I can only occupy myself with reading literature and political essays." I think that we have to realize the dignity of labour. If a barber or shoe-maker attends a college, he ought not to abandon the profession of barber or shoe-maker. I consider that a barber's profession is just as good as the profession of medicine.

Last of all, when you have conformed to these rules, I think then, and not till then, you may come to

### POLITICS

and dabble in them to your heart's content, and certainly you will then never go wrong. Politics, divorced from religion, have absolutely no meaning. If the student-world crowd the political platform of this country, to my mind it is not necessarily a healthy sign of national growth ; but that does not mean that you, in your student-life, ought not to study politics. Politics are a part of our being ; we ought to



understand our national institutions, and we ought to understand our national growth and all those things. We may do it from our infancy. So, in our Ashram, every child is taught to understand the political institutions of our country, and to know how the country is vibrating with new emotions, with new aspirations, with a new life. But we want also the steady light, the infallible light, of religious faith, not a faith which merely appeals to the intelligence, but a faith which is indelibly inscribed on the heart. First, we want to realize that religious consciousness, and immediately we have done that, I think the whole department of life is open to us, and it should then be a sacred privilege of students and everybody to partake of that whole life, so that, when they grow to manhood, and when they leave their colleges, they may do so as men properly equipped to battle with life. Today what happens is this : much of the political life is confined to student life ; immediately the students leave their colleges and cease to be students, they sink into oblivion, they seek miserable employments, carrying miserable emoluments, rising no higher in their aspirations, knowing nothing of God, knowing nothing of fresh air or bright light and nothing of that real vigorous independence that comes out of obedience to these laws that I have ventured to place before you.

#### CONCLUSION

I am not here asking you to crowd into the Ashram, there is no room there. But I say that every one of you may enact that Ashram life individually and collectively. I shall be satisfied with anything that you may choose from the rules I have ventured to place before you and act up to it. But if



you think that these are the outpourings of a mad man, you will not hesitate to tell me that it is so, and I shall take that judgment from you undismayed.

*The Indian Review, February, 1916*

## MORALITY v. ECONOMICS

When I accepted Mr. Kapildeva Malaviya's invitation to speak to you upon the subject of this evening, I was painfully conscious of my limitations. You are an economic society. You have chosen distinguished specialists for the subjects included in your syllabus for this year and the next. I seem to be the only speaker ill-fitted for the task set before him. Frankly and truly, I know very little of economics, as you naturally understand them. Only the other day, sitting at an evening meal, a civilian friend deluged me with a series of questions on my crankisms. As he proceeded in his cross-examination, I being a willing victim, he found no difficulty in discovering my gross ignorance of the matters. I appeared to him to be handling matters with a cocksureness worthy only of a man who knows not that he knows not. To his horror and even indignation, I suppose, he found that I had not even read books on economics by such well-known authorities as Mill, Marshall, Adam Smith and a host of such other authors. In despair, he ended by advising me to read these works before experimenting in matters economic at the expense of the public. He little knew that I was a sinner past redemption. My experiments continue at the expense of trusting friends. For, there come to us moments in life when about some things we need no proof from without. A little voice within us tells us, "You are on the right track, move neither to your left nor right, but keep to the straight and narrow way."

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Speech at Muir Central College Economic Society, Ahmedabad,  
December 22, 1916



With such help we march forward slowly indeed, but surely and steadily. That is my position. It may be satisfactory enough for me, but it can in no way answer the requirements of a society such as yours. Still it was no use my struggling against Mr. Kapildeva Malaviya. I knew that he was intent upon having me to engage your attention for one of your evenings. Perhaps you will treat my intrusion as a welcome diversion from the trodden path. An occasional fast after a series of sumptuous feasts is often a necessity. And as with the body, so, I imagine, is the case with the reason. And if your reason this evening is found fasting instead of feasting, I am sure it will enjoy with the greater avidity the feast that Rao Bahadur Pandit Chandrika Prasad has in store for you for the 12th of January.

Before I take you to the field of my experiences and experiments, it is perhaps best to have a mutual understanding about the title of this evening's address : Does economic progress clash with real progress ? By economic progress, I take it, we mean material advancement without limit and by real progress we mean moral progress, which again is the same thing as progress of the permanent element in us. The subject may therefore be stated thus : "Does not moral progress increase in the same proportion as material progress ?" I know that this is a wider proposition than the one before us. But I venture to think that we always mean the larger one even when we lay down the smaller. For we know enough of science to realize that there is no such thing as perfect rest or repose in this visible universe of ours. If therefore material progress does not clash with moral progress, it must necessarily advance the latter. Nor can we be satisfied with the clumsy way in which sometimes those who cannot defend the larger proposition put their case. They seem to be obsessed with the concrete case of thirty millions of India

stated by the late Sir William Wilson Hunter to be living on one meal a day. They say that before we can think or talk of their moral welfare, we must satisfy their daily wants. With these, they say, material progress spells moral progress. And then is taken a sudden jump : What is true of thirty millions is true of the universe. They forget that hard cases make bad law. I need hardly say to you how ludicrously absurd this deduction would be. No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation. Every human being has a right to live and therefore to find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary to clothe and house himself. But, for this very simple performance, we need no assistance from economists or their laws.

“Take no thought for the morrow” is an injunction which finds an echo in almost all the religious scriptures of the world. In well-ordered society, the securing of one’s livelihood should be and is found to be the easiest thing in the world. Indeed, the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it owns, but the absence of starvation among its masses. The only statement that has to be examined is whether it can be laid down as a law of universal application that material advancement means moral progress.

Now let us take a few illustrations. Rome suffered a moral fall when it attained high material affluence. So did Egypt and so perhaps most countries of which we have an historic record. The descendants, kinsmen of the royal and divine Krishna, too, fell when they were rolling in riches. We do not deny to the Rockefellers and the Carnegies possession of an ordinary measure of morality but we gladly judge them indulgently. I mean that we do not even expect them to satisfy the highest standard of morality. With them material



gain has not necessarily meant moral gain. In South Africa, where I had the privilege of associating with thousands of our countrymen on most intimate terms, I observed almost invariably that the greater the possession of riches, the greater was their moral turpitude. Our rich men, to say the least, did not advance the moral struggle of passive resistance as did the poor. The rich men's sense of self-respect was not so much injured as that of the poorest. If I were not afraid of treading on dangerous ground, I would even come nearer home and show you that possession of riches has been a hindrance to real growth. I venture to think that the scriptures of the world are far safer and sounder treatises on laws of economics than many of the modern text-books. The question we are asking ourselves this evening is not a new one. It was addressed to Jesus two thousand years ago. St. Mark has vividly described the scene. Jesus is in his solemn mood; he is earnest. He talks of eternity. He knows the world about him. He is himself the greatest economist of his time. He succeeded in economizing time and space—he transcended them. It is to him at his best that one comes running, kneels down, and asks: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said unto him: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one that is God. Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother." And he answered and said unto him: "Master, all these have I observed from my youth." Then Jesus beholding him, loved him and said unto him: "One thing thou lackest. Go thy way, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven—come take up the cross and follow me." And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved—for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about and said unto his disciples: "How hardly shall



they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again and saith unto them: "Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!" Here you have an eternal rule of life stated in the noblest words the English language is capable of producing. But the disciples nodded unbelief as we do even to this day. To him they said as we say today: "But look how the law fails in practice. If we sell all and have nothing, we shall have nothing to eat. We must have money or we cannot even be reasonably moral." So they state their case thus. And they were astonished out of measure saying among themselves: "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus looking upon them saith: "With men it is impossible but not with God, for with God all things are possible." Then Peter began to say unto him: "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." And Jesus answered and said: "Verily I say unto you there is no man that has left house or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children or lands for my sake and the Gospels, but he shall receive one hundredfold, now in this time houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the world to come eternal life. But many that are first shall be last and the last first." You have here the result or reward, if you prefer the term, of following the law. I have not taken the trouble of copying similar passages from the other non-Hindu scriptures and I will not insult you by quoting in support of the law stated by Jesus passages from the writings and sayings of our own sages, passages even stronger if possible than the Biblical extracts I have drawn your attention to. Perhaps the strongest of all the testimonies in favour of the affirmative answer to the question before us are the lives of the greatest teachers of the world. Jesus.

Mahomed, Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Shankara, Dayanand, Ramakrishna were men who exercised an immense influence over and moulded the character of thousands of men. The world is the richer for their having lived in it. And they were all men who deliberately embraced poverty as their lot.

I should not have laboured my point as I have done, if I did not believe that, in so far as we have made the modern materialistic craze our goal, in so far as we are going downhill in the path of progress. I hold that economic progress in the sense I have put it is antagonistic to real progress. Hence the ancient ideal has been the limitation of activities promoting wealth. This does not put an end to all material ambition. We should still have, as we have always had, in our midst people who make the pursuit of wealth their aim in life. But we have always recognized that it is a fall from the ideal. It is a beautiful thing to know that the wealthiest among us have often felt that to have remained voluntarily poor would have been a higher state for them. That you cannot serve God and Mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. We have to make our choice. Western nations today are groaning under the heel of the monster god of materialism. Their moral growth has become stunted. They measure their progress in £ s. d. American wealth has become the standard. She is the envy of other nations. I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt, if it were made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be 'wise, temperate and furious' in a moment. I would have our leaders to teach us to be morally supreme in the world. This land of ours, we are told, was once the abode of the gods. It is not possible to conceive gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the



din of mill chimneys and factories and whose roadways are traversed by rushing engines dragging numerous cars crowded with men mostly who know not what they are after, who are often absent-minded, and whose tempers do not improve by being uncomfortably packed like sardines in boxes and finding themselves in the midst of utter strangers who would oust them if they could and whom they would in their turn oust similarly. I refer to these things because they are held to be symbolical of material progress. But they add not an atom to our happiness. This is what Wallace, the great scientist, has said as his deliberate judgement.

"In the earliest records which have come down to us from the past, we find ample indications that general ethical considerations and conceptions, the accepted standard of morality, and the conduct resulting from these were in no degree inferior to those which prevail today."

In a series of chapters, he then proceeds to examine the position of the English nation under the advance in wealth it has made. He says :

"This rapid growth of wealth and increase of our power over nature put too great a strain upon our crude civilization, on our superficial Christianity, and it was accompanied by various forms of social immorality almost as amazing and unprecedented."

He then shows how factories have risen on the corpses of men, women and children, how as the country has rapidly advanced in riches, it has gone down in morality. He shows this by dealing with insanitation, life-destroying trades, adulteration, bribery and gambling. He shows how, with the advance of wealth, justice has become immoral, deaths from

alcoholism and suicide have increased, the average of premature births and congenital defects has increased, and prostitution has become an institution. He concludes his examination by these pregnant remarks :

"The proceedings of the divorce courts show other aspects of the result of wealth and leisure, while a friend who had been a good deal in London society assured me that both in country houses and in London various kinds of orgies were occasionally to be met with which would hardly have been surpassed in the period of the most dissolute emperors. Of war, too, I need say nothing. It has always been more or less chronic since the rise of the Roman Empire ; but there is now undoubtedly a disinclination for war among all civilized peoples. Yet the vast burden of armaments, taken together with the most pious declarations in favour of peace, must be held to show an almost total absence of morality as a guiding principle among the governing classes."

Under British aegis, we have learnt much, but it is my firm belief that there is little to gain from Britain in intrinsic morality, that if we are not careful, we shall introduce all the vices that she has been a prey to owing to the disease of materialism. We can profit by that connection only if we keep our civilization, and our morals, straight, i.e., if instead of boasting of the glorious past, we express the ancient moral glory in our own lives and let our lives bear witness to our past. Then we shall benefit her and ourselves. If we copy her because she provides us with rulers, both they and we shall suffer degradation. We need not be afraid of ideals or of reducing them to practice even to the uttermost. Ours will only then be a truly spiritual nation when we shall show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self. If we



will but clean our houses, our palaces and temples of the attributes of wealth and show in them the attributes of morality, we can offer battle to any combinations of hostile forces without having to carry the burden of a heavy militia. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and the irrevocable promise is that everything will be added with us. These are real economics. May you and I treasure them and enforce them in our daily life.

*The Leader*, 25-12-1916

## A NATIONAL LANGUAGE FOR INDIA

It behoves us to devote attention to a consideration of a national language, as we have done to that of the medium of instruction. If English is to become a national language, it ought to be treated as a compulsory subject. Can English become the national language? Some learned patriots contend that even to raise the question betrays ignorance. In their opinion, English already occupies that place. His Excellency the Viceroy in his recent utterance has merely expressed a hope that English will occupy that place. His enthusiasm does not take him as far as that of the former. His Excellency believes that English will day after day command a larger place, will permeate the family circle, and at last rise to the status of a national language. A superficial consideration will support the Viceregal contention. The condition of our educated classes gives one the impression that all our activities would come to a stand-still if we stop the use of English. And yet deeper thought will show that English can never and ought not to become the national language of India. What is the test of a national language?

(1) For the official class it should be easy to learn.

(2) The religious, commercial and political activity throughout India should be possible in that language.

(3) It should be the speech of the majority of the inhabitants of India.

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Extracts from the presidential address to the second Gujarat Educational Conference, Broach, October 20, 1917



(4) For the whole of the country it should be easy to learn.

(5) In considering the question, weight ought not to be put upon momentary or shortlived conditions.

The English language does not fulfil any of the conditions above named. The first ought to have been the last, but I have purposely given it the first place, because that condition alone gives the appearance of being applicable to the English language. But upon further consideration we should find that for the officials even at the present it is not an easy language to learn. In our scheme of administration, it is assumed that the number of English officials will progressively decrease, so that in the end only the Viceroy and others whom one may count on one's finger-tips will be English. The majority are of Indian nationality today, and their number must increase.

And everyone will admit that for them English is more difficult to learn than any Indian language. Upon an examination of the second condition, we find that until the public at large can speak English, religious activity through that tongue is an impossibility. And a spread of English to that extent among the masses seems also impossible.

English cannot satisfy the third condition, because the majority in India do not speak it.

The fourth, too, cannot be satisfied by English, because it is not an easy language to learn for the whole of India.

Considering the last condition we observe that the position that English occupies today is momentary. The permanent condition is that there will be little necessity for English

in the national affairs. It will certainly be required for imperial affairs. That, therefore, it will be an imperial language, the language of diplomacy, is a different question. For that purpose its knowledge is a necessity. We are not jealous of English. All that is contended for is that it ought not to be allowed to go beyond its proper sphere. And as it will be the imperial language, we shall compel our Malaviyajis, our Shastriars and our Banerjeas to learn it.\* And we shall feel assured that they will advertise the greatness of India in other parts of the world. But English cannot become the national language of India. To give it that place is like an attempt to introduce Esperanto. In my opinion, it is unmanly even to think that English can become our national language. The attempt to introduce Esperanto merely betrays ignorance. Then which is the language that satisfies all the five conditions? We shall be obliged to admit that Hindi satisfies all those conditions.

I call that language Hindi which Hindus and Mahomedans in the North speak and write, either in the Devanagari or the Urdu characters. Exception has been taken to this definition. It seems to be argued that Hindi and Urdu are different languages. This is not a valid argument. In the northern part of India, Mussalmans and Hindus speak the same language. The literate class have created a division. The learned Hindus have Sanskritized Hindi. The Mussalmans, therefore, cannot understand it. The Muslims of Lucknow have Persianized their speech and made it unintelligible to the Hindus. These represent two excesses of the same languages. They find no common place in the speech of the masses. I have lived in the North. I have freely mixed with Hindus and Mahomedans, and although I have but a poor

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Madan Mohan Malaviya, V. S. Srinivasa Shastri and Sir Surendranath Banerjee were pre-eminent in their masterly use of English language.



knowledge of Hindi, I have never found any difficulty in holding communion with them. Call the language of the North what you will, Urdu or Hindi, it is the same. If you write in the Urdu characters, you may know it as Urdu. Write the same thing in the Nagari characters and it is Hindi.

There, therefore, remains a difference about the script. For the time being Mahomedan children will certainly write in the Urdu characters, and Hindus will mostly write in the Devanagari. I say mostly, because thousands of Hindus use the Urdu characters and some do not even know the Nagari characters. But when Hindus and Mahomedans come to regard one another without suspicion, when the causes begetting suspicion are removed, that script which has greater vitality will be more universally used and therefore, become the national script. Meanwhile those Hindus and Mahomedans who desire to write their petitions in the Urdu characters should be free to do so and should have the right of having them accepted at the seat of the National Government.

There is not another language capable of competing with Hindi in satisfying the five conditions. Bengali comes next to Hindi. But the Bengalis themselves make use of Hindi outside Bengal. No one wonders to see a Hindi-speaking man making use of Hindi, no matter where he goes. Hindu preachers and Mahomedan Moulvis deliver their religious discourses in Hindi and Urdu and even the illiterate masses follow them. Even the unlettered Gujarati going to the North attempts to use a few Hindi words, whereas a gatekeeper from the North declines to speak in Gujarati even to his employer, who has on that account to speak to him in broken Hindi. I have heard Hindi spoken even in the Dravid country. It is not true to say that in Madras one can go on with English. Even there I have employed Hindi

with effect. In the trains I have heard Madras passengers undoubtedly use Hindi. It is worthy of note that Mahomedans throughout India speak Urdu and they are to be found in large numbers in every Province. Thus Hindi is destined to be the nationall language. We have made use of it as such in times gone by. The rise of Urdu itself is due to that fact. The Mahomedan kings were unable to make Persian or Arabic the national language. They accepted the Hindi grammar, but employed the Urdu characters and Persian words in their speeches. They could not, however, carry on their intercourse with the masses through a foreign tongue. All this is not unknown to the English. Those who know anything of the sepoys, know that for them military terms have had to be prepared in Hindi or Urdu.

Thus we see that Hindi alone can become the national language. It presents some difficulty in the case of the learned classes in Madras. For men from the Deccan, Gujarat, Sind and Bengal, it is easy enough. In a few months, they can acquire sufficient command over Hindi to enable them to carry on national intercourse in that tongue. It is not so for the Tamils. The Dravidian languages are distinct from their Sanskrit sister in structure and grammar. The only thing common to the two groups is their Sanskrit vocabulary to an extent. But the difficulty is confined to the learned class alone. We have a right to appeal to their patriotic spirit and expect them to put forth sufficient effort in order to learn Hindi. For in future when Hindi has received State recognition, it will be introduced as a compulsory language in Madras as in other Provinces, and intercourse between Madras and them will then increase. English has not permeated the Dravidian masses. Hindi, however, will take no time. The Telugus are making an effort in that direction even now. If this Conference



can come to an unanimous conclusion as to a national language, it will be necessary to devise means to attain that end.

### *Indian Review*

## SWARAJ THROUGH SOUL-FORCE

I am thankful to you all for the exalted position to which you have called me. I am but a baby of two years and a half in Indian politics. I cannot trade, here, on my experience in South Africa. I know that acceptance of the position is to a certain extent an impertinence. And yet I have been unable to resist the pressure your overwhelming affection has exerted upon me.

I am conscious of my responsibility. This Conference is the first of its kind in Gujarat. The time is most critical for the whole of India. The empire is labouring under a strain never before experienced. My views do not quite take the general course. I feel that some of them run in the opposite direction. Under the circumstances, I can hardly claim this privileged position. The president of a meeting is usually its spokesman. I cannot pretend to lay any such claim. It is your kindness that gives me such a unique opportunity of placing my thoughts before the Gujarat public. I do not see anything wrong in these views being subjected to criticism, dissent, and even emphatic protest. I would like them to be freely discussed. I will only say with regard to them that they were not formed today or yesterday. But they were formed years ago. I am enamoured of them, and my Indian experience of two years and a half has not altered them.

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Presidential address to the First Gujarat Political Conference;  
November 3, 1917



I congratulate the originators of the proposal to hold this Conference as also those friends who have reduced it to practice. It is a most important event for Gujarat. It is possible for us to make it yield most important results. This Conference is in the nature of a foundation, and if it is well and truly laid, we need have no anxiety as to the superstructure. Being the first progenitor, its responsibility is great. I pray that God will bless us with wisdom and that our deliberations will benefit the people.

This is a political conference. Let us pause a moment over the word "political". It is, as a rule, used in a restricted sense, but I believe it is better to give it a wider meaning. If the work of such a conference were to be confined to a consideration of the relations between the rulers and the ruled, it would not only be incomplete but we should even fail to have an adequate conception of those relations. For instance, the question of Mhowra flowers is of great importance for a part of Gujarat. If it is considered merely as a question between the Government and the people, it might lead to an untoward end, or even to one never desired by us. If we considered the genesis of the law on Mhowra flowers and also appreciated our duty in the matter, we would very probably succeed sooner in our fight with Government than otherwise, and we would easily discover the key to successful agitation. You will more clearly perceive my interpretation of the word "political" in the light of the views now being laid before you.

Conferences do not, as a rule, after the end of their deliberations, appear to leave behind them an executive body, and even when such a body is appointed, it is, to use the

language of the late Mr. Gokhale, composed of men who are amateurs. What is wanted, in order to give effect to the resolutions of such conferences, is men who would make it their business to do so. If such men come forward in great numbers, then and then only will such conferences be a credit to the country and produce lasting results. At present there is much waste of energy. It is desirable that there were many institutions of the type of the Servants of India Society. Only when men fired with the belief that service is the highest religion come forward in great numbers, only then can we hope to see great results. Fortunately, the religious spirit still binds India, and if during the present age the service of the Motherland becomes the end of religion, men and women of religion in large numbers would take part in our public life. When sages and saints take up this work, India will easily achieve her cherished aims. At all events, it is incumbent on us that for the purpose of this Conference we formed an executive committee whose business it would be to enforce its resolutions.

The sound of swaraj pervades the Indian air. It is due to Mrs. Besant that swaraj is on the lips of hundreds of thousands of men and women. What was unknown to men and women only two years ago, has, by her consummate tact and her indefatigable efforts, become common property for them. There cannot be the slightest doubt that her name will take the first rank in history among those who inspired us with the hope that swaraj was attainable at no distant date. Swaraj was, and is, the goal of the Congress. The idea did not originate with her. But the credit of presenting it to us as an easily attainable goal belongs to that lady alone. For that we could hardly thank her enough. By releasing her and her associates, Messrs Arundale and Wadia, Government have laid us under an obligation, and at the same time



acknowledged the just and reasonable nature of the agitation for swaraj. It is desirable that Government should extend the same generosity towards our brothers, Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali. It is no use discussing the appositeness or otherwise of what Sir William Vincent has said about them. It is to be hoped that the Government will accede to the people's desire for their release and thus make them responsible for any improper result that might flow from their release. Such clemency will make them all the more grateful to the Government. The act of generosity will be incomplete so long as these brothers are not released. The grant of freedom to the brothers will gladden the people's hearts and endear the Government to them.

Mr. Montague will shortly be in our midst. The work of taking signatures to the petition to be submitted to him is going on apace. The chief object of this petition is to educate the people about swaraj. To say that a knowledge of letters is essential to obtain swaraj, betrays ignorance of history. A knowledge of letters is not necessary to inculcate among people the idea that we ought to manage our own affairs. What is essential is the grasp of such an idea. People have to desire swaraj. Hundreds of unlettered kings have ruled kingdoms in an effective manner. To see how far such an idea exists in the minds of the people, and to try to create it where it is absent, is the object of this petition. It is desirable that millions of men and women should sign it intelligently. That such a largely signed petition will have its due weight with Mr. Montague is its natural result.

No one has the right to alter the scheme of reforms approved by the Congress and the Muslim League, and one need not, therefore, go into the merits thereof. For our present purposes, we have to understand thoroughly the

scheme formulated most thoughtfully by our leaders and to do faithfully the things necessary to get it accepted and enforced.

This scheme is not swaraj, but is a great step towards swaraj. Some English critics tell us that we have no right to enjoy swaraj, because the class that demands it is incapable of defending India. "Is the defence of India to rest with the English alone," they ask, "and are the reins of Government to be in the hands of the Indians?" Now this is a question which excites both laughter and sorrow. It is laughable, because our English friends fancy that they are not of us; whilst our plan of swaraj is based upon retention of the British connection. We do not expect the English settlers to leave the country. They will be our partners in swaraj. And they need not grumble if in such a scheme the burden of the defence of the country falls on them. They are however hasty in assuming that we shall not do our share of defending the country. When India decides upon qualifying herself for the act of soldiering, she will attain to it in no time. We have but to harden our feelings to be able to strike. To cultivate a hardened feeling does not take ages. It grows like weeds. The question has also its tragic side, because it puts us in mind of the fact that Government have up to now debarred us from military training. Had they been so minded they would have had at their disposal today, from among the educated classes, an army of trained soldiers. Government have to accept a larger measure of blame than the educated classes for the latter having taken little part in the war. Had the Government policy been shaped differently from the very commencement, they would have today an unconquerable army. But let no one be blamed for the present situation. At the time British rule was established it was considered to be a wise policy for the governance of crores of men to deprive them of



arms and military training. But it is never too late to mend, and both the rulers and the ruled must immediately repair the omission.

In offering these views, I have assumed the propriety of the current trend of thoughts. To me, however, it does not appear to be tending altogether in the right direction. Our agitation is based on the Western model. The swaraj we desire is of a Western type. As a result of it, India will have to enter into competition with the Western nations. Many believe that there is no escape from it. I do not think so. I cannot forget that India is not Europe, India is not Japan, India is not China. The divine word that "India alone is the land of karma" (Action), the rest the land of bhoga (Enjoyment), is indelibly imprinted on my mind. I feel that India's mission is different from that of the others. India is fitted for religious supremacy of the world. There is no parallel in the world for the process of purification that this country has voluntarily undergone. India is less in need of steel weapons; it has fought with divine weapons; it can still do so. Other nations have been votaries of brute force. The terrible war going on in Europe furnishes a forcible illustration of the truth. India can win all by soul-force. History supplies numerous instances to prove that brute force is nothing before soul-force. Poets have sung about it and seers have described their experiences. A thirty-year-old Hercules behaves like a lamb before his eighty-year-old father. This is an instance of love force. Love is atman; it is its attribute. If we have faith enough, we can wield that force over the whole world. Religion having lost its hold on us, we are without an anchor to keep us firm amidst the storm of modern civilization and are therefore being tossed to and fro. Enough, however, of this for the present. I shall return to it at a later stage.

In spite of my views being as I have just described them, I do not hesitate to take part in the swaraj movement, for India is being governed in accordance with the modern system, and even the Government admit that the "Parliament" presents the best type of that system. Without parliamentary government, we should be nowhere. Mrs. Besant is only too true when she says that we shall soon be facing hunger-strike if we do not have Home Rule. I do not want to go into statistics. The evidence of my eyes is enough for me. Poverty in India is deepening day by day. No other result is possible. A country that exports its raw produce and imports it after it has undergone manufacturing processes, a country that in spite of growing its own cotton has to pay crores of rupees for its imported cloth, cannot be otherwise than poor. It can only be said of a poor country that its people are spend-thrifts, because they ungrudgingly spend money in marriage and such other ceremonies. It must be a terribly poor country that cannot afford to spend enough on carrying out improvements for stamping out epidemics like the plague. The poverty of a country must continuously grow when the salaries of its highly paid officials are spent outside it. Surely it must be India's keen poverty that compels its people during cold weather for want of woollen clothing to burn their precious manure in order to warm themselves. Throughout my wanderings in India, I have rarely seen a buoyant face. The middle classes are groaning under the weight of awful distress. For the lowest order there is no hope. They do not know a bright day. It is a pure fiction to say that India's riches are buried under ground, or are to be found in her ornaments. What there is of such riches is of no consequence. The nation's expenditure has increased, not so its income. Government have not deliberately brought about this state of things. I believe that their intentions are pure. It is their honest opinion that the nation's prosperity is daily grow-



ing. Their faith in their blue-books is immovable. It is only too true that statistics can be made to prove anything. The economists deduce India's prosperity from statistics. People like me who appreciate the popular way of examining figures shake their heads over blue-books statistics. If the gods were to come down and testify otherwise, I would insist on saying that I see India growing poorer.

What then would our Parliament do ? When we have it, we would have a right to commit blunders and to correct them. In the early stages we are bound to make blunders. But we being children of the soil won't lose time in setting ourselves right. We shall, therefore, soon find out remedies against poverty. Then our existence won't be dependent on Lancashire goods. Then we shall not be found spending untold riches on Imperial Delhi. It will then bear some correspondence to the peasant cottage. There will be some proportion observed between that cottage and our Parliament House. "The nation today is in a helpless condition, it does not possess even the right to err. He who has no right to err, can never go forward." The history of the Commons is a history of blunders. Man, says an Arabian proverb, is error personified. "Freedom to err and the duty of correcting errors is one definition of swaraj." And such swaraj lies in Parliament. That Parliament we need today. We are fitted for it today. We shall, therefore, get it on demand. It rests with us to define "today". Swaraj is not to be attained through an appeal to the British democracy. The English nation cannot appreciate such an appeal. Its reply will be: "We never sought outside help to obtain swaraj. We have received it through our own ability. You have not received it, because you are unfit. When you are fit for it nobody can withhold it from you." How then shall we fit ourselves for it ? We have to demand swaraj from our own

people. Our appeal must be to it. When the peasantry of India understand what swaraj is, the demand will become irresistible. The late Sir W. W. Hunter used to say that in the British system, victory on the battle-field was the shortest cut to success. If educated India could have taken its full share in the war, I am certain that we would not only have reached our goal already, but the manner of the grant would have been altogether unique. We often refer to the fact that many sepoys of Hindustan have lost their lives on the battle-fields of France and Mesopotamia. It is not possible for the educated classes to claim the credit for this event. It is not patriotism that had prompted those sepoys to go to the battle-field. They know nothing of swaraj. At the end of the war they will not ask for it. They have gone to demonstrate that they are faithful to the salt they eat. In asking for swaraj, I feel that it is not possible for us to bring into account their services. The only thing we can say is, that we may not be considered blameworthy for our inability to take a large, active part in the prosecution of the war.

That we have been loyal at a time of stress is no test of fitness for swaraj. Loyalty is no merit. It is a necessity of citizenship all the world over. That loyalty can be no passport to swaraj is a self-demonstrated maxim. Our fitness lies in that we now keenly desire swaraj, and in the conviction we have reached that bureaucracy, although it has served India with pure intentions, has had its day. And this kind of fitness is sufficient for our purpose. Without swaraj there is now no possibility of peace in India.

But if we confine our activities for advancing swaraj only to holding meetings, the nation is likely to suffer harm. Meetings and speeches have their own place and time. But they cannot make a nation.



In a nation fired with swaraj zeal, we shall observe an awakening in all departments of life. The first step to swaraj lies in the individual. The great truth "As with the individual so with the universe," is applicable here as elsewhere. If we are ever torn by conflict from within, if we are ever going astray, and if instead of ruling our passions we allow them to rule us, swaraj can have no meaning for us. Government of self, then, is primary education in the school of swaraj.

Then the family. If dissensions reign supreme in our families, if brothers fight among themselves, if joint families, i.e., families enjoying self-government, become divided through family quarrels, and if we are unfit even for such restricted swaraj, how can we be considered fit for the larger swaraj?

Now for the caste. If caste-fellows become jealous of one another, if the castes cannot regulate their affairs in an orderly manner, if the elders want to usurp power, if the members become self-opinionated and thus show their unfitness for tribal self-government, how can they be fit for national self-government?

After caste the city. If we cannot regulate the affairs of our cities, if our streets are not kept clean, if our homes are dilapidated and if our roads are crooked, if we cannot command the services of selfless citizens for civic government, and those who are in charge of affairs are neglectful or selfish, how shall we claim larger powers? The way to national life lies through the cities. It is, therefore, necessary to linger a little longer on civic government.

The plague has found a home in India. Cholera has been always with us. Malaria takes an annual toll of thousands. The plague has been driven out from every other part of the

world. Glasgow drove it out as soon as it entered it. In Johannesburg it could appear but once. Its municipality made a great effort and stamped it out within a month, whereas we are able to produce little impression upon it. We cannot blame the Government for this state of things. In reality we cannot make our poverty answerable for it. None can interfere with us in the prosecution of any remedies that we might wish to adopt. Ahmedabad, for instance, cannot evade responsibility by pleading poverty. I fear that in respect of the plague we must shoulder the whole responsibility. It is a matter of wonderment that when the plague is working havoc in our rural quarters, cantonments, as a rule, remain free. Reasons for such immunity are obvious. In the cantonments the atmosphere is pure, houses detached, roads are wide and clean, the sanitary habits of the residents are exceptionally sound, whereas ours are as unhygienic as they well could be. Our closets are pestilentially dirty. Ninety per cent of our population go barefoot, people spit anywhere, perform natural functions anywhere and are obliged to walk along roads and paths thus dirtied. It is no wonder that the plague has found a home in our midst.

Unless we alter the conditions of our cities, rid ourselves of dirty habits and reform our castes, swaraj for us can have no value.

It will not be considered out of place here to refer to the condition of the so-called untouchables. The result of considering the most useful members of society as unworthy of being even touched by us has been that we let them clean only a part of our closets. In the name of religion we ourselves would not clean the remainder for fear of pollution and so, in spite of personal cleanliness, a portion of our houses remains the dirtiest in the world, with the result that we are brought up in an atmosphere which is laden with disease germs.



We were safe so long as we kept to our villages. But in the cities we ever commit suicide by reason of our insanitary habits.

Where many die before their death, there is every probability that people are devoid of both religion and its practice. I believe that it ought not to be beyond us to banish the plague from India, and if we could do so, we shall have increased our fitness for swaraj, as it could not be by agitation, no matter how ever great. This is a question meriting the serious consideration of our doctors and vaidyas.

Our sacred Dakorji is our next-door neighbour. I have visited that holy place. Its unholiness is limitless. I consider myself a devout Vaishnavite. I claim, therefore, a special privilege of criticizing the conditions of Dakorji. The insanitation of that place is so great that one used to hygienic conditions can hardly bear to pass even twenty-four hours there. The pilgrims are permitted to pollute the tank and the streets as they choose. The keepers of the idol quarrel among themselves and, to add insult to injury, a receiver has been appointed to take charge of the jewellery and costly robes of the idol. It is our clear duty to set this wrong right. How shall we, Gujaratis, bent on attaining swaraj, discharge ourselves in its army if we cannot sweep our houses clean ?

The inconsideration of the state of education in our cities also fills us with despondency. It is up to us to provide, by private effort, for the education of the masses. But our gaze is fixed upon Government whilst our children are starving for want of education.

In the cities the drink-evil is on the increase, tea-shops are multiplying, gambling is rampant. If we cannot remedy

these evils, how should we attain swaraj whose meaning is government of ourselves ?

We have reached a time when we and our children are likely to be deprived of our milk supply. Dairies in Gujarat are doing us infinite harm. They buy out practically the whole milk supply and sell its products, butter, cheese, etc., in a wider market. How can a nation whose nourishment is chiefly derived from milk allow this important article of food to be thus exploited ? How can men be heedless of the national health and think of enriching themselves by such an improper use of this article of diet ? Milk and its products are of such paramount value to the nation that they deserve to be controlled by the municipalities. What are we doing about them ?

I have just returned from the scene of Bakr-Id riots. For an insignificant cause, the two communities quarrelled, mischievous men took advantage of it, and a mere spark became a blaze. We were found to be helpless. We have been obliged to depend only upon Government assistance. This is a significant illustration of the condition I am trying to describe.

It will not be inopportune to dwell for a moment on the question of cow protection. It is an important question. And yet it is entrusted to the so-called cow protection societies. The protection of cows is an old custom. It has originated in the necessity of the country. Protection of its cows is incumbent upon a country, 73 per cent of whose population lives upon agriculture and uses only bullocks for it. In such a country even meat-eaters should abstain from beef-eating. These natural causes should be enough justification for not killing cows. But here we have to face a peculiar situation.



The chief meaning of cow protection seems to be to prevent cows from going into the hands of our Mussalman brethren and being used as food. The governing class seem to need beef. On their behalf thousands of cows are slaughtered daily. We take no steps to prevent the slaughter. We hardly make any attempt to prevent the cruel torture of cows by certain Hindu dairies of Calcutta, which subject them to certain indescribable practices and make them yield the last drop of milk. In Gujarat, Hindu drivers use spiked sticks to goad bullocks into action. We say nothing about it. The bullocks of our cities are to be seen in a pitiable condition. Indeed, protection of the cow and her progeny is a very great problem. With us it has degenerated into a pretext for quarrelling with the Mahomedans, and we have thus contributed to a further slaughter of cows. It is not religion, but want of it, to kill a Mahomedan brother who declines to part with his cow. I feel sure that if we were to negotiate with our Mussalman brothers upon a basis of love, they will appreciate the peculiar condition of India and readily co-operate with us in the protection of cows. By courtesy and even by satyagraha we can engage them in that mission. But in order to be able to do this, we shall have to understand the question in its true bearing. We shall have to prepare rather to die than to kill. But we shall be able to do this only when we understand the real value of the cow and have pure love for her. Many ends will be automatically served in achieving this one end. Hindus and Mahomedans will live in peace, milk and its products will be available in a pure condition and will be cheaper than now, and our bullocks will become the envy of the world. By real tapasya, it is possible for us to stop cow slaughter, whether by the English, Mahomedans or Hindus. This one act will bring swaraj many a step nearer.

Many of the foregoing problems belong to municipal

government. We can, therefore, clearly see that national government is dependent upon purity of the government of our cities.

It will not be considered an improper statement to say that the swadeshi movement is in an inane condition. We do not realize that swaraj is almost wholly obtainable through swadeshi. If we have no regard for our respective vernaculars, if we dislike our clothes, if our dress repels us, if we are ashamed to wear the sacred Shikha, if our food is distasteful to us, our climate is not good enough, our people uncouth and unfit for our company, our civilization faulty and the foreign attractive, in short, if everything native is bad and everything foreign pleasing to us, I should not know what swaraj can mean for us. If everything foreign is to be adopted, surely it will be necessary for us to continue long under foreign tutelage, because foreign civilization has not permeated the masses. It seems to me that, before we can appreciate swaraj, we should have not only love but passion for swadeshi. Everyone of our acts should bear the swadeshi stamp. Swaraj can only be built upon the assumption that most of what is national is on the whole sound. If the view here put forth be correct, the swadeshi movement ought to be carried on vigorously. Every country that has carried on the swaraj movement has fully appreciated the swadeshi spirit. The Scotch Highlanders hold on to their kilts even at the risk of their lives. We humorously call the Highlanders the "petticoat brigade". But the whole world testifies to the strength that lies behind that petticoat and the Highlanders of Scotland will not abandon it even though it is an inconvenient dress and an easy target for the enemy. The object in developing the foregoing argument is not that we should treasure our faults but that what is national, even though comparatively less agreeable, should be adhered to, and that what is foreign



should be avoided, though it may be more agreeable than our own. That which is wanting in our civilization can be supplied by proper effort on our part. I do hope that the swadeshi spirit will possess every member in this assembly, and that we would carry out the swadeshi vow in spite of great difficulties and inconvenience. Then swaraj will be easy of attainment.

The foregoing illustrations go to show that our movement should be twofold. We may petition the government, we may agitate in the Imperial Council for our rights, but for a real awakening of the people, internal activity is more important. There is likelihood of hypocrisy and selfishness tainting external activity. There is less danger of such a catastrophe in the internal activity. Without being balanced by the internal, the external activity not only lacks grace, but it is likely to be barren of results. It is not my contention that we have no internal activity at all, but I submit we do not lay enough stress upon it.

One sometimes hears it said : "Let us get the Government of India in our own hands and everything will be all right." There could be no greater superstition than this. No nation has thus gained its independence. The splendour of the spring is reflected in every tree, the whole earth is then filled with the freshness of youth. Similarly when the swaraj spirit has really permeated society, a stranger suddenly come upon us will observe energy in every walk of life, he will find national servants engaged, each according to his own abilities, in a variety of public activities.

If we admit that our progress has not been what it might have been, we shall have to admit two reasons for it: We have kept our women strangers to these activities of ours and

have thus brought about paralysis of half the national limb. The nation walks with one leg only. All its work appears to be only half or incompletely done. Moreover, the learned section, having received its education through a foreign tongue, has become enervated and it is unable to give the nation the benefit of such ability as it possesses. I need not reiterate my views on this subject as I have elaborated them in my address delivered before the Gujarat Educational Conference. It is a wise decision, that of conducting the proceedings of this Conference in Gujarati, and I hope that all Gujaratis will adhere to the determination and resist every temptation to alter it.

The educated class, lovers of swaraj, must freely mix with the masses. We dare not reject a single member of the community. We shall make progress only if we carry all with us. Had the educated class identified itself with the masses, Bakr-Id riots would have been an impossibility.

I now reach the concluding topic. There are two methods of attaining the desired end: Truthfulness and Truthlessness. In our scriptures they have been described respectively as divine and devilish. In the path of satyagraha there is always unflinching adherence to Truth. It is never to be forsaken on any account, not even for the sake of one's country. The final triumph of Truth is always assumed for the divine method. Its votary does not abandon it, even though at times the path seems impenetrable and beset with difficulties and dangers, and a departure however slight from that straight path may appear full of promise. His faith even then shines resplendent like the midday sun and he does not despond. With truth for sword, he needs neither steel nor gunpowder. He conquers the enemy by the force of the soul, which is love. Its test is not to be found among friends. There is neither newness,



nor merit nor yet effort in a friend loving a friend. It is tested truly when it is bestowed on the so-called enemy : it then becomes a virtue, there is effort in it, it is an act of manliness and real bravery. We can adopt this method towards the Government and in doing so, we should be in a position to appreciate their beneficial activities and with greater ease correct their errors, because we should draw attention to them not in anger but in love. Love does not act through fear. There can, therefore, be no weakness in its expression. A coward is incapable of exhibiting love, it is the prerogative of the brave. Following this method we shall not look upon all Governmental activity with suspicion, we shall not ascribe bad motives to them. And our examination of their actions, being directed by love, will be unerring and bound, therefore, to carry conviction with them.

Love has its struggles. In the intoxication of power, man often fails to detect his mistake. When that happens, a passive resister does not sit still. He suffers. He disobeys the ruler's laws and orders in a civil manner and willingly incurs hardships caused by such disobedience, e.g., imprisonment and gallows. Thus is the soul disciplined. Here there is no waste of energy, and any untoward results of such respectful disobedience are suffered merely by him and his companions. A passive resister is not at sixes and sevens with those in power but the latter willingly yield to him. "They know that they cannot effectively exercise force against the passive resister. Without his concurrence they cannot make him do their will. And this is the full fruition of swaraj, because in it is complete independence." It need not be taken for granted that such decorous resistance is possible only in respect of civilized rulers. Even a heart of flint will melt in front of a fire kindled by the power of the soul. Even a Nero becomes a lamb when he faces love. This is no ex-

aggregation. It is as true as an algebraical equation. This satyagraha is India's special weapon. It has had others but satyagraha has commanded greater attention. It is omnipresent and is capable of being used at all times and under all circumstances. It does not require a Congress license. He who knows its power cannot help using it. Even as the eyelashes automatically protect the eyes, so does satyagraha, when kindled, automatically protect the freedom of the soul.

But truthlessness has opposite attributes. The terrible war going on in Europe is a case in point. Why should a nation's cause be considered right and another's wrong because it overpowers the latter by sheer brute force? The strong are often seen preying upon the weak. The wrongness of the latter's cause is not to be inferred from their defeat in a trial of brute strength, nor is the rightness of the strong to be inferred from their success in such a trial. The wielder of brute force does not scruple about the means to be used. He does not question the propriety of means if he can somehow achieve his purpose. This is not dharma, it is adharma. In dharma there cannot be a particle of untruth, cruelty or the taking of life. The measure of dharma is the measure of love, kindness, truth. Heaven itself is no acceptable exchange for them. Swaraj itself is useless at the sacrifice of Truth. Sacrifice of Truth is the foundation of a nation's destruction. The believer in brute force becomes impatient and desires the death of the so-called enemy. There can be but one result of such an activity. Hatred increases. The defeated party vows vengeance and simply bides his time. Thus does the spirit of revenge descend from father to son. It is much to be wished that India may not give predominance to the worship of brute force. If the members of this Assembly will deliberately accept satyagraha in laying down its own programme, they will reach their goal all the easier for it. They may have to face disap-



pointment in the initial stages. They may not see results for a time. But satyagraha will triumph in the end. The brute-force man, like the oilman's ox, moves in a circle. It is a motion, but it is not progress, whereas the votary of Truth force ever moves forward.

A superficial critic reading the foregoing is likely to conclude that the views herein expressed are mutually destructive. On the one hand I appeal to the Government to give military training to the people, on the other I put satyagraha on the pedestal. Surely there can be no room for the use of arms in satyagraha, nor is there any. But military training is intended for those who do not believe in satyagraha. That the whole of India will ever accept satyagraha is beyond my imagination. Not to defend the weak is an entirely effeminate idea, everywhere to be rejected. In order to protect our innocent sister from the brutal designs of a man, we ought to offer ourselves a willing sacrifice and by the force of love conquer the brute in the man. But if we have not attained that power we would certainly use up all our bodily strength in order to frustrate those designs. The votaries of soul-force and brute force are both soldiers. The latter, bereft of his arms, acknowledges defeat, the former does not know what defeat is. He does not depend upon the perishable body and its weapons, but he derives his strength from the unconquerable and immortal soul. The thing outside the two is not a man, for he does not recognize the Dweller within him. If he did, he would not take fright and run away from danger. Like a miser trying to save his flesh, he loses all, he does not know how to die. But the armoured soldier always has death by him as a companion. There is hope of his becoming a passive resister, and one has a right to hope that India, the holy land of the gods, will ever give the predominant place to the divine force rather than to the brute force. Might is right as a formula which,

let us hope, will never find acceptance in India. Her formula is Truth alone conquers.

Upon reflection we find that we can employ satyagraha even for a social reform. We can rid ourselves of many defects in our social institutions. We can settle the Hindu-Mohammedan problem, and we can deal with political questions. It is well that for the sake of facilitating progress we divide our activities according to the subjects handled. But it should never be forgotten that all are inter-related. It is not true to say that neither religion nor social reform has anything to do with politics. The result obtained by bringing religion into play in the consideration of political subjects will be different from that obtained without it. The Hindus can ill afford to neglect 56 lakhs of ignorant sadhus in considering political matters. Our Mussalman brethren cannot lose sight of their fakeers. In advancing political progress the condition of our widows and child marriages must have their proper place, and the purdah must tax Mussalman wit. Nor can we, Hindus and Mohammedans, in considering politics shut our eyes to scores of questions that arise between us.

Indeed, our difficulties are like the Himalayas. But we have equally powerful means at our disposal for removing them. We are children of an ancient nation. We have witnessed the burial of civilizations, those of Rome, Greece and Egypt. Our civilization abides even as the ocean in spite of its ebbs and flows. We have all we need to keep ourselves independent. We have the mountains that kiss the sky, we have the mighty rivers. We have the matchless beauties of Nature and we have handed down to us a heritage of deeds of valour. This country is the treasure-house of tapasya. In this country alone do people belonging to different religions



live together in amity. In this country alone do all the gods receive their due measure of worship. We shall disgrace our heritage, and our connection with the British nation will be vain if, in spite of such splendid equipment by some unique effort, we do not conquer our conquerors. The English nation is full of adventure, the religious spirit guides it, it has unquenchable faith in itself, it is a nation of great soldiers it treasures its independence, but it has given the place of honour to its commercial instinct, it has not always narrowly examined the means adopted for seeking wealth. It worships modern civilization. The ancient ideals have lost their hold upon it. If, therefore, instead of imitating that nation, we do not forget our past, we have real regard for our civilization, we have firm faith in its supremacy, we shall be able to make a proper use of our connection with the British nation and make it beneficial to ourselves, to them and to the whole world. I pray to the Almighty that this Assembly, taking its full share of this great work, may shed lustre upon itself, upon Gujarat, and upon the whole of Bharatavarsha.

*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*

## AIM OF EDUCATION

You have as it were chained me to you by inviting me to preside over this session of the Students' Conference. For twenty-five years, I have been in close contact with students. It was in South Africa that I first came to know some. While in England, I always maintained contact with other students. After returning to India, I have been meeting students all over the country. They show me unbounded love. By inviting me to preside over this meeting today and permitting me to speak in Hindi and conduct the proceedings, too, in Hindi, you, students, have given me evidence of your love. I shall think myself fortunate indeed if I can prove myself worthy of this love and be of some service to you. You have shown great wisdom in deciding to carry on the proceedings of this Conference in the regional language of the province which also happens to be our national language. I congratulate you, and hope that you will continue this practice.

We have been guilty of disrespect to our mother tongue. I am sure we shall have to pay heavily for this act of sin. It has raised a wall of separation between us and our families. All those who are present at this Conference will bear witness to this fact. We do not and cannot explain to our mothers anything of what we learn. We do not and cannot give the benefit of our knowledge to others in our families. One will never find this sad state of affairs in an English family. In



England and in other countries where education is imparted through the mother tongue, students, when they return home, discuss with their parents what they learn at school; the servants in the home, and others too, become familiar with it. Thus, the other members of the family also benefit from what the children learn at school. We, on the other hand, leave behind in the school what we learn there. Knowledge, like air, can circulate in no time. But, as a miser keeps his wealth buried in the ground, so we keep our learning to ourselves, and others do not share in its benefits. Disrespect to the mother tongue is as reprehensible as disrespect to one's mother. No one who is guilty of it deserves to be called a patriot. We hear many people saying that our languages are not rich enough in words to express our highest thinking. Gentlemen, this is no fault of the language. It is for us to develop and enrich our language. There was a time when English was in the same condition as our languages. It progressed because the British made progress and strove to develop their language. If we fail to develop our languages, holding that English alone can help us to cultivate and express higher thoughts, there is not the least doubt that we shall continue to be slaves for ever. So long as our languages do not acquire the power to express all our thinking and remain incapable of serving as the medium of communication for the various sciences, the nation will not get modern knowledge. It is self-evident :

1. that the entire body of our people need this knowledge;
2. that it will never be possible for all our people to understand English;
3. that, if only an English-educated individual can acquire

new knowledge, it is impossible for all the people to have it.

This means that, if the first two propositions are correct, there is no hope for the masses. For this position, however, the blame does not lie with the languages. Tulsidas was able to express his divine ideas just in Hindi. There are not many books in the world to equal his *Ramayana*. A great patriot like Bharat Bhushan Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, who, though a householder, has sacrificed his all for the country, has no difficulty in expressing himself in Hindi. He commands silvery English, but his speeches in Hindi have the brilliance of gold, like the current of the Ganga blazing like gold in sunshine as it pours down from lake Manasa. I have heard some Maulavis delivering their sermons. They find it easy enough to express their most profound ideas in their mother tongue. The language of Tulsidas is perfect, immortal. If we cannot express our thoughts in the speech which was his, surely the fault is ours.

The reason why we cannot do so is clear; the medium of education is English. All of us can help in getting this serious anomaly removed. I feel students can petition the Government, respectfully, on this matter. There is another remedy which they can simultaneously adopt, and that is, to translate what they learn at school into Hindi, share their knowledge with others in their homes, and pledge themselves to use only their mother tongue in their intercourse with one another. I cannot bear to see one Bihari corresponding with another Bihari in English. I have heard thousands of Englishmen talking to one another. Some of them know other languages, but I have never heard two Englishmen talking in any foreign language among themselves. The



inordinate folly that we are guilty of in India has no parallel in the history of the world.

A Vedantist poet has said that learning without thinking is useless. But owing to the reasons mentioned above, students' lives seem to be almost bankrupt of thought. They have lost all spirit and energy, are devoid of originality and most of them appear listless and apathetic.

I do not dislike English ; its riches are infinite. It is the language of administration and is rich with the wealth of knowledge. All this notwithstanding, I hold that it is not necessary for every Indian to learn it. But of this, I do not wish to speak more here. Students have been learning English and they have no option but to do so till some other system is devised and the present schools undergo a revolution. I shall, therefore, end this all-important subject of the mother tongue here, by merely saying in conclusion that in their dealings with one another, and whenever possible, people should use only their mother tongue and that others, besides students, who are present here should strive their utmost to make the mother tongue the medium of education.

As I have earlier pointed out, most of the students look listless and devoid of energy. Many of them have asked me what they should do, how they could serve the country and what they had best do to earn their living. I have the impression that they are most anxious about this last. Before answering these questions, it is necessary to consider what the true aim of education is. Huxley has said that education should aim at building character. Our seers aver that, if a man, though wellversed in the Vedas and the shastras, fails to realize the Self and to make himself worthy of liberation from all bonds, all his learning will have been in vain. They have also said :

"He who has known the Self knows all." Self-realization is possible even without knowledge of letters. Prophet Mahomed was illiterate. Jesus Christ never went to school. But it would be foolhardy to assert, therefore, that these great souls had not attained self-realization. Though they never went to our schools and colleges to take any examination, we revere them. They had all that learning and knowledge could bring. They were mahatmas. If, following their example in blind imitation of one another, we leave off attending school, we should get nowhere, to be sure. But we, too, can attain knowledge of the Self only by cultivating good character. What is character, however? What are the hallmarks of a virtuous life? A virtuous man is one who strives to practise truth, non-violence, brahmacharya, non-possession, non-stealing, fearlessness and such other rules of conduct. He will give up his life rather than truth. He will choose to die rather than kill. He will rather suffer himself than make others suffer. He will be as a friend even to his wife and entertain no carnal thoughts towards her. Thus the man of virtue practises brahmacharya and tries to conserve, as well as he can, the ultimate sources of energy in the body. He does not steal, nor take bribes. He does not waste his time nor that of others. He does not accumulate wealth needlessly. He does not seek ease and comfort and does not use things he does not really need but is quite content to live a simple life. First in the belief that "I am the immortal spirit and not this perishable body and that none in this world can ever kill the spirit," he casts out all fear of suffering of mind and body and of worldly misfortunes and, refusing to be held down even by an emperor, goes on doing his duty fearlessly.

If our schools never succeed in producing this result, the students, the system of education and the teachers—all three must share the blame. It is, however, in the students'



own hands to make good the want of character. If they are not anxious to develop character, neither teacher nor books will avail them. Thus, as I have said earlier, we must first understand the aim of education. A student who desires to cultivate and build character will learn how to do so from any good book on the subject. As Tulsidas has said:

"The Lord of Creation has made all things in this world, animate and inanimate, an admixture of good and evil. But a good man selects the good and rejects the evil even as the fabled swan is said to help himself to milk leaving out water." Being devoted to Rama, Tulsidas beheld him even in the image of Krishna. Some of our students attend Bible classes as required by rules but they remain innocent of the teaching of the Bible. One who reads the *Gita* with the intention of discovering errors in it may well succeed in doing so. But to him who desires liberation, the *Gita* shows the surest way thereto. Some people see nothing but imperfection in the Koran-e-Sharif, others, by meditating over it, fit themselves to cross the ocean of this earthly life. But I am afraid that most of the students never think as to the real aim of education. They attend school merely because that is the normal thing to do. Some do so in order to be able to obtain employment later on. In my humble opinion, to think of education as a means of earning a living betrays an unworthy disposition of mind. The body is the means of earning a living, while the school is a place for building character. To regard the latter as the means of fulfilling one's bodily needs is like killing a buffalo for a small piece of hide. The body should be maintained through bodily work. How can the atman, the spirit, be employed for this purpose? "Thou shalt earn thy bread by the sweat of thy brow"—this is a mahavakya of Jesus Christ. The *Gita* also seems to say the same. About 99 per cent of the people in

this world follow this law and live without fear. "He who has given the teeth will also give the feed" is indeed a true saying. But it is not for the lazy and indolent. Students had better know from the very start that they will have to earn their living through bodily labour and not be ashamed of manual work to that end. I do not mean that all of us should always be plying the hoe. But it is necessary to understand that there is nothing wrong in plying the hoe to earn one's living even though one may be engaged in some other avocation, and that labourers are in no way inferior to us. He who has accepted this as a principle and an ideal, will reveal himself as a man of pure and exceptional character in the way he does his work, no matter what profession he follows. Such a man will not be the slave of wealth: rather, wealth will be his slave. If I am right in this, students will have to acquire the habit of doing physical labour. I have said this for the benefit of those who look upon education as the means of earning their living.

Students who attend school without taking thought as to the true aim of education should first make sure what it should be. Such a student may resolve this very day that, henceforth he will regard school as a place for building character. I am sure that he will effect a change for the better in his character in the course of a month and that his companions will also bear witness to his having done so. The shastras assert that we become what we think.

Many students feel that it is not necessary to make any special effort for health. However, regular exercise is absolutely necessary for the body. What can be expected of a student who is not well-equipped in health? Just as milk cannot be held in a paper container, so also education is not likely to remain for long in the paper-like bodies of our



students. The body is the abode of the spirit and, therefore, holy like a place of pilgrimage. We must see that it is well protected. Walking regularly and energetically for an hour and a half in the morning and for the same period in the evening in open air keeps it healthy and the mind fresh. The time thus spent is not wasted. Such exercise, coupled with rest, will invigorate both the body and the intellect, enabling one to learn things more quickly. I think games like cricket have no place in a poor country like India. We have a number of inexpensive games of our own which afford innocent joy.

The daily life of the student should be above reproach. He alone can experience true delight whose mind is pure. Indeed, to ask such a man to seek delight in worldly pleasures is to deprive him of the real delight which is his. He who has resolved to rise does indeed rise. Ramchandra, in his innocence, wished for the moon and he got it.

From one point of view, the world seems to be an illusion; from another, it seems real enough. For students, the world does indeed exist, for it is they who have to strive for great achievement in it. He who declares the world to be illusory without knowing what that really means, indulges in pleasures as the fancy takes him and then claims to have renounced the world is welcome to call himself a sannyasi but in reality he is a deluded man.

This brings me to the subject of dharma. Where there is no dharma, there can be neither knowledge nor wealth, nor health, nor anything else. Where there is no dharma, life is devoid of all joy, is mere emptiness. We have had to go without instruction in dharma; we are in much the same position as the bridegroom's party at a wedding without the

bridegroom. Students cannot have innocent joy without a knowledge of dharma. That they may have such joy, it is necessary for them to study the shastras, to reflect over their teaching and bring their conduct in conformity with their ideals. Smoking a cigarette the first thing in the morning or idle gossip does good to nobody. Nazir has said that, even the sparrows as they twitter sing the name of the Lord, morning and evening, when we are still lying in our beds full-length. It is the duty of every student to acquire the knowledge of dharma in any manner he can. Whether or not dharma is taught in schools, it is my prayer to students who have assembled here that they introduce its essential principles in their life. What exactly is dharma? In what manner can instruction in religion be imparted? This is not the place for a discussion of this subject. But I shall give you this practical advice, based on my own experience, that you should take to the *Ramacharitmanasa* (of Tulsidas) and the *Bhagavad Gita* in love and reverence. You have a real jewel in the latter; seize it. But see that you study these two books in order to learn the secret of dharma. The seers who wrote these works did not set out to write history but only to teach dharma and morals. Millions of people read these books and lead pure lives. They read them with a guileless heart and live in this world full of innocent joy. It never occurs to them even in a dream to ask whether or not Ravana was a historical figure or whether they might not kill their enemies as Rama killed Ravana. Even when face to face with enemies, they pray for Ramchandra's protection and remain unafraid. Tulsidas, the author of the *Ramayana*, had nothing but compassion by way of a weapon. He desired to kill none. He who creates, destroys. Rama was God; He had created Ravana and so had the right to kill him. When any of us becomes God, he may consider whether he is fit to have the power to destroy. I have ventured to say this by way of introduction to these great



books. I was, myself, a sceptic once and lived in fear of being destroyed. I have grown out of that stage and become a believer. I have thought it fit here to describe the influence which these books have had on me. For Muslim students, the Koran is the best book in this respect. I would counsel them as well that they study this book in a spirit of devotion. They should understand its true message. I feel, too, that both Hindus and Muslims should study each other's religious scriptures with due respect and try to understand them.

From this most absorbing subject, I shall pass on to a topic of more worldly interest. It is often asked whether it is proper for students to take part in politics. I will let you know my opinion about it without going into the reasons. Politics has two aspects, theoretical study and practical activity. It is essential that students be introduced to the former, but it is harmful for them to concern themselves with the latter. They may attend political meetings or the sessions of the Congress in order to learn the science of politics. Such gatherings are useful as object-lessons. Students should have complete freedom to attend them and every effort should be made to get the recent ban on them removed. Students may not speak or vote at such meetings but may serve as volunteers if that does not interfere with their studies. No student can afford to miss an opportunity of serving Malaviyaji if one comes his way. Students should keep away from party politics. They should remain detached and cultivate respect for the leaders of the nation. It is not for them to judge the latter. Students easily respond to excellences of character, they adore them. They say it is the duty of students to look upon elders with reverence and respect their words. This is well said. He who has not learnt to respect others cannot hope for respect for himself. An attitude of insolence ill becomes students. In this respect, an unusual situation has

come about in India. Older folk are careless how they behave, or fail to maintain their dignity. What are the students to do in these circumstances? As I imagine, a student should have regard for dharma. Such a student, when faced with a moral dilemma, should recall the instance of Prahlad. Placed in circumstances in which this boy respectfully disobeyed the commands of his father, we can act in like manner towards elders resembling the latter. But any disrespect shown to them beyond this will be wrong. It will ruin the community. An elder is so not merely by virtue of his age, but by virtue of the knowledge, experience and wisdom which age brings. Where these are absent, the elder's position depends simply on his age. Nobody, however, worships age as such.

Another question is: How can students serve the country? The simple answer is that a student should study well, safeguarding his health meanwhile and cherishing the aim of using the fruits of his study in the service of the country. I am quite sure he will thereby serve his country. By living a purposeful life and taking care to be unmindful of our own interests and to work for others, we can achieve much with little effort. I want to tell you of one task of this kind. You must have seen my letter in the newspapers about the difficulties of third-class passengers. I suppose most of you travel third. These passengers spit in the compartment; they also spit out the remains of betel leaves and tobacco which they chew right in the carriage, and likewise throw the skins of bananas, etc., and other leavings on the floor of the carriage; they are careless in the use of the latrine and foul it. They smoke bidis and cigarettes without any regard for the convenience of fellow-passengers. We can explain to the other passengers in our compartment the harm that results from their dirtying the place. Most passengers respect students and listen to them. They should not then miss these excellent



opportunities of explaining the rules of hygiene to the masses. The eatables sold at stations are dirty. It is the duty of students, when they find the things dirty, to draw the attention of the traffic manager to the fact, whether he replies or no. And take care that you write to him in Hindi. When he receives many such letters, he will be forced to heed them. This is easy work to do but it will yield important results.

I have spoken about the habits of chewing betel leaves and tobacco. In my humble opinion, these habits are both harmful and unclean. Most of us, men and women, have become their slaves. We must be free of this slavery. A stranger visiting India will surely think that we are always eating something or the other. That the betel leaf, possibly, helps to digest food may be conceded, but food eaten in the proper quantity and manner is digested without any help from things like the betel leaf. Moreover, it does not have even an agreeable taste. And tobacco chewing must be given up as well. Students should always practise self-control. It is also necessary to consider the habit of smoking. Our rulers have set a bad example in this respect. They smoke cigarettes anywhere. This has led us to consider smoking a fashion, and to turn our mouths into chimneys. Many books have been written to show that smoking is harmful. We call this age *kaliyuga*. Christians believe that Jesus Christ will come again when selfishness, immorality, addiction to drugs and drink, etc., become rife. I shall not consider to what extent we may accept this as true. But I do feel that the world has been suffering a great deal from evils such as drinking, smoking, addiction to opium, ganja, hemp and so on. All of us are caught in this snare and so we cannot truly measure the magnitude of its unhappy consequences. It is my prayer that you, the students, keep away from them.

This Conference has entered its seventeenth year. The speeches of the Presidents in previous years were sent to me. I have gone through them. What is the object behind arranging these speeches? If it is that you may learn something from them, ask yourselves what you have learnt. If it is just to hear a beautiful flow of English words and enhance the prestige of the Conference, I feel sorry for you. I take it that these speeches are arranged with the idea that you may learn something from them and put it into practice. How many of you followed Smt. Besant's advice and adopted the Indian mode of dress, simplified your food habits and gave up unclean talk or acted on Prof. Jadunath Sarkar's advice and spent your vacations in teaching the poor, free of charge? I can put many questions. I do not ask for a reply. You may answer these questions to your own conscience. The worth of your learning will be judged by your actions. Stuffing your brains with the contents of hundreds of books may bring its reward but action is of much greater value by far. One's stock of learning is of no more value than the action it leads to. The rest is an unnecessary burden. I would, therefore, always request you and urge you to practise what you learn and what appears to you to be right. That is the only way to progress.



## REGENERATION OF WOMEN

It is necessary to understand what we mean when we talk of the regeneration of women. It presupposes degeneration and, if that is so, we should further consider what led to it and how. It is our primary duty to have some very hard thinking on these points. In travelling all over India, I have come to realize that all the existing agitation is confined to an infinitesimal section of our people who are really a mere speck in the vast firmament. Crores of people of both the sexes live in absolute ignorance of this agitation. Full eighty-five per cent of the people of this country pass their innocent days in a state of total detachment from what is going on around them. These men and women, ignorant as they are, do their bit in life well and properly. Both have the same education or, rather, the absence of education, both are helping each other as they ought to do. If their lives are in any sense incomplete, the cause can be traced to the incompleteness of the lives of the remaining fifteen per cent.

In the observations that I am going to make, I will confine myself to the 15 per cent above mentioned and, even then, it would be out of place to discuss the disabilities that are common both to men and to women. The point for us to consider is the degeneration of our women relatively to our men. Legislation has been mostly the handiwork

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Speech at Bhagini Samaj, a women's welfare organization, Bombay, February 20, 1918

of men; and man has not always been fair and discriminate in performing that self-appointed task.

What the authors of the various *smritis* have said about women can in no wise be defended. Child-marriage, the restrictions on widows and such other evils owe their origin to the injunctions in the *smritis*. Women's being placed on a level with *Sudras* has done unimaginable harm to Hindu society. These statements of mine may have verbal similarity with the occasional attacks of Christians, but, apart from this similarity, there is no other common ground between us. The Christians, in their attacks, seek to strike at the roots of Hinduism. I look upon myself as an orthodox Hindu and my attack proceeds from the desire to rid Hinduism of its defects and restore it to its pristine glory. The Christian critic, by demonstrating the imperfection of the *smritis*, tries to show that they are just ordinary books. My attempt is to show that the imperfection of the *smritis* comes from interpolated passages, that is to say, verses inserted by persons accepted as *smritikaras* in the period of our degeneration. It is easy to demonstrate the grandeur of the *smritis* minus these verses. I do not have the slightest desire to put up a weak defence of Hinduism, believing out of false pride or in ignorance, and wanting others to believe, that there is no error in the *smritis* or in the other accepted books of the Hindu religion. I am convinced that such an effort will not raise the Hindu religion but will degrade it rather. A religion which gives the foremost place to truth can afford no admixture of untruth.

The largest part of our effort in promoting the regeneration of women should be directed towards removing those blemishes which are represented in our *shastras* as the necessary and ingrained characteristics of women. Who will



attempt this and how? In my humble opinion in order to make the attempt we will have to produce women, pure, firm and self-controlled as Sita, Damayanti and Draupadi. If we do produce them, such modern sisters will receive the same homage from Hindu society as is being paid to their prototypes of yore. Their words will have the same authority as the shastras. We will feel ashamed of the stray reflections on them in our smritis and will soon forget them. Such revolutions have occurred in Hinduism in the past and will still take place in the future, leading to the stability of our faith.

We have now discussed the root cause of the degeneration of our women and have considered the ideals by the realization of which the present condition of our women can be improved. The number of women who can realize those ideals will be necessarily very few and, therefore, we will now consider what ordinary women can accomplish if they will try. Their first attempt should be directed towards awakening in the minds of as many women as possible a proper sense of their present condition. I am not among those who believe that such an effort can be made through literary education only. To work on that basis would be to postpone indefinitely the accomplishment of our aims; I have experienced at every step that it is not at all necessary to wait so long. We can bring home to our women the sad realities of their present condition without, in the first instance, giving them any literary education.

I am just returning from a district of Bihar. I once met there a large group of women from respectable families of the place. They all observed purdah. In my presence, they removed the purdah as they would in the presence of a brother. These women had no education. Just before

I went to meet them, an Englishwoman had been to see me. She had called on me where I sat surrounded by a number of men. To meet the Hindu women, on the other hand, I had to go into a room specially set apart. Half seriously, I suggested that we would go to the room where the men were sitting. All enthusiasm they said that they would be only too happy to do so, but that the custom being what it was, they would need the men's permission. They did not like the purdah at all they said and wanted me to see that the custom was ended. While there is tragedy in these words, they also bear out what I have said above. These women had realized their condition without having had any literary education. They were right in asking for my help, but I wanted them to have the strength themselves to win their freedom and they admitted, too, that they had such strength. I have come away full of hope that we shall soon hear that these women have flung away the purdah. Women who should ordinarily be considered uneducated are doing excellent work in Champaran. They are waking up their extremely backward sisters to the freedom which they themselves enjoy.

Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the very minutest detail in the activities of man and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him. She is entitled to a supreme place in her own sphere of activity as man is in his. This ought to be the natural condition of things and not as a result only of learning to read and write. By sheer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have. Many of our movements stop half-way because of the condition of our women. Much of our work does not yield appropriate results; our lot is like that of the penny-wise and pound-foolish trader who does



not employ enough capital in his business.

But although much good and useful work can be done without a knowledge of reading and writing, yet it is my firm belief that you cannot always do without a knowledge thereof. It develops and sharpens one's intellect and it stimulates our power of doing good. I have never placed an unnecessarily high value on the knowledge of reading and writing. I am only attempting to assign its proper place to it. I have pointed out from time to time that there is no justification for men to deprive women or to deny to them equal rights on the ground of their illiteracy; but education is essential for enabling women to uphold these natural rights, to improve them and to spread them; again, the true knowledge of self is unattainable by the millions who are without such education. Many a book is full of innocent pleasure and this will be denied to us without education. It is no exaggeration to say that a human being without education is not far removed from an animal. Education, therefore, is necessary for women as it is for men. Not the methods of education should be identical in both cases. In the first place, our State system of education is full of error and productive of harm in many respects. It should be eschewed by men and women alike. Even if it were free from its present blemishes, I would not regard it as proper for women from all points of view. Man and woman are of equal rank, but they are not identical. They are a peerless pair, being supplementary to each other; each helps the other so that without the one the existence of the other cannot be conceived and, therefore, it follows as a necessary corollary from these facts that anything that will impair the status of either of them will involve the equal ruin of them both. In framing any scheme of women's education, this cardinal truth must be constantly kept in mind. Man is supreme in the outward activities of a

marreid pair and, therefore, it is in the fitness of things that he should have a greater knowledge thereof. On the other hand, home life is entirely the sphere of woman and, therefore, in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children women ought to have more knowledge. Not that knowledge should be divided into watertight compartments or that some branches of knowledge should be closed to any one; but unless courses of instruction are based on a discriminating appreciation of these basic principles, the fullest life of man and woman cannot be developed.

I should say a word or two as to whether English education is or is not necessary for our women. I have come to the conclusion that, in the ordinary course of our lives, neither our men nor our women need necessarily have any knowledge of English. True, English is necessary for making a living and for active association in our political movements. I do not believe in women working for a living or undertaking a commercial enterprise. The few women who may require or desire to have English education can very easily have their way by joining the schools for men. Introduction of English education in schools meant for women could only lead to a prolongation of our helplessness. I have often read and heard people saying that the rich treasures of English literature should be opened alike to men and women. I submit in all humility that there is some misapprehension in assuming such an attitude. No one intends to close these treasures against women while keeping them open for men. There is none on earth able to prevent you from studying the literature of the whole world if you are fond of literary tastes. But when courses of education have been framed with the needs of particular society in view, you cannot supply the requirements of the few who have cultivated a literary taste.



Their needs can be met, after we are fully developed by separate institutions as in Europe. When, through a well-planned scheme, large numbers of men and women begin to receive education and those who remain without it are looked upon as exceptions, we shall have plenty of writers in our languages to bring to us the pleasures of other literatures. If we seek the pleasure of literature always in English, our languages will remain poor, which means that we shall remain a poor people. The habit of deriving enjoyment only from a foreign literature is, I must say, if you will pardon me the simile, like the thief's habit of deriving pleasure from stolen goods. The pleasure which Pope found in the *Iliad* he placed before the people in English of superb beauty. The pleasure which Fitzgerald derived from the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam made him render it into English of such power that millions of Englishmen keep this poem with them as they do the Bible. The *Bhagavad Gita* filled Edwin Arnold with transports of joy; he did not ask the people to learn Sanskrit in order that they may have the same joy, but put the work into English which would stand beside Sanskrit or Pali, pouring his very soul into the language, and thus shared his joy with his people. Our being so very backward is a reason why such work should be undertaken among us on a much larger scale. This will be possible only when a scheme such as I have suggested has been formulated and is firmly adhered to. If only we can give up our infatuation with English and our lack of confidence in ourselves or in the capacity of our languages, the task is not difficult.

In asking our men and women to spend less time on the study of English than they are doing now, my object is not to deprive them of the pleasure which they are likely to derive from it, but I hold that the same pleasure can be

obtained at less cost and trouble if we follow a more natural method. The world is full of many a gem of priceless beauty; but then those gems are not all of English setting. Other languages can well boast of productions of similar excellence; all these should be made available to our common people and that can only be done if our own learned men will undertake to translate them for us into our own languages.

Merely to have outlined a scheme of education as above is not to have removed the bane of child-marriage from our society or to have conferred on our women an equality of rights. Let us now consider the case of our girls who disappear, so to say, from view after marriage. They are not likely to return to our schools. Conscious of the unspeakable and unthinkable sin of the child-marriage of their daughters, their mothers cannot think of educating them or of otherwise making their dry life a cheerful one. The man who marries a young girl does not do so out of any altruistic motives, but through sheer lust. Who is to rescue these girls? A proper answer to this question will also be a solution of the woman's problem. The answer is albeit difficult, but it is the only one. There is, of course, none to champion her cause but her husband. It is useless to expect a child-wife to be able to bring round the man who has married her. The difficult work must, therefore, for the present at least, be left to a man. If I could, I would take a census of child-wives and would find the friends of their husbands and through such friends, as well as through moral and polite exhortations, I will attempt to bring home to them the enormity of their crimes in linking their fortunes with child-wives and will warn them that there is no expiation for that sin unless and until they have by education made their wives fit not only to bear children but also to bring them up



properly, and unless, in the meantime, they live a life of absolute celibacy.

Thus there are many fruitful fields of activity before the members of the Bhagini Samaj for devoting their energies to so. The field for work is so vast that, if resolute application is brought to bear thereon, the wider movements for reform may, for the present, well be left to themselves and great service can be done to the cause of Home Rule without so much as even a verbal reference to it. When printing presses were non-existent and scope for speech-making was very limited, when one could hardly travel twenty-four miles in the course of a day instead of a thousand miles as now, we had only one agency for propagating our ideals and that was our 'acts'; and acts had immense potency. We are now rushing to and fro with the velocity of air, delivering speeches, writing newspapers articles, and yet we fall short of our accomplishments and the cry of despair fills the air. I for one am of opinion that, as in old days, our acts will have a more powerful influence on the public than any number of speeches and writings. It is my earnest prayer to your association that its members should give prominence to quiet and unobtrusive work in whatever it does.

*The Hindu*, 26-2-1918

## FASTING FOR PURITY

The step I have just now taken is a very grave one, but at the back of it there stands a great idea. It is grave because on hearing of this all those who know me in India will be very much pained, be almost in an agony of grief. But, at the same time, I have here an opportunity to convey to them a beautiful idea, and I should not miss it. This is the motive behind my action. I have been getting quite impatient for the last two days to explain it to you but I could not get enough quiet time for that. It would make me very unhappy to miss the morning and evening prayers in the Ashram. And, besides, yesterday the music maestro dropped in and so I just would not forgo the pleasure of hearing his strains. I have swum past many a lure but many hungers still persist in me. At present I get here all that I long for by way of music and, therefore, although it was Anasuyabehn's express wish yesterday that I should stay on there, I insisted on coming over to the Ashram. At a time like this, the music here has a very soothing effect on me. This is indeed the best occasion for me to unburden my soul to you. At other hours, you are likely to be busy with your work and to make you leave that and assemble here—that won't be proper either.

From the ancient culture of India, I have gleaned a truth which, even if it is mastered by the few persons here at the moment, would give these few a mastery over the world. Before telling you of it, however, I should like to say another



thing. At present, there is only one person in India over whom millions are crazy, for whom millions of our countrymen would lay down their lives. That person is Tilak Maharaj. I often feel that this is a great asset of his, his great treasure. He has written on the inner meaning of the *Gita*. But I have always felt that he has not understood the age-old spirit of India, has not understood her soul and that is the reason why the nation has come to this pass. Deep down in his heart, he would like us all to be what the Europeans are. As Europe stands on top at present, as it seems, that is, to those whose minds are steeped in European notions—he wants India to be in the same position. He underwent six years' internment but only to display a courage of the European variety, with the idea that these people who are tyrannizing over us now may learn how, if it came to that, we too could stand such long long terms of internment, be it five years or twenty-five. In the prisons of Siberia, many great men of Russia are wasting their whole lives, but these men did not go to prison in obedience to any spiritual promptings. To be thus prodigal of one's life is to expend our highest treasure to no purpose. If Tilakji had undergone the sufferings of internment with a spiritual motive, things would not have been as they are and the results of his internment would have been far different. This is what I should like to explain to him. I have often, with great respect, spoken about this to him, as much as I could, though I have not put the things in so many words orally or in writing. I might have, in what I wrote, watered down my meaning, but Tilak Maharaj has so penetrating an intellect that he would understand. This is, however, not a matter to be explained orally or in writing. To give him first-hand experience of it, I must furnish a living example. Indirectly, I have spoken to him often enough but, should I get an opportunity of providing a direct demonstration, I should not miss it, and here is one.

Another such person is Madan Mohan Malaviya. Amongst the present leaders of India, he is a man of the holiest character – that is, amongst political personages and amongst those whom we know. Unknown to us, there may be many such indeed. But although he is so holy in his life and so well informed on points of dharma he has not, it seems to me, properly understood the soul of India in all its grandeur. I am afraid I have said too much. If he were to hear this, Malaviyaji might get angry with me, even think of me as a swollen-headed man and take a dislike to me. But I feel no hesitation in saying what I do, because it is quite true. I have spoken to him many times. I am bound to him by ties of affection and hence I have even indulged in frequent wranglings with him. At the end of all my arguments, however, he would merely say that all I had said might be true but that he was not convinced of it. I have this opportunity to provide him, too, with a direct demonstration. I owe it to both to show now what India's soul is.

For the last twenty days, I have been mixing with ten thousand mill-hands. In my presence, they took a pledge in the name of God. At the time, they did so with great enthusiasm. Whatever type of people they are, they all believe at any rate that God exists.

They thought that, when they had observed the pledge for twenty days, God was bound to come to their help. When that did not happen and God prolonged the test, their faith faltered. They felt that, led by this one man, they had suffered all these days but gained nothing whatever, that if they had not allowed themselves to be prevailed upon by him but had turned militant, they would have had their 35 per cent, or even more, in a much shorter time. This is my analysis of how their minds work. I can never bear to be in such a situation.



That a pledge once taken, at my instance, should be so lightly broken and that faith in God should decline means certain annihilation of dharma. I simply cannot live to be a witness to this in any activity to which I am a party. I must impress upon the minds of the mill-hands what it is to take a pledge. I must show to them what I can do for a pledge; if I did not, I would be a coward. For a man who brags of clearing seven feet, not to clear even one is impotence. Well, then, to keep those ten thousand men from falling, I took this step. This was why I took the vow and its impact was electrifying. I had never expected this. The thousands of men present there shed tears from their eyes. They awoke to the reality of their soul, a new consciousness stirred in them and they got strength to stand by their pledge. I was instantly persuaded that dharma had not vanished from India, that people did respond to an appeal to their soul. If Tilak Maharaj and Malaviyaji would but see this, great things could be done in India.

I am at present overflowing with joy. When, on a former occasion, I took such a vow, my mind did not enjoy the peace it does today. I also felt at that time the pull of the body. This time I experience nothing of the kind. My mind is filled with profound peace. I feel like pouring forth my soul to you all but I am beside myself with joy.

My pledge is directed to making the mill-hands honour theirs and teaching them what value to attach to a pledge. For people in our country to take pledges whenever they fancy and break them at any moment betrays their degraded state. And for ten thousand mill-hands to break faith with themselves would spell ruin for the nation. It would never again be possible to raise the workers' issues. At every turn they would quote this as an example and say that ten thousand mill-hands endured suffering for twenty days with a man like Gandhi to

lead them and still they did not win. I was thus forced to consider by what means the mill-hands could be made to remain firm. How could I do this without suffering myself? I saw that it was necessary to show them by example how, for the sake of one's pledge, one had to undergo suffering. So it was that I took this pledge. I am aware that it carries a taint. It is likely that, because of my vow, the mill-owners may be moved by consideration for me and come to grant the workers' demand for a thirty-five per cent increase. My desire is that they should grant the demand only if they see its justice and not out of charity. But the natural result would be that they would do so out of charity and to that extent this pledge is one which cannot but fill me with shame. I weighed the two things, however, against each other : my sense of shame and the mill-hands' pledge. The balance tilted in favour of the latter and I resolved, for the sake of the mill-hands, to take no thought of my shame. In doing public work, a man must be prepared to put up even with such loss of face. Thus, my pledge is not at all by way of a threat to the mill-owners ; on the contrary, I wish they clearly understand this and grant the 35 per cent to the mill-hands only if they think it just to do so. To the mill-hands, too, I would say that they should go to the owners and tell them as much.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XIV*



## KHEDA SATYAGRAHA

The occasion which has brought us here is so important that it will be enshrined in your memory for ever. For some months past, an agitation has been going on in this district for securing the suspension of land revenue. The crops have been generally less than four annas this year and so the collection of revenue ought to be suspended.

In compliance with the resolution of the Gujarat Sabha, I toured a number of villages and inquired personally into the matter. My co-workers did the same. The available evidence goes to show that the crops do not exceed four annas in the district as a whole. The Government, too, claims to have made an inquiry, but it is not prepared to give the needed relief to the farmers. It has decided to collect the dues. If people do not pay, it has threatened to adopt coercive measures. Notices have been issued for the collection of *chothai* and for the confiscation of holdings. Complaints of oppression by Talatis are also being received. I have only this to say to the Talatis and chiefs of villages who are present at this meeting : Let them by all means be loyal to the Government but that loyalty does not lie in oppressing the people. The land revenue must be realized, as ordered, but the Government certainly would not ask them to beat the people. Surely, the law can never authorize such an order. If there should be any such order, the Talatis are not bound to obey it. Anyone acting in this manner will be

committing treason against the country, the State and God. They may execute the orders of superiors loyally, but they have no right to molest the people.

If they are convinced that the crop is below four annas they should say so boldly to their superior officers. There are two reasons why I give you this advice. It has been the system of Government to assert that what they have said is true. In a talk with Lord Willingdon I came to know his opinion that the people of India do not give out their correct views; they are not bold enough to say what they mean; they say anything which pleases the other party; they are lacking in moral courage.

What are the people to do in this situation? Those whose crops are less than four annas should tell the Government politely: "It is not possible for us to submit to this injustice; when the crops have, in fact, failed, we cannot pay up our dues and thereby prove ourselves liars. You may realize the dues by force if you choose." It is to give you this advice that this meeting has been called.

This is a very beautiful district. Its people are well off. It has delightful trees, the like of which I have seen nowhere else in this country except in Bihar.

But Bihar has natural beauty, while in this district beauty has been achieved by hard work and perseverance. This is the only district which can boast of intelligent and industrious agriculturists. They have turned their land into a lovely orchard. They can be justly proud of their achievement. It does not, however, follow that they may be called upon to pay land revenue even when their crops have failed. This industrious section of the district's population is steadily



growing poorer and many have been compelled to give up agriculture and take to daily labour. This is a distressing thing for anyone to have to do. A country in which the farmers find this necessary is in for a bad time.

In fact, revenue should be paid from the sale value of the crops; it is intolerable, when the crops have failed, that the Government should recover it forcibly. But, in this country, it has become a practice with the Government to insist that it is always in the right. It is intolerable that, however just the people's case, the Government should have its own way. Justice must prevail and injustice yield. The agriculturists claim, and the evidence collected by those who conducted the inquiry bears them out, that the crops have failed and yet the Government insists that they have been plentiful. In the circumstances, the people have every right to tell the Government that, surely, they could see and judge things as well as the Government, and that they would not submit to injustice done by the officers. That people would tell lies, for the sake of saving at the most a year's interest by asking for a postponement of the assessment, is inconceivable. That the officers should suggest anything of the kind is intolerable. We must show, therefore, that our case is just; placed in the situation that we are, I would tell you that, if the Government does not accept our request, we should declare plainly that we shall not pay land revenue and will be prepared to take the consequences.

All nations which have risen have done so through suffering. If the people have to sacrifice their land, they should be ready to do so and suffer. Some will even argue that this is treason or rebellion; it is nothing of the kind. It means suffering ourselves, no treason. When the crops have failed, to pay up the dues out of fear is cowardice. We are

human beings, not animals. To refuse a thing firmly and plainly in the name of truth—that is satyagraha.

We have assembled today to do the spade-work for satyagraha. We don't propose to pay up the revenue to the Government; we want to fight it out. We have to prepare ourselves, then, for the suffering that may follow. We must visualize what we shall have to face:

- (1) The Government may recover the assessment by selling our cattle and our movable property.
- (2) It may impose fines.
- (3) It may confiscate jagirs.
- (4) It may even put people into jail on the ground that they are defiant.

The word has been used by the Government and I don't like it. How can they say that you are defiant merely because you speak the truth? Indeed, such a person is brave, not defiant. It is an act of bravery, and no defiance, for a man who, though he can afford to pay, refuses to do so in the interests of the poor. If in the process this man has to leave the village for ever, he will do so; he alone may take the pledge today who is ready for this.

It is very difficult to take the pledge of satyagraha; it is still more difficult to carry out one. I cannot bear to think of anyone breaking a pledge once taken, forsaking his God. It would cause me very great pain, indeed, if you took a pledge which you did not mean to keep. In the intensity of my suffering, I may take an extreme step. I may have to fast. I don't suffer when I fast; fasting hurts me less than that people should deceive me by breaking their pledge. In satyagraha, a pledge is the most valuable thing of all; it must be kept up to the very end. A pledge taken in God's name must never be broken. I would not hesitate to sacrifice my life if



that might ensure that thousands would keep their pledge. Those who want to fight must make up their minds once for all. I would not mind very much if people just said that they would hold out as long as possible but that they were not sure of themselves in case of severe repression. I would far rather that they cut my throat than that they break my heart by betraying their pledge. The man who cuts my throat, I would pray to God to forgive, but I would not forgive the other man.

I would tell you, therefore, in all humility, whatever you decide, do so with full thought and consideration. Only those who are determined to carry their decision through are able to raise themselves. When you have so raised yourselves, the Government will respect you, for it will know then, that it was dealing with men who would honour their plighted word and not betray it. A man who breaks his word can do no service to his country, or to his Government or to God.

I want, therefore, to know whether you agree; I ask you: "Are you ready to fight?" I shall prepare a written pledge. Those friends who wish to take it should come to the Ashram and give their signatures. I have only one request: "Suffer everything and honour the pledge; refuse to pay the revenue and prove to the Government thereby that you are prepared for sacrifices." The Government cannot use force against everyone.

## INDIAN CIVILIZATION

We often think that changes of the kind that take place in Europe will also occur in India ; that when some big transformation comes about, people who know beforehand how to prepare themselves for it win through and those who fail to take account of this are destroyed ; that mere movement is progress and that our advancement lies in it. We think that we shall be able to progress through the great discoveries that have been made on the continent of Europe. But this is an illusion. We are inhabitants of a country which has so long survived with its own civilization. Many a civilization of Europe is destroyed, but India, our country, survives as a witness to its own civilization. All scholars agree in testifying that the civilization of India is the same today as it was thousands of years ago. But, now, there is reason to suspect that we no longer have faith in our civilization. Every morning we do our worship and prayer, recite the verses composed by our forbears, but we do not understand their significance. Our faith is turning in another direction.

So long as the world goes on, the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas will also continue. The books of almost all the religions say that the war between the gods and Satan goes on for ever. The question is how we are to make our preparations. I have come here to tell you that you should have faith in your civilization and keep to it steadfastly. If



you do this, India will one day hold sway over the entire world.

Our leaders say that, in order to fight the West, we have to adopt the ways of the West. But please rest assured that it will mean the end of Indian civilization. India's face is turned away from your modern trend ; that India you do not know. I have travelled much and so come to know the mind of India and I have discovered that it has preserved its faith in its ancient civilization. The swaraj of which we hear will not be achieved the way we are working for it. The Congress-League Scheme, or any other scheme which is even better, will not get us swaraj. We shall get swaraj through the way in which we live our lives. It cannot be had for the asking. We can never gain it through copying Europe.

That European civilization is Satanic we see for ourselves. An obvious proof of this is the fierce war that is going on at present. It is so terrible that the Mahabharata War was nothing in comparison. This should be a warning to us and we should remember that our sages have given us the immutable and inviolate principles that our conduct should be godly and that it should be rooted in dharma. We should follow these principles alone. So long as we do not follow dharma, our wish will not be fulfilled, notwithstanding all the grandiose schemes we may devise. Even if Mr. Montagu offers us swaraj today, we can in no way benefit from that swaraj. We must make use of the legacy left us by our rishis and munis.

The whole world knows that the tapasya that was practised in ancient India is found nowhere else. Even if we want an empire for India, we can get it through no other method but that of self-discipline. We can be certain that once the spirit of discipline comes to pervade our lives, we shall be able

to get anything we may want.

Truth and non-violence are our goal. Non-violence is the supreme dharma, there is no discovery of greater import than this. So long as we engage in mundane actions, so long as soul and body are together, some violence will continue to occur through our agency. But we must renounce at least the violence that it is possible for us to renounce. We should understand that the less violence a religion permits, the more is the truth contained in it. If we can ensure the deliverance of India, it is only through truth and non-violence. Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Bombay, has said that he feels greatly disappointed when he meets Indians for they do not express what is in their minds but only what would be agreeable to him, so that he never knows the real position. Many people have this habit of hiding their own sentiments when in the presence of an important person and suiting their talk to his pleasure. They do not realize how cruelly they deceive themselves and harm the truth. One must say what one feels. It is impertinence to go against one's reason. One must not hesitate the least to tell what one feels to anyone, be he a minister of the Government or even a more exalted person. Deal with all with truth and non-violence.

Love is a rare herb that makes a friend even of a sworn enemy and this herb grows out of non-violence. What in a dormant state is non-violence becomes love in the waking state. Love destroys ill will. We should love all—whether Englishmen or Muslims. No doubt, we should protect the cow. But we cannot do so by fighting with Muslims. We cannot save the cow by killing Muslims. We should act only through love: thus alone shall we succeed. So long as we do not have unshakable faith in truth, love and non-violence, we can make no progress. If we give up these and imitate European civili-



zation, we shall be doomed. I pray to Suryanarayan that India may not turn away from her civilization. Be fearless. So long as you live under various kinds of fears, you can never progress, you can never succeed. Please do not forget our ancient civilization. Never never give up truth and love. Treat all enemies and friends with love. If you wish to make Hindi the national language, you can do so in a short time through the principles of truth and non-violence.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XIV*

## SATYAGRAHA PLEDGE

It behoves everyone who wishes to take the satyagraha pledge seriously to consider all its factors before taking it. It is necessary to understand the principles of satyagraha, to understand the main features of the Bills known as the Rowlatt Bills, and to be satisfied that they are so objectionable as to warrant the very powerful remedy of satyagraha being applied and, finally, to be convinced of one's ability to undergo every form of bodily suffering, so that the soul may be set free and be under no fear from any human being or institution. Once in it, there is no looking back.

Therefore there is no conception of defeat in satyagraha. A satyagrahi fights even unto death. It is thus not an easy thing for everybody to enter upon it. It therefore behoves a satyagrahi to be tolerant of those who do not join him. In reading reports of satyagraha meetings, I often notice that ridicule is poured upon those who do not join our movement. That is entirely against the spirit of the pledge. In satyagraha we expect to win over opponents by self-suffering, i.e., by love. The process whereby we hope to reach our goal is by so conducting ourselves as gradually and in an unperceived manner to disarm all opposition. Opponents as a rule expect irritation, even violence from one another when both parties are equally matched. But when satyagraha comes into play, the expectation is transformed into agreeable surprise in the mind of the party towards whom satyagraha is addressed till at last he relents and



recalls the act which necessitated satyagraha. I venture to promise that if we act up to our pledge day after day, the atmosphere around us will be purified and those who differ from us from honest motives, as I verily believe they do, will perceive that their alarm was unjustified. The violationists wherever they may be, will realize that they have in satyagraha a far more potent instrument for achieving reform than violence whether secret or open and that it gives them enough work for their inexhaustible energy. And the Government will have no case left in defence of their measures if, as a result of our activity, the cult of violence is notably on the wane if it has not entirely died out. I hope therefore that at satyagraha meetings we shall have no cries of shame, and no language betraying irritation or impatience either against the Government or our countrymen who differ from us, and some of whom have for years been devoting themselves to the country's cause according to the best of their ability.

*The Leader*, 13-3-1919

## NON-CO-OPERATION

I am aware, more than aware, of the grave responsibility that rests on my shoulders in being privileged to move this resolution before this great assembly. I am aware that my difficulties, as also yours, increase if you are able to adopt this resolution. I am also aware that the adoption of any resolution will mark a definite change in the policy which the country has hitherto adopted for the vindication of the rights that belong to it and its honour. I am aware that a large number of our leaders who have given the time and attention to the affairs of my Motherland which I have not been able to give are ranged against me. They think it a duty to resist the policy of revolutionizing the Government policy at any cost. Knowing this I stand before you in fear of God and a sense of duty to put this before you for your hearty acceptance.

I ask you to dismiss me, for the time being, from your consideration. I have been charged with saintliness and a desire for dictatorship. I venture to say that I do not stand before you either as a saint or a candidate for dictatorship. I stand before you to present to you the results of my many years' practical experience in non-co-operation. I deny the charge that it is a new thing in the country. It has been accepted at hundreds of meetings attended by thousands of men and has been placed in working order since the 1st of

Speech at the special session of the Indian National Congress,  
Calcutta, September 8, 1920



August by the Mussalmans, and many of the things in the programme are being enforced in a more or less intense form. I ask you again to dismiss personalities in the consideration of this important question and bring to bear patient and calm judgement on it. But mere acceptance of the resolution does not end the work. Every individual has to enforce the items of the resolution in so far as they apply to him. I beseech you to give me a patient hearing. I ask you neither to clap nor to hiss. You will not hiss out of the stage any single speaker. For non-co-operation is a measure of discipline and sacrifice and it demands patience and respect for opposite views. And unless we are able to evolve a spirit of mutual toleration for diametrically opposite views, non-co-operation is an impossibility. Non-co-operation in an angry atmosphere is an impossibility. I have learnt through bitter experience the one supreme lesson to conserve my anger, and as heat conserved is transmuted into energy, even so our anger controlled can be transmuted into a power which can move the world. Those who have been attending the Congress as brothers-in-arms I ask what can be better discipline than that which we should exercise between ourselves ?

I have been told that I have been doing nothing but wreckage and that by bringing forward the resolution, I am breaking up the political life of the country. The Congress is not a party organization. It ought to provide a platform for all shades of opinion, and a minority need not leave this organization but may look forward to translating itself into a majority in course of time if its opinion commends itself to the country. Only let no man in the name of the Congress advocate a policy which has been condemned by the Congress. And if you condemn my policy, I shall not go away from the Congress but shall plead with them to convert the minority into a majority.

There are no two opinions as to the wrong done to the Khilafat. Mussalmans cannot remain as honourable men and follow their Prophet if they do not vindicate their honour at any cost. The Punjab has been cruelly, brutally treated and in as much as one man in the Punjab was made to crawl on his belly, the whole of India crawled on her belly, and if we are worthy sons and daughters of India, we should be pledged to remove these wrongs. It is in order to remove these wrongs that the country is agitating itself. But we have not been able to bend the Government to our will. We cannot rest satisfied with a mere expression of angry feeling. You could not have heard a more passionate denunciation of the Punjab wrongs than in the pages of the Presidential address. If the Congress cannot wring justice from unwilling hands, how can it vindicate its existence and its honour? How can it do so if it cannot enforce clear repentance before receiving a single gift, however rich, from those blood-stained hands?

I have therefore placed before you my scheme of non-co-operation to achieve this end and want you to reject any other scheme unless you have deliberately come to the conclusion that it is a better scheme than mine. If there is a sufficient response to my scheme, I make bold to reiterate my statement that you can gain swaraj in the course of a year. Not the passing of the resolution will bring swaraj but the enforcement of the resolution from day to day in a progressive manner, due regard being had to the conditions. There is another remedy before the country and that is the drawing of the sword. If that was possible, India would not have listened to the gospel of non-co-operation. I want to suggest to you that even if you want to arrest injustice by methods of violence, discipline and self-sacrifice are necessary. I have not known of a war gained by a rabble, but I have known of wars gained by disciplined



armies and if you want to give battle to the British Government and to the combined power of Europe, we must train ourselves in discipline and self-sacrifice. I confess I have become impatient. I have seen that we deserve swaraj today, but we have not got the spirit of national sacrifice. We have evolved this spirit in domestic affairs and I have come to ask you to extend it to other affairs. I have been travelling from one end to the other end of the country to see whether the country has evolved the national spirit, whether at the altar of the nation it is ready to dedicate its riches, children, its all, if it is ready to make the initiatory sacrifice. Is the country ready? Are the title-holders ready to surrender their titles? Are parents ready to sacrifice the literary education of their children for the sake of the country? The schools and colleges are really a factory for turning out clerks for Government. If the parents are not ready for the sacrifice, if title-holders are not ready, swaraj is very nearly an impossibility. . . . Immediately the conquered country realized instinctively that any gift which might come to it is not for the benefit of the conquered but for the benefit of the conqueror, that moment it should reject every form of voluntary assistance to it. These are the fundamental essentials of success in the struggle for the independence for the country whether within the Empire or without the Empire. I hold a real substantial unity between Hindus and Mussalmans infinitely superior to the British connection, and if I had to make a choice between that unity and the British connection, I would have the first and reject the other. If I had to choose between the honour of the Punjab, anarchy, neglect of education, shutting out of all legislative activity, and British connection, I would choose the honour of the Punjab and all it meant, even anarchy, shutting out of all schools, etc., without the slightest hesitation.

If you have the same feeling burning in you as in me for the honour of Islam and the Punjab, then you will unreservedly accept my resolution.

I now come to the burning topic, viz., the boycott of the councils. Sharpest differences of opinion exist regarding this and if the house has to divide on it, it must divide on one issue, viz., whether swaraj has to be gained through the councils or without the councils. If we utterly distrust the British Government and we know that they are utterly unrepentant, how can you believe that the councils will lead to swaraj and not tighten the British hold on India ?

I now come to swadeshi. The boycott of foreign goods is included in the resolution. You have got here, I confess, an anomaly for which I am not originally responsible. But I have consented to it. I will not go into the history of how it found a place into the resolution of which the essence is discipline and self-sacrifice. Swadeshi means permanent boycott of foreign goods. It is therefore a matter of redundancy. But I have taken it in, because I could not reject it as a matter of conscience. I know, however, it is a physical impossibility. So long as we have to rely on the pins and needles—figurative and literal both—we cannot bring about a complete boycott of foreign goods. I do not hesitate to say this clause mars the musical harmony, if I may claim it without vanity, of the programme. I feel that those words do mar the symmetry of the programme. But I am not here for the symmetry of the programme as for its workability.

I again ask you not to be influenced by personality. Reject out of your consideration any service that I have done. Two things only I claim: Laborious industry, great thought



behind my programme, and unflinching determination to bring it about. You may take only those things from me and bring them to bear on any programme that you adopt.

*Young India*, 15-9-1920

## THE CREED OF THE CONGRESS

The resolution which I have the honour to move is as follows: "The object of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means."

There are only two kinds of objections so far as I understand that will be advanced from this platform. One is, that we may not today think of dissolving the British connection. What I say is, that it is derogatory to national dignity to think of the permanence of the British connection at any cost. We are labouring under a grievous wrong which it is the personal duty of every Indian to get redressed. The British Government not only refuses to redress the wrong, but it refuses to acknowledge its mistakes, and so long as it retains its attitude, it is not possible for us to say all that we want to be or all that we want to get, retaining the British connection. No matter what difficulties be in our path, we must make the clearest possible declaration to the world and to the whole of India that we may not possibly have the British connection if the British people will not do this elementary justice. I do not for one moment suggest that we want to end the connection at all costs unconditionally. If the British connection is for the advancement of India, we do not want to destroy it. But if it is inconsistent with our national self-respect, then it is our bounden duty to destroy it. There is room in this resolution for



both—those who believe that by retaining the British connection, we can purify ourselves and purify British people, and those who have no belief. As for instance, take the extreme case of Mr. Andrews. He says all hope for India is gone for keeping the British connection. He says there must be complete severance—complete independence. There is room enough in this creed for a man like Mr. Andrews also. Take another illustration, a man like myself or my brother Shaukat Ali. There is certainly no room for us if we have eternally to subscribe to the doctrine: whether these wrongs are redressed or not, we shall have to evolve ourselves within the British Empire. There is no room for me in that creed. Therefore this creed is elastic enough to take in both shades of opinion and the British people will have to beware that if they do not want to do justice, it will be the bounden duty of every Indian to destroy the Empire.

I want just now to wind up my remarks with a personal appeal, drawing your attention to an object-lesson that was presented in the Bengal camp yesterday. If you want swaraj, you have got a demonstration of how to get swaraj. There was a little bit of skirmish, a little bit of squabble, and a little bit of difference in the Bengal camp, as there will always be differences so long as the world lasts. I have known differences between husband and wife, because I am still a husband; I have noticed differences between parents and children, because I am still a father of four boys, and they are all strong enough to destroy their father so far as bodily struggle is concerned; I possess that varied experience of husband and parent; I know that we shall always have squabbles, we shall always have differences but the lesson that I want to draw your attention to is, that I had the honour and privilege of addressing both the parties. They gave me their undivided attention and, what is more, they

showed their attachment, their affection and their fellowship for me by accepting the humble advice that I had the honour of tendering to them, and I told them: "I am not here to distribute justice that can be awarded only through our worthy President. But I ask you not to go to the President; you need not worry him. If you are strong, if you are brave, if you are intent upon getting swaraj, and if you really want to revise the creed, then you will bottle up your rage, you will bottle up all the feelings of injustice that may rankle in your hearts and forget these things here under this very roof." And I told them to forget their differences, to forget the wrongs. I don't want to tell you or go into the history of that incident. . .

I only wanted my Bengali friends and all the other friends who have come to this great assembly with a fixed determination to seek nothing but the settlement of their country, to seek nothing but the advancement of their respective rights, to seek nothing but the conservation of the national honour. I appeal to every one of you to copy the example set by those who felt aggrieved and who felt that their heads were broken. I know, before we have done with this great battle on which we have embarked at the special sessions of the Congress, we have to go probably, possibly, through a sea of blood, but let it not be said of us or anyone of us that we are guilty of shedding blood, but let it be said by generations yet to be born that we suffered, that we shed not somebody's blood but our own, and so I have no hesitation in saying that I do not want to show much sympathy for those who had their heads broken or who were said to be even in danger of losing their lives. What does it matter? It is much better to die at the hands, at least, of our countrymen. What is there to revenge ourselves about or upon? So I ask every one of you that at



any time there is blood-boiling within you against some fellow-countryman of yours, even though he may be in the employ of Government, even though he may be in the secret service, you will take care not to be offended and not to return blow for blow. Understand that the very moment you return the blow from the detective, your cause is lost. This is your non-violent campaign. And so I ask every one of you not to retaliate but to bottle up all your rage, to dismiss your rage from you and you will rise braver men.

Therefore I appeal to those who feel aggrieved to feel that they have done the right thing in forgetting it, and if they have not forgotten, I ask them to try to forget the thing; and that is the object-lesson to which I wanted to draw your attention. If you want to carry this resolution, do not carry this resolution only by an acclamation for this resolution, but I want you to accompany the carrying out of this resolution with a faith and resolve which nothing on earth can move. That you are intent upon getting swaraj at the earliest possible moment and that you are intent upon getting swaraj by means that are legitimate, that are honourable and by means that are non-violent, that are peaceful, you have resolved upon this thing: that so far we can say today, we cannot give battle to this Government by means of steel, but we can give battle by exercising what I have so often called soul-force and soul-force is not the prerogative of one man or a sannyasi or even a so-called saint. Soul-force is the prerogative of every human being, female or male, and therefore I ask my countrymen if they want to accept this resolution, to accept it with that firm determination and to understand that it is inaugurated under such good and favourable auspices as I have described you.

## UNTOUCHABILITY—GREATEST BLOT ON HINDUISM

I regard untouchability as the greatest blot on Hinduism. This idea was not brought home to me by my bitter experience during the South African struggle. It is not due to the fact that I was once an agnostic. It is equally wrong to think—as some people do—that I have taken my views from my study of Christian religious literature. These views date as far back as the time when I was neither enamoured of, nor was acquainted with, the Bible or the followers of the Bible.

I was hardly yet twelve when this idea had dawned on me. A scavenger named Uka, an untouchable, used to attend our house for cleaning latrines. Often I would ask my mother why it was wrong to touch him, why I was forbidden to touch him. If I accidentally touched Uka, I was asked to perform the ablutions, and though I naturally obeyed, it was not without smilingly protesting that untouchability was not sanctioned by religion, that it was impossible that it should be so. I was a very dutiful and obedient child and so far as it was consistent with respect for parents, I often had tussles with them on this matter. I told my mother that she was entirely wrong in considering physical contact with Uka as sinful.

While at school I would often happen to touch the 'untouchables', and as I never would conceal the fact from my



parents, my mother would tell me that the shortest cut to purification after the unholy touch was to cancel the touch by touching any Mussalman passing by. And simply out of reverence and regard for my mother I often did so, but never did so believing it to be a religious obligation. After some time we shifted to Porbandar, where I made my first acquaintance with Sanskrit. I was not yet put into an English school, and my brother and I were placed in charge of a Brahmin, who taught us *Ramaraksha* and *Vishnu Puja*. The text "*Jale Vishnuh Sthale Vishnuh*" (there is the Lord present in water, there is the Lord present in earth) has never gone out of my memory. A motherly old dame used to live close by. Now it happened that I was very timid then, and would conjure up ghosts and goblins whenever the lights went out and it was dark. The old mother, to disabuse me of fears, suggested that I should mutter the *Ramaraksha* texts whenever I was afraid, and all evil spirits would fly away. This I did and, as I thought, with good effect. I could never believe then that there was any text in the *Ramaraksha* pointing to the contact of the untouchables as a sin. I did not understand its meaning then, or understood it very imperfectly. But I was confident that *Ramaraksha*, which could destroy all fear of ghosts, could not be countenancing any such thing as fear of contact with the untouchables.

The *Ramayana* used to be regularly read in our family. A Brahmin called Ladha Maharaj used to read it. He was stricken with leprosy, and he was confident that a regular reading of the *Ramayana* would cure him of leprosy, and indeed, he was cured of it. 'How can the *Ramayana*,' I thought to myself, 'in which one who is regarded nowadays as an untouchable took Rama across the Ganges in his boat, countenance the idea of any human beings being untouchable on the ground that they were polluted souls?' The fact

that we address God as the 'purifier of the polluted' and by similar appellations, shows that it is a sin to regard anyone born in Hinduism as polluted or untouchable—that it is Satanic to do so. I have hence been never tired of repeating that it is a great sin. I do not pretend that this thing had crystallized as a conviction in me at the age of twelve, but I do say that I did then regard untouchability as a sin. I narrate this story for the information of the Vaishnavas and orthodox Hindus.

I have always claimed to be a sanatani Hindu. It is not that I am quite innocent of the scriptures. I am not a profound scholar of Sanskrit. I have read the Vedas and the *Upanishads* only in translation. Naturally therefore mine is not a scholarly study of them. My knowledge of them is in no way profound, but I have studied them as I should do as a Hindu and I claim to have grasped their true spirit. By the time I had reached the age of 21 I had studied other religions also.

There was a time when I was wavering between Hinduism and Christianity. When I recovered my balance of mind, I felt that to me salvation was possible only through the Hindu religion and my faith in Hinduism grew deeper and more enlightened.

But even then I believed that untouchability was no part of Hinduism; and that if it was, such Hinduism was not for me.

True Hinduism does not regard untouchability as a sin. I do not want to enter into any controversy regarding the interpretation of the shastras. It might be difficult for me to establish my point by quoting authorities from the *Bhagavat*



or *Manusmriti*. But I claim to have understood the spirit of Hinduism. Hinduism has sinned in giving sanction to untouchability. It has degraded us, made us the pariahs of the Empire. Even the Mussalmans caught the sinful contagion from us, and in South Africa, in East Africa and in Canada, the Mussalmans no less than Hindus came to be regarded as pariahs. All this evil has resulted from the sin of untouchability.

I may here recall my proposition, which is this : So long as the Hindus wilfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, as long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, swaraj is impossible of attainment. Yudhishtira would not enter heaven without his dog. How can, then, the descendants of that Yudhishtira expect to obtain swaraj without the untouchables ? What crimes for which we condemn the Government as Satanic have not we been guilty of towards our untouchable brethren ?

We are guilty of having suppressed our brethren ; we make them crawl on their bellies ; we have made them rub their noses on the ground ; with eyes red with rage, we push them out of railway compartments—what more than this has British rule done ? What charge that we bring against Dyer and O'Dwyer may not others, and even our own people, lay at our door ? We ought to purge ourselves of this pollution. It is idle to talk of swaraj so long as we do not protect the weak and the helpless, or so long as it is possible for a single Swarajist to injure the feelings of any individual. Swaraj means that not a single Hindu or Muslim shall for a moment arrogantly think that he can crush with impunity meek Hindus or Muslims. Unless this condition is fulfilled we will gain swaraj only to lose it the next moment. We are no

better than the brutes until we have purged ourselves of the sins we have committed against our weaker brethren.

But I have faith in me still. In the course of my peregrinations in India I have realized that the spirit of kindness of which the poet Tulsidas sings so eloquently, which forms the corner-stone of the Jain and Vaishnava religions, which is the quintessence of the *Bhagavat*, and which every verse of the *Gita* is saturated with—this kindness, this love, this charity, is slowly but steadily gaining ground in the hearts of the masses of this country.

Many a fracas between Hindus and Mussalmans is still heard of. There are still many of those who do not scruple to wrong one another. But as to the net result, I feel that kindness and charity have increased. The Hindus and Mahommedans have become godfearing. We have shaken ourselves free from the hypnotism of law courts and Government schools and no longer labour under any other hallucination. I have also realized that those whom we regard as illiterate and ignorant are the very people who deserve to be called educated. They are more cultured than we, their lives are more righteous than ours. A little study of the present-day mentality of the people will show that according to the popular conception, swaraj is synonymous with Ramarajya—the establishment of the Kingdom of Righteousness on earth. If it can bring any comfort to you, my untouchable brethren, I would say that your question does not cause so much stir, as it used to do formerly. That does not mean that I expect you to cease to have misgivings about the Hindus. How can they deserve to be not mistrusted having wronged you so much? Swami Vivekanand used to say that the untouchables were not depressed, they were



suppressed by the Hindus who in turn had suppressed themselves by suppressing them.

I suppose I was at Nellore on the 6th of April. I met the untouchables there and I prayed that day as I have done today. I do want to attain *moksha*. I do not want to be reborn. But if I have to be reborn, I should be born an untouchable, so that I may share their sorrows, suffering, and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition. I, therefore, prayed that if I should be born again, I should do so not as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra, but as an Atishudra.

Today is much more solemn than the sixth. It is hallowed by the memory of the massacre of thousands of innocents. And I prayed, therefore, also today that if I should die with any of my desires unfructified, with my service of the untouchables unfinished, with my Hinduism unfulfilled, I may be born again amongst the untouchables to bring my Hinduism to its fulfilment.

I love scavenging. In my Ashram, an eighteen-year-old Brahmin lad is doing the scavenger's work in order to teach the Ashram scavenger cleanliness. The lad is no reformer. He was born and bred in orthodoxy. He is a regular reader of the *Gita* and faithfully performs *sandhyavandana*. His pronunciation of Sanskrit verses is more faultless than mine. When he conducts the prayer, his soft, sweet melodies melt one into love. But he felt that his accomplishments were incomplete until he had become also a perfect sweeper, and that if he wanted the Ashram sweeper to do his work well, he must do it himself and set an example.

You should realize that you are cleaning Hindu society. You have therefore to purify your lives. You should cultivate the habits of cleanliness, so that no one may point his finger at you. Use alkali ash or earth if you cannot afford to use soap to keep yourselves clean. Some of you are given to drinking and gambling which you must get rid of. You will point your finger at the Brahmins and say that even they are given to these vices. But they are not looked upon as polluted and you are. You must not ask the Hindus to emancipate you as a matter of favour. Hindus must do so, if they want, in their own interests. You should, therefore, make them feel ashamed by your own purity and cleanliness. I believe that we shall have purified ourselves within the next five months. If my expectations are not fulfilled, I will think that although my proposition was fundamentally correct, yet I was wrong in my calculation; and I will again say that I had erred in my calculation.

You claim to be Hindus; you read the *Bhagavat*. If, therefore, the Hindus oppress you then you should understand that the fault does not lie in the Hindu religion but in those who profess it. In order to emancipate yourselves you shall have to purify yourselves. You shall have to get rid of evil habits like drinking.

If you want to ameliorate your condition, if you want to obtain swaraj, you should be self-reliant. I was told in Bombay that some of you are opposed to N.C.O. and believe that salvation is only possible through the British Government. Let me tell you that you will never be able to obtain redress by discarding Hindu religion and courting the favour of a third party. Your emancipation lies in your own hands.

I have come in contact with the untouchables all



over the country ; and I have observed that immense possibilities lie latent in them of which neither they nor the rest of the Hindus seem to be aware. Their intellect is of virginal purity. I ask you to learn spinning and weaving, and if you take them up as a profession, you will keep poverty from your doors. As regards your attitude towards the Bhangis I will repeat what I said at Godhra. I cannot understand why you should yourselves countenance the distinction between Dheds and Bhangis. There is no difference between them. Even in normal times their occupation is as honourable as that of lawyers or Government servants.

You should now cease to accept leavings from plates, however clean they may be represented to be. Receive grain only—good, sound grain, not rotten grain—and that too only if it is courteously offered. If you are able to do all I have asked you to do, you will secure your emancipation, not in four or five months, but in so many days.

The Hindus are not sinful by nature—they are sunk in ignorance. Untouchability must be extinct in this very year. Two of the strongest desires that keep me in flesh and bone are the emancipation of the untouchables and the protection of the cow. When these two desires are fulfilled, there is swaraj, and therein lies my own *moksha*. May God give you strength to work out your salvation !

*Young India*, 27-4-1921 & 4-5-1921

## FROM STAUNCH LOYALIST TO A NON-CO-OPERATOR

Before I read this statement I would like to state that I entirely endorse the learned Advocate-General's remarks in connection with my humble self. I think that he was entirely fair to me in all the statements that he has made, because it is very true and I have no desire whatsoever to conceal from this Court the fact that to preach disaffection towards the existing system of Government has become almost a passion with me, and the learned Advocate-General is also entirely in the right when he says that my preaching of disaffection did not commence with my connection with *Young India*, but that it commenced much earlier and in the statement that I am about to read, it will be my painful duty to admit before this Court that it commenced much earlier than the period stated by the Advocate-General. It is the most painful duty with me, but I have to discharge that duty knowing the responsibility that rests upon me, and I wish to endorse all the blame that the learned Advocate-General has thrown on my shoulders in connection with the Bombay, the Madras and the Chauri Chaura occurrences. Thinking over these deeply and sleeping over them night after night, it is impossible to dissociate myself from the diabolical crimes of Chauri Chaura, or the mad outrages in Bombay and Madras. He is quite right when he says that, as a man of responsibility, a man having received a fair share of education and having had a fair



share of experience of this world, I should know the consequences of every one of my acts. I know that I was playing with fire. I ran the risk and, if I was set free, I would still do the same. I know that I was feeling it so every day and I have felt it also this morning that I would have failed in my duty if I did not say what I said here just now.

I wanted to avoid violence. I want to avoid violence. Non-violence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed. But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which I considered had done an irreparable harm to my country, or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth when they understood the truth from my lips. I know that my people have sometimes gone mad; I am deeply sorry for it. I am, therefore here to submit not to a light penalty but to the highest penalty. I do not ask for mercy. I do not ask for any extenuating act of clemency. I am here to invite and cheerfully submit to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is, as I am just going to say in my statement, either to resign your post, or inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is therefore injurious to the public weal. I do not expect that kind of conversion, but by the time I have finished with my statement, you will, perhaps, have a glimpse of what is raging within my breast to run this maddest risk that a sane man can run.

The statement was then read out.

## STATEMENT

I owe it perhaps to the Indian public and to the public in England, to placate which this prosecution is mainly taken up, that I should explain why, from a staunch loyalist and co-operator I have become an uncompromising disaffectionist and non-co-operator. To the Court, too, I should say why I plead guilty to the charge of promoting disaffection towards the Government established by law in India.

My public life began in 1893 in South Africa in troubled weather. My first contact with British authority in that country was not of a happy character. I discovered that as a man and an Indian I had no rights. More correctly, I discovered that I had no rights as a man because I was an Indian.

But I was not baffled. I thought that this treatment of Indians was an excrescence upon a system that was intrinsically and mainly good. I gave the Government my voluntary and hearty co-operation, criticizing it freely where I felt it was faulty, but never wishing its destruction. Consequently, when the existence of the Empire was threatened in 1899 by the Boer challenge, I offered my services to it, raised a volunteer ambulance corps and served at several actions that took place for the relief of Ladysmith. Similarly in 1906, at the time of the Zulu revolt, I raised a stretcher-bearer party and served till the end of the rebellion. On both these occasions I received medals and was even mentioned in despatches. For my work in South Africa I was given by Lord Hardinge a Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal. When the War broke out in 1914 between England and Germany, I raised a volunteer ambulance corps in London consisting of the then resident Indians in London, chiefly students. Its work was



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acknowledged by the authorities to be valuable. Lastly, in India, when a special appeal was made at the War Conference in Delhi in 1918 by Lord Chelmsford for recruits, I struggled at the cost of my health to raise a corps in Kheda and the response was being made when the hostilities ceased and orders were received that no more recruits were wanted. In all these efforts at service, I was actuated by the belief that it was possible by such services to gain a status of full equality in the Empire for my countrymen.

The first shock came in the shape of the Rowlatt Act, a law designed to rob the people of all real freedom. I felt called upon to lead an intensive agitation against it. Then followed the Punjab horrors beginning with the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh and culminating in crawling orders, public floggings and other indescribable humiliations. I discovered, too, that the plighted word of the Prime Minister to the Mussalmans of India regarding the integrity of Turkey and the holy places of Islam was not likely to be fulfilled. But in spite of the forebodings and the grave warnings of friends at the Amritsar Congress in 1919, I fought for co-operation and working the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, hoping that the Prime Minister would redeem his promise to the Indian Mussalmans, that the Punjab wound would be healed and that the reforms, inadequate and unsatisfactory though they were, marked a new era of hope in the life of India.

But all that hope was shattered. The Khilafat promise was not to be redeemed. The Punjab crime was white-washed and most culprits went not only unpunished, but remained in service and some continued to draw pensions from the Indian revenue, not only did the reforms not mark a change of heart, but they were only a method of further draining India

of her wealth and of prolonging her servitude.

I came reluctantly to the conclusion that the British connection had made India more helpless than she ever was before, politically and economically. A disarmed India has no power of resistance against any aggressor if she wanted to engage in an armed conflict with him. So much is this the case that some of our best men consider that India must take generations before she can achieve the Dominion status. She has become so poor that she has little power of resisting famines. Before the British advent, India spun and wove in her millions of cottages just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witnesses. Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profits and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for the exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt whatsoever that both England and the town-dwellers of India will have to answer, if there is a God above, for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history. The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. My unbiassed examination of the Punjab Martial Law cases has led me to believe that at least ninety-five per cent of convictions were wholly bad. My experience of political cases in India leads me to the conclusion that in nine out of every ten cases the condemned men were totally



innocent. Their crime consisted in the love of their country. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, justice has been denied to Indians as against Europeans in the Courts of India. This is not an exaggerated picture. It is the experience of almost every Indian who has had anything to do with such cases. In my opinion, the administration of the law is thus prostituted consciously or unconsciously for the benefit of the exploiter.

The greatest misfortune is that Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know that they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. I am satisfied that many English and Indian officials honestly believe that they are administering one of the best systems devised in the world and that India is making steady though slow progress. They do not know that a subtle but effective system of terrorism and an organized display of force on the one hand and the deprivation of all powers of retaliation or self-defence on the other have emasculated the people and induced in them the habit of simulation. This awful habit has added to the ignorance and the self-deception of the administrators. Section 124 A under which I am happily charged is perhaps the prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen. Affection cannot be manufactured or regulated by law. If one has no affection for a person or system, one should be free to give the fullest expression to one's disaffection, so long as one does not contemplate, promote or incite to violence. But the section under which Mr. Banker and I are charged is one under which mere promotion of disaffection is a crime. I have studied some of the cases tried under it, and I know that some of the most loved of India's patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege, therefore, to be

charged under it. I have endeavoured to give in their briefest outline the reasons for my disaffection. I have no personal ill will against any single administrator, much less can I have any disaffection towards the King's person. But I hold it to be a virtue to be disaffected towards a Government which in its totality has done more harm to India than any previous system. India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before. Holding such a belief, I consider it to be a sin to have affection for the system. And it has been a precious privilege for me to be able to write what I have in the various articles tendered in evidence against me.

In fact, I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-co-operation the way out of the unnatural state in which both are living. In my humble opinion, non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as is co-operation with good. But, in the past, non-co-operation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evil-doer. I am endeavouring to show to my countrymen that violent non-co-operation only multiplies evil and that, as evil can only be sustained by violence, withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-co-operation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is either to resign your post and thus dissociate yourself from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent; or to inflict on me the severest penalty if you believe that the system and the law you are



assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is, therefore, injurious to the public weal.

*Young India*, 23-3-1922

## A SWARAJ SCHEME

It was after much misgiving that I accepted the burden of the honour you have done me today. The unique honour for this year should have been bestowed upon Shrimati Sarojini Naidu, who did such wonderful work both in Kenya and South Africa. But it was not to be. The developments both internal and external have necessitated my acceptance of the burden. I know that I shall have your support in my attempt to do justice to the high office to which you have called me.

### RETROSPECTIVE

From the September of 1920 the Congress has been principally an institution for developing strength from within. It has ceased to function by means of resolutions addressed to the Government for redress of grievances. It did so, because it ceased to believe in the beneficial character of the existing system of government. The breach of faith with the Mussalmans of India was the first rude shock to the people's faith in the Government. The Rowlatt Act and O'Dwyerism culminating in the Jallianwala Bagh massacre opened the eyes of the people to the true nature of the system. At the same time it was realized that the existence of the system depended upon the co-operation, whether voluntary or forced, of the people. With the view therefore of mending or ending

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from the Presidential address at the A.I.C.C. session, Belgaum, December 26, 1924



the system, it was decided to try to begin withdrawing voluntary co-operation from the top. At the special session of the Congress at Calcutta in 1920, the boycott of Government titles, law courts, educational institutions, legislative bodies and foreign cloth was resolved upon. All the boycotts were more or less taken up by the parties concerned. Those who could not or would not retire from the Congress. I do not propose to trace the chequered career of the non-co-operation movement. Though not a single boycott was anywhere near completion, every one of them had undoubtedly the effect of diminishing the prestige of the particular institutions boycotted.

The most important boycott was the boycott of violence. Whilst it appeared at one time to be entirely successful, it was soon discovered that the non-violence was only skin-deep. It was the passive non-violence of helplessness, not the enlightened non-violence of resourcefulness. The result was an eruption of intolerance against those who did not non-co-operate. This was violence of a subtler type. In spite, however, of this grave defect, I make bold to say that the propaganda of non-violence checked the outbreak of physical violence which would certainly have broken out, had not non-violent non-co-operation come into being. It is my deliberate conviction that non-violent non-co-operation has given to the people a consciousness of their strength. It has brought to the surface the hidden powers in the people of resistance through suffering. It has caused an awakening among the masses which perhaps no other method could have.

Though, therefore, non-violent non-co-operation has not brought us swaraj, though it has brought about certain deplorable results and though the institutions that were sought to be boycotted are still flourishing, in my humble opinion, non-

violent non-co-operation as a means of attaining political freedom has come to stay and that even its partial success has brought us nearer swaraj. There is no mistaking the fact that the capacity for suffering for the sake of a cause must advance it.

### A HALT

But we are face to face with a situation that compels us to cry a halt. For, whilst individuals hold firmly to their belief in non-co-operation, the majority of those who are immediately concerned have practically lost faith in it, with the exception of boycott of foreign cloth. Scores of lawyers have resumed practice. Some even regret having ever given it up. Many who had given up Councils have returned to them and the number of those who believe in Council-entry is on the increase. Hundreds of boys and girls who gave up Government schools and colleges have repented of their action and have returned to them. I hear that Government schools and colleges can hardly cope with the demand for admission. In these circumstances, these boycotts cannot be worked as part of the national programme, unless the Congress is prepared to do without the classes directly affected. But I hold it to be just as impracticable to keep these classes out of the Congress as it would be now to keep the non co-operators out. They must both remain in the Congress, without either party interfering with or hostilely criticizing the other. What is applicable to Hindu-Muslim unity is, I feel, applicable to the unity among different political groups. We must tolerate each other and trust to time to convert the one or the other to the opposite belief. We must go further. We must plead with the Liberals and others who have seceded to rejoin the Congress. If non-co-operation is suspended, there is no reason why they should keep out. The advance must be



from us Congressmen. We must cordially invite them and make it easy for them to come in.

You are perhaps now able to see why I entered into the agreement with the Swarajists.

#### FOREIGN CLOTH BOYCOTT

You will observe that one boycott has been retained. Out of regard for the sentiment of an English friend the word "boycott" has been changed in the agreement into "refusal to use foreign cloth". There is no doubt a bad odour about the word "boycott". It usually implies hatred. So far as I am concerned, I have not intended the word to bear any such meaning. The boycott has reference not to British but to foreign cloth. That boycott is not merely a right but a duty. It is as much a duty as boycott of foreign waters would be if they were imported to substitute the waters of the Indian rivers. This, however, is a digression.

What I wanted to say was that the agreement saves and emphasizes the boycott of foreign cloth. For me it is an effective substitute for violent methods. Just as certain acts such as personal abuse, irritating conduct, lying, causing hurt and murder are symbols of violence, similarly courtesy, inoffensive conduct, truthfulness, etc., are symbols of non-violence. And so to me is boycott of foreign cloth a symbol of non-violence. Revolutionary crime is intended to exert pressure. But it is the insane pressure of anger and ill will. I contend that non-violent acts exert pressure far more effective than violent acts, for that pressure comes from goodwill and gentleness. Boycott of foreign cloth exerts such pressure. We import the largest amount of foreign cloth from Lancashire. It is also by far the largest of all our

imports, sugar being next. Britain's chief interest centres round the Lancashire trade with India. It is the one thing more than any other that has ruined the Indian peasant and imposed partial idleness upon him by depriving him of the one supplementary occupation he had. Boycott of foreign cloth is therefore a necessity if he is to live. The plan, therefore, is not merely to induce the peasant to refuse to buy the cheap and nice-looking foreign fabric but also by teaching him to utilize his spare hours in carding and spinning and clothing himself in khaddar so woven and thus to save him the cost of buying foreign cloth and, for that matter, even Indian mill-made cloth. Thus, boycott of foreign cloth by means of hand-spinning and hand-weaving, i.e., khaddar, not only saves the peasant's money, but it enables us, workers, to render social service of a first class order. It brings us into direct touch with the villagers. It enables us to give them real political education and teach them to become self-sustained and self-reliant. Organization of khaddar is thus infinitely better than co-operative societies or any other form of village organization. It is fraught with the highest political consequences, because it removes the greatest immoral temptation from Britain's way. I call the Lancashire trade immoral because it was raised and is sustained on the ruin of millions of India's peasants. And one immorality leads to another, the many proved immoral acts of Britain are traceable to this one immoral traffic. If therefore this one great temptation is removed from Britain's path by India's voluntary effort, it would be good for India, good for Britain and, as Britain is today the predominant world-power, good even for humanity.

I do not endorse the proposition that supply follows demand. On the contrary demand is often artificially created by unscrupulous vendors. And if a nation is bound, as I hold it is, like individuals to comply with a code of moral conduct,



then it must consider the welfare of those whose wants it seeks to supply. It is wrong and immoral for a nation to supply for instance intoxicating liquor to those who are addicted to drink. What is true of intoxicants is true of grain or cloth, if the discontinuance of its cultivation or manufacture in the country to which foreign grain or cloth is exported results in enforced idleness or penury. These latter hurt a man's soul and body just as much as intoxication. Depression is but excitement upside down and hence equally disastrous in its results and often more so because we have not yet learnt to regard as immoral or sinful the depression of idleness or penury.

#### MACHINERY

I wish, too, you would dismiss from your minds the views attributed to me about machinery. In the first instance, I am no more trying to present for national acceptance all my views on machinery, than I am presenting the whole of my belief in non-violence. The spinning-wheel is itself an exquisite piece of machinery. My head daily bows in reverence to its unknown inventor. What I do resent is the wanton and wicked destruction of the one cottage industry of India that kept the wolf from the doors of thousands of homes scattered over a surface of 1,900 miles long and 1,500 miles broad.

#### UNTOUCHABILITY

Untouchability is another hindrance to swaraj. Its removal is just as essential for swaraj as the attainment of Hindu-Muslim unity. This is essentially a Hindu question and Hindus cannot claim or take swaraj till they have restored the liberty of the suppressed classes. They have sunk with

the latter's suppression. Historians tell us that the Aryan invaders treated the original inhabitants of Hindustan precisely as the English invaders treat us, if not much worse. If so, our helotry is a just retribution for our having created an untouchable class. The sooner we remove the blot, the better it is for us Hindus. But the priests tell us that untouchability is a divine appointment. I claim to know something of Hinduism. I am certain that the priests are wrong. It is a blasphemy to say that God set apart any portion of humanity as untouchables. And Hindus who are Congressmen have to see to it that they break down the barrier at the earliest possible moment. The Vykam Satyagrahis are showing us the way. They are carrying on their battle with gentleness and firmness. They have patience, courage and faith. Any movement in which these qualities are exhibited becomes irresistible.

I would however warn the Hindu brethren against the tendency which one sees nowadays of exploiting the suppressed classes for a political end. To remove untouchability is a penance that caste Hindus owe to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification required is not of untouchables but of the so-called superior castes. There is no vice that is special to the untouchables, not even dirt and insanitation. It is our arrogance which blinds us "superior" Hindus to our own blemishes and which magnifies those of our down-trodden brethren whom we have suppressed and whom we keep under suppression. Religions like nations are being weighed in the balance. God's grace and revelation are the monopoly of no race or nation. They descend equally upon all who wait upon God. That religion and that nation will be blotted out of the face of the earth, which pins its faith to injustice, untruth or violence. God is Light, not darkness. God is Love, not hate. God is Truth, not untruth. God



alone is great. We his creatures are but dust. Let us be humble and recognize the place of the lowliest of His creatures. Krishna honoured Sudama in his rags as he honoured no one else. Love is the root of religion or sacrifice and this perishable body is the root of self or irreligion, says Tulsidas. Whether we win swaraj or not, the Hindus have to purify themselves before they can hope to revive the Vedic philosophy and make it a living reality.

#### SWARAJ SCHEME

But the spinning-wheel, Hindu-Muslim unity and removal of untouchability are only means to an end. The end we do not know. For me it is enough to know the means. Means and ends are convertible terms in my philosophy of life. But I have long professed my conversion to the view pressed upon the public by Babu Bhagwandas that the public must know the end, nor vaguely but precisely. They must know the full definition of swaraj, i.e., the scheme of swaraj which all India wants and must fight for. Happily the Committee appointed by the All Parties Conference is charged with that mission and let us hope that the Committee will be able to produce a scheme that will be acceptable to all parties. May I suggest for its consideration the following points?

1. The qualification for the franchise should be neither property nor position but manual work, such for example as suggested for the Congress franchise. Literary or property test has proved to be elusive. Manual work gives an opportunity to all who wish to take part in the Government and the well-being of the State.

2. The ruinous military expenditure should be curtailed

to the proportion necessary for protection of life and property in normal times.

3. Administration of justice should be cheapened and with that end in view the final court of appeal should be not in London but in Delhi. Parties to civil suits must be compelled in the majority of cases to refer their disputes to arbitration, the decisions of these panchayats to be final except in cases of corruption or obvious mis-application of law. Multiplicity of intermediate courts should be avoided. Case law should be abolished and the general procedure should be simplified. We have slavishly followed the cumbersome and worn-out English procedure. The tendency in the Colonies is to simplify the procedure so as to make it easy for litigants to plead their own cases.

4. Revenues from intoxicating liquors and drugs should be abolished.

5. Salaries of the civil and military service personnel should be brought down to a level compatible with the general condition of the country.

6. There should be redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis with as complete autonomy as possible for every province for its internal administration and growth.

7. Appointment of a commission to examine all the monopolies given to foreigners and, subject to the findings of the commission, full guarantees to be given for all vested rights justly acquired.

8. Full guarantee of their status to the Indian Chiefs without any hindrance from the Central Government, subject



to the right of asylum to subjects of these States who, not being offenders against the Penal Code, may seek it in self-governing India.

9. Repeal of all arbitrary powers.

10. The highest post to be open to all who may be otherwise fit. Examination for the civil and military service to be in India.

11. Recognition of complete religious freedom to various denominations subject to mutual forbearance.

12. The official language for provincial governments, legislatures and courts, within a definite period, to be the vernacular of the province; of the Privy Council, the final court of appeal, to be Hindustani; the script to be either Devanagari or Persian. The language of the Central Government and of the Central Legislature to be also Hindustani. The language of international diplomacy to be English.

I trust you will not laugh at what may appear to you to be extravagance of thought in the foregoing sketch of some of the requirement of swaraj as I would have it. We may not have the power today to take or receive or do the things I have mentioned. Have we the will? Let us at least cultivate the desire. Before I leave this highly attractive, because speculative, theme, let me assure the Committee in charge of the drafting of a swaraj scheme, that I claim for my suggestion no more attention than it would give to any single individual's. I have incorporated them in my address only to gain greater currency for them than they would perhaps otherwise receive.

## INDEPENDENCE

The above sketch presupposes the retention of the British connection on perfectly honourable and absolutely equal terms. But I know that there is a section among Congressmen who want under every conceivable circumstance complete independence of Britain. They will not have even an equal partnership. In my opinion if the British Government mean what they say and honestly help us to equality, it would be a greater triumph than a complete severance of the British connection. I would therefore strive for swaraj within the Empire, but would not hesitate to sever all connection, if severance became a necessity through Britain's own fault. I would thus throw the burden of separation on the British people. The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent States warring one against another but a federation of friendly inter-dependent States. The consummation of that event may be far off. I want to make no grand claim for our country. But I see nothing grand or impossible about our expressing our readiness for universal inter-dependence rather than independence. It should rest with Britain to say that she will have no real alliance with India. I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting the independence. Any scheme that I would frame, while Britain declares her goal about India to be complete equality within the Empire, would be that of alliance and not of independence without alliance. I would urge every Congressman not to be insistent on independence in each and every case, not because there is anything impossible about it, but because it is wholly unnecessary till it has become perfectly manifest that Britain really means subjugation in spite of her declaration to the contrary.



## THE SWARAJ PARTY

So far, then, I have considered the contents of the agreement and the general questions arising from it. Not much need be said about the status of equality given to the Swaraj Party. I wish I could have avoided it, not because the party is not worthy, but because I do not share its views about Council-entry. But if I must remain in the Congress and even lead it, I must recognize facts as they are. It was easy enough for me to go out of the Congress or to decline the honour of presiding. But it was not, so I thought and still think, in the interest of the country for me to take that step. The Swaraj Party represents if not a majority, at least a strong and growing minority in the Congress. If I was not to divide the Congress on the issue of the status, I was bound to agree to its conditions so long as they were not in conflict with my conscience. They are not in my opinion unreasonable. The Swarajists want to use the name of the Congress for their policy. A formula had to be found for their doing so, without their pledging or binding the No-changers to their policy. One of the ways of doing it was to give it the authority and the responsibility both financial and executive with regard to the framing and the prosecution of their policy. The Congress as a whole could not guide that policy without sharing the responsibility. And as I could not take the responsibility, and as I apprehended no No-changer can, I could not be a party to shaping that policy, nor could I shape it without my heart in it. And heart can only go where belief is. I know that the sole authority to the Swaraj Party to use the name of the Congress in regard to the Council programme makes somewhat awkward the position of the other parties wishing to join the Congress. But I fear it is inevitable. The Swaraj Party cannot be expected to surrender the advantage it possesses. After all it wants the advantage not for itself but for the

service of the country. All parties have or can have that ambition or no other. I hope therefore that the others will join the Congress and work from within to affect the course of the country's politics. Dr. Besant has led the way in that direction. I know that she would have many things done otherwise, but she is content to come in hoping to bring round the electorate to her view by working within the Congress. The No-changers can, in my humble opinion, vote for the agreement with a clear conscience. The only national programme jointly to be worked by all the parties is khaddar, Hindu-Muslim unity and, for the Hindus, removal of untouchability. Is not this after all that they want?

#### PURELY SOCIAL REFORM ?

It has been suggested that this programme turns the Congress into a purely social reform organization. I beg to differ from that view. Everything that is absolutely essential for swaraj is more than merely social work and must be taken up by the Congress. It is not suggested that the Congress should confine its activity for all time to this work only. But it is suggested that the Congress should for the coming year concentrate the whole of its energy on the work of construction, or as I have otherwise described it, the work of internal growth.

Nor does the agreement exhaust the list of constructive items that the Congress must handle. Those I am about to mention are of the highest importance, but they, being non-contentious and not absolutely essential for swaraj as the foregoing three items, find no mention in the agreement.



## NATIONAL SCHOOLS

One such is the maintenance of national educational institutions. Probably the public do not know that next to khaddar the running of national educational institutions has been the most successful. These cannot be given up so long as even a few pupils are left. It must be a point of honour with the respective provinces to keep up their colleges and schools. Suspension of non-co-operation should not have any injurious effect on these institutions. On the contrary, greater effort than ever before should be made to maintain and strengthen them. Most provinces have their national schools and colleges. Gujarat alone has a national university maintained at an annual cost of Rs. 1,00,000 and having control of three colleges and 70 schools with 9,000 pupils. It has acquired its own ground at Ahmedabad and has already spent Rs. 2,05,323 in buildings. Throughout the country, finest and most silent work has been done by the non-co-operating students. Theirs is a great and noble sacrifice. From a worldly standpoint they have perhaps lost the prospect of brilliant careers. I suggest to them however that from the national standpoint they have gained more than they have lost. They left their schools or colleges, because it was through them that the youth of the nation were insulted and humiliated in the Punjab. The first link in the chain of our bondage is forced in these institutions. The corresponding national institutions, however inefficiently managed they may be, are the factories where the first instruments of our freedom are forged. After all, the hope of the future centres round the boys and girls studying in these national institutions. I therefore regard the upkeep of these institutions as a first charge on provincial funds. But these institutions to be truly national must be clubs for promoting real Hindu-Muslim unity, they must be also nurseries for training Hindu

boys and girls to regard untouchability as a blot upon Hinduism and a crime against humanity. They should be training schools for expert spinners and weavers. If the Congress retains its belief in the potency of the spinning-wheel and khaddar, one has a right to expect these institutions to supply the science of the spinning-wheel. They should be also factories for khaddar production. This is not to say that the boys and girls are not to have any literary training. But I do maintain that the training of the hand and the heart must go hand-in-hand with that of the head. The quality and the usefulness of a national school or college will be measured not by the brilliance of the literary attainment of its scholars but by the strength of the national character, and deftness in handling the carding-bow, the spinning-wheel and the loom. Whilst I am most anxious that no national school or college should be closed down, I should have not the slightest hesitation in closing down a school or college that is indifferent to the admission of non-Hindu boys or that shuts its door against the entry of untouchables or that has not carding and spinning as an indispensable part of the training. The time is past when we can be satisfied with the word "national" on the signboards of the school and the knowledge that it is not affiliated to any Government university or is not otherwise controlled by the Government. I must also not omit to point out that the tendency in many national institutions still is to neglect the vernaculars and Hindustani. Many teachers have not realized the necessity of imparting instruction through the vernaculars or Hindustani. I rejoice to observe that Sjt. Gangadharrao has arranged a meeting of national educationalists to exchange experiences on the several points mentioned by me and to evolve, if possible, a general plan of education and action.



## UNEMPLOYED NON-CO-OPERATORS

This is perhaps the proper place to mention those lawyers who have given up practice, and schoolmasters and other Government employees who have given up Government service at the call of the nation. I know that there are many such men who find it hard to make the two ends meet. They deserve national support. The Khadi Board and the national schools and colleges are the two services that can take in almost an unlimited number of honest and industrious men who are willing to learn and labour and are satisfied with a modest allowance. I observe a tendency not to accept any remuneration for national service. This desire to serve without remuneration is praiseworthy, but all cannot satisfy it. Every labourer is worthy of his hire. No country can produce thousands of unpaid whole-time workers. We must therefore develop an atmosphere in which a patriot would consider it an honour to serve the country and accept an allowance for such service.

## NEED FOR SANCTION

The Congress, therefore, to be worthy of its trust, must device a sanction to back its demands. Before we can forge the sanction, we Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, etc., must unite and so should Swarajists, No-changers, Liberals, Home Rulers, Muslim Leaguers and others. If we can but speak with a united voice and know our own mind, it would be well. If we can develop the power to keep foreign cloth away from our land, it would be better. We are ready then for the sanction.

## MY FAITH

Let me state my faith; as a Congressman wishing to keep the Congress intact, I advise suspension of non-co-operation, for I see that the nation is not ready for it. But as an individual, I cannot—will not—do so as long as the Government remains what it is. It is not merely a policy with me, it is an article of faith. Non-co-operation and civil disobedience are but different branches of the same tree called satyagraha. It is my *kalpadruma*, my *Jam-i-Jam*—the Universal Provider. Satyagraha is search for Truth; and God is Truth. Ahimsa or non-violence is the light that reveals that Truth to me. Swaraj for me is part of that Truth. This satyagraha did not fail me in South Africa, Kheda or Champaran and in a host of other cases I could mention. It excludes all violence or hate. Therefore, I cannot and will not hate Englishmen. Nor will I bear their yoke. I must fight unto death the unholy attempt to impose British methods and British institutions on India. But I combat the attempt with non-violence. I believe in the capacity of India to offer non-violent battle to the English rulers. The experiment has not failed. It has succeeded, but not to the extent we had hoped and desired. I do not despair. On the contrary I believe that India will come to her own in the near future, and that only through satyagraha. The proposed suspension is part of the experiment. Non-co-operation need never be resumed if the programme sketched by me can be fulfilled. Non-violent non-co-operation in some form or other, whether through the Congress or without it, will be resumed if the programme fails. I have repeatedly stated satyagraha never fails and that one perfect satyagrahi is enough to vindicate Truth. Let us all strive to be perfect satyagrahis. The striving does not require any quality



unattainable by the lowliest among us. For satyagraha is an attribute of the spirit within. It is latent in everyone of us. Like swaraj it is our birthright. Let us know it.

*Young India*, 26-12-1924

## BRAHMACHARYA

I have been asked to say a few words on brahmacharya. There are certain subjects about which I write in the *Navajivan* when occasion demands, but on which I seldom, if ever, speak. Brahmacharya is one of these. It is a subject which is most difficult to explain by the use of mere words. It is a way of life, and one which is very hard to achieve. The brahmacharya you want to hear about is ordinary brahmacharya. But there is another and more difficult brahmacharya which is defined as the control of all our senses. Even the observance of ordinary brahmacharya, the Shastras say, is difficult. This view is ninety-nine per cent correct. I take the liberty to say that it is short of the whole truth by one per cent. It appears difficult because we do not practise control of the other senses, especially of the palate. Those who can control their palate will find it easy to observe brahmacharya. Biologists say that men do not practise as much brahmacharya as even the beasts do. This is true. The reason is that the beasts have control over their palate. Not that they exercise this control consciously, but it is part of their nature. They feed chiefly on grass which they eat to the extent of their hunger. They eat to live, they do not live to eat. But we do the opposite. The mother gives her child various eatables so that he may enjoy various taste sensations. She thinks that the best form of love for her child is to give him the maximum number of things to eat and enjoy. In fact by so doing we dull the sharpness of the



palate, for taste lies in hunger. A plain loaf of bread will taste sweeter to a hungry man than a *laddu* to a man who has already eaten his fill. We use a number of spices in various dishes to titillate the palate and arouse our passions. Then, we complain about the difficulty of practising brahmacharya. God has granted us eyes to behold things but we foul them by seeing things we should not see. Why should not a mother learn the *gayatri* mantra and teach it to her child? Even if she does not go into its deeper meaning, she could teach her child to worship the life-giving Sun. Both Arya Samajists and Sanatanis worship the Sun. The mere worship of the Sun is only touching the fringe of the true meaning of the *gayatri*. What does worship of the Sun mean? It means that we should hold our heads high, behold it and purify our eyes. The singers of this mantra were seers. By the worship of the Sun they suggested that nowhere else would we see the drama, the delight and the beauty which we see in sunrise. There can be no stage more sublime than the sky and no director of a drama more competent than God. But how many mothers are there who show their children, after they have washed their faces, the morning sky? What the boy learns at school may, perhaps, help him, in course of time, to become a high Government official. But who has estimated the value of what the boy learns at home consciously and unconsciously? Our parents cover the bodies of their children with an unnecessary amount of clothes to make them look more beautiful. But does it really add to the beauty of children? Clothes are meant for covering the body, for protecting it from heat and cold, and not for adding to its beauty. He who observes brahmacharya has a body as strong and hard as steel. We ruin the physique of the child by coddling him. We want to preserve the warmth of his body by keeping him indoors, but the heat thus produced can be likened to an itch. We have made our

bodies delicate and useless for hard work by excessive care. So much about clothes.

We also produce undesirable impressions on the mind of the child by our ill-considered conversation at home. We talk about his marriage. He is allowed to see things which make him think about it and all that it means. It is indeed a wonder why we have not become barbarians! In spite of the opportunities to break the bonds of morality and good conduct, those bonds are still intact in our society. Man has been so constituted that he saves himself, despite the many opportunities to corrupt and ruin himself. If these hindrances in the way of practising brahmacharya are removed, it will become much easier.

Even under such conditions, we want to compete with others in the matter of physical strength and fitness. There are two ways of doing it—one divine, and the other devilish. The devilish way approves of all the available means—without distinction of right and wrong—to develop the strength of the body, such as eating anything whatsoever, including beef, etc. If one wants to develop and build one's body after the manner of a devil, one has to eat such forbidden food.

But if one wants to build one's body in the divine manner, brahmacharya is the only means open to him. I have been described as a *naishthik* brahmachari in the welcome address given to me. The least that I can say about it is that the writer of the address is ignorant of the true meaning of this term. Otherwise, why did it not occur to him that a man who is married and has children cannot possibly be called a *naishthik* brahmachari? A *naishthik* brahmachari never suffers from fever or headache; is neither afflicted with cough nor appendicitis. The brilliance of spirit, born of



*naishthik* brahmacharya, is many times more than what I have. I am not yet a perfect brahmachari, though it is true I should like to become one. I have placed before you, from my own experience, a few examples showing the distinguishing features of brahmacharya. Being a brahmachari does not mean that I cannot touch any woman, even my sister. But it does mean that just as the touch of a piece of paper does not produce any wrong sentiments or deeds in my mind, so also the feel of a woman should not produce any wrong thoughts or acts. If brahmacharya prevents me from touching and nursing my ailing sister, that kind of brahmacharya would be absolutely worthless. We can call ourselves brahmacharis only if our minds remain undisturbed at the touch of even the most beautiful woman. If you wish your boys and girls to grow into worthy brahmacharis, you must give them the right kind of education, and not you, but only a brahmachari like me, however, imperfect, can draw up a scheme for such education.

#### *True Education*

## CHRISTIANITY AND HINDUISM

Not many of you perhaps know that my association with Christians, not Christians so called but real Christians, dates from 1889, when as a lad I found myself in London; and that association has grown riper as the years have rolled on. In South Africa, where I found myself in the midst of inhospitable surroundings, I was able to make hundreds of Christian friends. I came in touch with the late Mr. Spencer Watton, Director of South Africa General Mission, and, later, with the great divine Rev. Mr. A. Murray and several others.

My acquaintance, therefore, this evening with so many missionaries is by no means a new thing. There was even a time in my life when a very sincere and intimate friend of mine, a great and good Quaker, had designs on me. He thought that I was too good not to become a Christian. I was sorry to have disappointed him. One missionary friend of mine in South Africa still writes to me and asks me, 'How is it with you?' I have always told this friend that so far as I know, it is all well with me. If it was prayer that these friends expected me to make, I was able to tell them that every day the heart-felt prayer within the closed door of my closet went to the Almighty to show me light and give wisdom and courage to follow that light.

In answer to promises made to one of these Christian friends of mine, I thought it my duty to see one of the biggest

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Speech at a meeting of missionaries, Y.M.C.A., Calcutta, July 28, 1925



of Indian Christians, as I was told he was—the late Kali Charan Banerjee. I went over to him—I am telling you of the deep search that I have undergone in order that I might leave no stone unturned to find out the true path—I went to him with an absolutely open mind and in a receptive mood, and I met him also under circumstances which were most affecting. I found that there was much in common between Mr. Banerjee and myself. His simplicity, his humility, his courage, his truthfulness, all these things I have all along admired. He met me when his wife was on her death-bed. You cannot imagine a more impressive scene, a more ennobling circumstance. I told Mr. Banerjee, ‘I have come to you as a seeker’—this was in 1901—‘I have come to you in fulfilment of a sacred promise I have made to some of my dearest Christian friends that I will leave no stone unturned to find out the true light.’ I told him that I had given my friends the assurance that no worldly gain would keep me away from the light, if I could but see it. Well, I am not going to engage you in giving a description of the little discussion that we had between us. It was very good, very noble. I came away, not sorry, not dejected, not disappointed, but I felt sad that even Mr. Banerjee could not convince me. This was my final deliberate striving to realize Christianity as it was presented to me. Today my position is that though I admire much in Christianity, I am unable to identify myself with orthodox Christianity. I must tell you in all humility that Hinduism as I know it entirely satisfies my soul, fills my whole being and I find a solace in the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* that I miss even in the Sermon on the Mount. Not that I do not prize the ideal presented therein, not that some of the precious teachings in the Sermon on the Mount have not left a deep impression upon me, but I must confess to you that when doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and when I see not one ray of

light on the horizon I turn to the *Bhagavad Gita*, and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been full of external tragedies and if they have not left any visible and indelible effect on me, I owe it to the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

I have told you all these things in order to make it absolutely clear to you where I stand, so that I may have, if you will, closer touch with you. I must add that I did not stop at studying the Bible and the commentaries and other books on Christianity that my friends placed in my hands; but I said to myself, if I was to find my satisfaction through reasoning, I must study the scriptures of other religions also and make my choice. And I turned to the Koran. I tried to understand what I could of Judaism as distinguished from Christianity. I studied Zoroastrianism and I came to the conclusion that all religions were right, but every one of them was imperfect, imperfect naturally and necessarily,—because they were interpreted with our poor intellects, sometimes with our poor hearts, and more often misinterpreted. In all religions, I found to my grief, that there were various and even contradictory interpretations of some texts, and I said to myself, 'Not these things for me. If I want the satisfaction of my soul, I must feel my way. I must wait silently upon God and ask Him to guide me.' There is a beautiful verse in Sanskrit which says 'God helps only when man feels utterly helpless and utterly humble.' Some of you have come from the Tamil land. When I was studying Tamil, I found in one of the books of Dr. Pope a Tamil proverb which means 'God helps the helpless.' I have given you this life-story of my own experience for you to ponder over.

You, the missionaries, come to India thinking that you



come to a land of heathens, of idolators, of men who do not know God. One of the greatest of Christian divines, Bishop Heber, wrote the two lines which have always left a sting on me: "Where every prospect pleases, and man alone is vile." I wish he had not written them. My own experience in my travels throughout India has been to the contrary. I have gone from one end of the country to the other, without any prejudice, in a relentless search after truth, and I am not able to say that here in this fair land, watered by the great Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Jumna, man is vile. He is not vile. He is as much a seeker after truth as you and I are, possibly more so. This reminds me of a French book translated for me by a French friend. It is an account of an imaginary expedition in search of knowledge. One party landed in India and found Truth and God personified, in a little pariah's hut. I tell you there are many such huts belonging to the untouchables where you will certainly find God. They do not reason but they persist in their belief that God is. They depend upon God for His assistance and find it too. There are many stories told throughout the length and breadth of India about these noble untouchables. Vile as some of them may be, there are noblest specimens of humanity in their midst. But does my experience exhaust itself merely with the untouchables? No. I am here to tell you that there are non-Brahmins, there are Brahmins who are as fine specimens of humanity as you will find in my place on the earth. There are Brahmins today in India who are embodiments of self-sacrifice, godliness, and humility. There are Brahmins who are devoting themselves body and soul to the service of untouchables, with no expectation of reward from the untouchables, but with execration from orthodoxy. They do not mind it, because in serving pariahs they are serving God. I can quote chapter and verse from my experience. I place these facts before you in all humility for the

simple reason that you may know this land better, the land to which you have come to serve. You are here to find out the distress of the people of India and remove it. But I hope you are here also in a receptive mood and, if there is anything that India has to give, you will not stop your ears, you will not close your eyes and steel your hearts, but open up your ears, eyes and, most of all, your hearts to receive all that may be good in this land. I give you my assurance that there is a great deal of good in India. Do not flatter yourselves with the belief that a mere recital of that celebrated verse in St. John makes a man a Christian. If I have read the Bible correctly I know many men who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ or have even rejected the official interpretation of Christianity will, probably, if Jesus came in our midst today in the flesh, be owned by him more than many of us. I therefore ask you to approach the problem before you with open-heartedness, and humility.

I was engaged in a friendly conversation with some missionaries this morning. I do not want to relate that conversation. But I do want to say that they are fine specimens of humanity. They did not want to misunderstand me, but I had to pass nearly one hour and a half in my attempt to explain to them that, in writing what I had written, I had not written anything in a spirit of ill will or hatred towards Englishmen. I was hard put to it to carry that conviction. In fact, I do not know whether I carried that conviction to them at all. If salt loseth its savour, wherewith will it be salted? If I could not drive home the truth that was in me to the three friends who certainly came with open minds, how should I fare with others? It has often occurred to me that a seeker after truth has to be silent. I know the wonderful efficacy of silence. I visited a Trappist monastery in South Africa. A



beautiful place it was. Most of the inmates of that place were under a vow of silence. I enquired of the father the motive of it and he said that the motive was apparent. "We are frail human beings. We do not know very often what we say. If we want to listen to the still small voice that is always speaking within us, it will not be heard if we continually speak." I understood that precious lesson. I know the secret of silence. I do not know just now as I speak to you whether it would not have been wise if I had said nothing to those friends beyond saying, "We shall know each other better when the mists have rolled away." As I speak to you, I feel humiliated. Why did I argue with these friends? But I say these things to you, first of all, to make this confession and, secondly, to tell you also that, if you will refuse to see the other side, if you will refuse to understand what India is thinking, then you will deny yourselves the real privilege of service. I have told my missionary friends 'Noble as you are, you have isolated yourselves from the people whom you want to serve.' I cannot help recalling to you the conversation I related in Darjeeling at the Missionary Language School. Lord Salisbury was waited upon by a deputation of missionaries in connection with China and this deputation wanted protection. I cannot recall the exact words, but give you the purport of the answer Lord Salisbury gave. He said : "Gentlemen, if you want to go to China to preach the message of Christianity, then do not ask for assistance of temporal power. Go with your lives in your hands and if the people of China want to kill you, imagine that you have been killed in the service of God." Lord Salisbury was right. Christian missionaries come to India under the shadow, or if you like, under the protection of a temporal power, and it creates an impassable bar.

If you give me statistics that so many orphans have been

reclaimed and brought to the Christian faith, I would accept them, but I do not feel convinced thereby that it is your mission. In my opinion, your mission is infinitely superior to that. You want to find true men and women in India and if you want to do that, you will have to go to the lowly cottages not to give them something, might be to take something from them. A true friend as I claim to be of the missionaries of India and of the Europeans, I speak to you what I feel from the bottom of my heart. I miss receptiveness, humility, willingness on your part to identify yourselves with the masses of India. I have talked straight from my heart. May it find a response from your hearts.

Young India, 6-8-1925



## ON MUSIC

There is a famous classical saying which has now become a proverb that the man "that hath no music in himself" is either an ascetic or a beast. We are far from being ascetics, and to the extent that we are devoid of music we are near allied to beasts. To know music is to transfer it to life. The prevalent discord of today is an indication of our sad plight. There can be no swaraj where there is no harmony, no music.

Where there is discord and everyone striking his own tune, there is bad government or anarchy. Work for swaraj fails to appeal to us because we have no music in us. When we have millions of people singing together in harmony or taking God's name in unison, making one music, we shall have taken the first step to swaraj. If we cannot achieve this simple thing, how can we win swaraj ?

We have free music classes in Ahmedabad for the last three years conducted by one who is an expert. And yet we have to be satisfied today with a roll-attendance of 10 and a regular attendance of four. It is poor consolation indeed ; but we live in hope and Dr. Hariprasad, who sees a way of hope when he finds even one *pol* out of the hundreds in Ahmedabad clean and tidy, might well feel satisfied that we have at least four regular music lovers.

Where there is filth and squalour and misery there can be no music. It implies an atmosphere quite the contrary. If we put a broad interpretation on music, i.e., if we mean by it union, concord, mutual help, it may be said that in no department of life can we dispense with it.

Music today has been regarded to mean the vocal effort of a singing girl. We fight shy of sending our sisters and daughters to music schools. There seems to be a superstition that their voice is best when it is devoid of sweetness. That explains why Dr. Hariprasad has had to express satisfaction with an attendance of ten students.

Music, truly speaking, is an ancient and sacred art. The hymns of Samaveda are a mine of music, and no ayat of the Koran can be recited unmusically. David's Psalms transport you to raptures and remind you of the hymns from Samaveda. Let us revive this art and patronize the school of music.

We see Hindu and Mussalman musicians sitting cheek by jowl and partaking in musical concerts. When shall we see the same fraternal union in other affairs of our life? We shall then have the name of Rama and Rahman simultaneously on our lips.

I am glad some of you here are patronizing music. If many more send their children to the music class, it will be a part of their contribution to national uplift.

But to go a step further. If we would see music in millions of our poor homes, we should all wear khadi and spin. The music we have had today was sweet indeed but it is a privilege of the favoured few. The music of the spinning-wheel can be a free gift to all and is therefore sweeter. It is



the hope and solace and mainstay of the millions, and for me therefore the truly good music.

We shall consider music in a narrow sense to mean the ability to sing and play an instrument well while carrying a tune and marking the correct beats of time but, in its wider sense, that is to say that, true music is created only when life is attuned to a single tune and a single-time-beat. Music is born only where the strings of the heart are not out of tune. The experiment with music will be regarded as a successful one when crores of people in the entire country will start speaking with the same voice. In my opinion true music is implicit in khadi and the spinning-wheel. So long as that has not been made explicit, the country is going to welcome anarchy or misrule and it will continue to be in a state of bondage.

*Young India, 15-4-1926*

## PROHIBITION

I am supposed to talk to you this morning about prohibition. I don't remember having talked to a select audience on "Prohibition" in my life except at one time, although I can claim to be a staunch prohibitionist as I am a staunch khaddarite. My life has been so cast that I get little chance to talking on such matters to a select audience. The one reason for that flaw in me is that I am a crank or I am supposed to be a crank, and therefore very often before a select audience I feel like a fish out of water. All cranks are necessarily extremists and, where others feel the necessity for caution and moderation and such like about things that matter in life, I feel as if I am nowhere, as if I have no place. When someone says to me that in this practical world I must go slowly, I become impatient and tell him, how can you go slowly in a matter of prohibition? You won't talk like that to a woman whose husband is a drunkard." I have lived in a family where the husband happened to be a drunkard. That was in Pretoria in 1893. The lady tried to make both ends meet and was always in dread as to what would happen when her lord and master returned home. If I had told her that "In this practical world we must go slowly", she would not have allowed me to continue as her co-tenant. You may imagine me to be in that plight but not with one husband, not one but thousands of husbands. How can you ask me to wait? I become impatient, angry and, non-violent though I am, you will see fierceness in my eyes. I said the same



thing to Mr. Anderson, the Secretary of the Temperance Association. I feel strongly about it. There are more things about which my feelings are strong and speech becomes useless for me. Those are really sacred things which I keep in my bosom and when opportunity offers itself I express my views strongly which the world cannot possibly mistake.

In this matter of prohibition we have some Englishmen with us, because they happen to be missionaries or Christians. I do not know whether there are other Englishmen with us in this matter. They are all for some purpose too practical. They say we should realize the difficulties of Government. Why should I realize the difficulties of Government in this matter? The difficulties are purely financial and nothing else. There are three acid tests in this connection.

Not one Englishman has yet told me that prohibition is an impossibility in India except for finance. Everybody says: "Oh yes. You want to make India bear the burden of additional taxation by the introduction of prohibition, for the education of your children, etc." I would like India to become a pauper rather than that India should have lakhs and lakhs of drunkards in her midst in order to educate her children, or I would have Indian children illiterate rather than have drunkenness in the land as the price of their education. But when I am called upon to become a party to additional taxation I say, "Hands off"; because there are other ways in which you can make up this financial loss. I think Government made the initial blunder of considering *abkari* as a source of revenue. It should never have been considered a source of revenue and it is not to be a source of revenue. And my grievance is definite and tangible that this source of revenue should have been left in charge of the transferred departments to meet the charges of education,

sanitation, etc., so that our ministers have to fall back upon this immoral, sinful and hideous source of revenue. There is nothing so sinful as this kind of revenue. It is difficult to contain myself and I have therefore to talk to you in strained language.

I feel that so far as India is concerned she has a complete case for prohibition and not prohibition piece-meal in one or two districts. I have read the speech of the Madras Excise Minister. I am sorry I have had to write something criticizing that speech in the coming issue of the *Young India*. The method of experimenting in one or two districts does not appeal to me. I shall not be surprised if he makes the experiment in one or two districts and if the experiment fails then it would be said that prohibition can never be tried and it can never be successful. You will try to do the right thing in the wrong manner and then denounce the right thing instead of the wrong manner. The country is in favour of prohibition. If it is a question of lakhs and lakhs of signatures in favour of prohibition it is merely a matter of organization. I have not found a single place where there has been really agitation against prohibition except when it is manufactured and financed also. There are States where territorial prohibition has been declared and where not a single man has come forward to say "We want a shop at least here." In one of the States Europeans who consumed whisky and brandy are exempted. But, we are in this matter terribly handicapped; we have as our rulers or Governors those who do not consider drink as a crime or immorality. I have myself English friends who laugh at me when I talk of prohibition. I have great regard for them. They seem to think that if they drink in moderation they would not lose their sense and would not become brutes. I have myself seen these friends not only losing their sense, but becoming



brutes. I have seen many friends losing self-control when they drink. They are first class men. But when they drink they become asses. It may be excusable to have spirituous liquor in countries near the north pole. There is no need in this country at all for drink. Yet some agitation is going on here against prohibition. I had from someone a pile of anti-prohibition pamphlets, published anonymously. They constituted a hymn in praise of liquor. Medical, scriptural and all sorts of authorities have been quoted in favour of drinking in moderation and the whole thing has been presented in such an insidiously attractive form that a man who has not his wits about him may easily become a convert to the drink habit.

If you are a fierce prohibitionist like myself and if you will agitate from one end of the country to the other for prohibition, you will certainly succeed. Let us not fall into the financial trap that is laid for us. Our position should be absolutely clear. It is not our purpose to find the finances. Those who committed the initial blunder must retrace their steps. There is also a way out of the financial difficulty. Cut out 25 crores from the crores upon crores you spend upon military expenditure. The military expenditure has been jumping from day to day. If you prepare a chart it would show a staggering growth of that expenditure. You can cut out a heavy slice from that expenditure. I must not go into the political history of the question. Whatever deficit that is found in connection with the *abkari* revenue should be made good out of military expenditure and no other. There should be no additional taxation on this score. The result will be that in 10 years' time the revenue of the Government will increase enormously and that is the experience of countries where prohibition has been tried.

Do not believe the interested writings in newspapers that total prohibition has been a failure in America. Scarcely an American who comes to India goes away without seeing me. These Americans and the literature published by the Prohibition League give the testimony that the total effect of prohibition is to the good of the country although they have not been able to claim all the brilliant results that they had thought they would be able to have. There is no public opinion in America supporting the removal of prohibition. The Government is their own government and people are satisfied with the state of things there. The labourer leads a sober and honest life there. Is not that sufficient consideration for loss of revenue? Such a state of things exists in another part of the world but not in India unfortunately. The experience of countries which have tried prohibition is that the people have become better and that the country has not been financially ruined. No ruin, no financial crisis will befall India if prohibition is introduced in India. It is the solemn duty of every one of us to see the use of drink wiped out of the land altogether if we possibly can. If I had the power and if I could have my way, I would do so today.

I come to picketing. I confess that some pickets were violent; but the real reason for Government not tolerating picketing was the loss of revenue. People in Bihar all of a sudden became teetotallers and they were faithful to the pickets. In Assam the same thing happened. The opium dens were closed for the time being. It was a thing too terrible for Government to contemplate. There was ample evidence to show that picketing was useful and necessary and it conferred immense benefit upon India. It showed the possibility of prohibition. In America prohibition has created a tremendous spiritual upheaval. But the task of creating that spiritual consciousness was great in America. But we



in India have not the hundredth part of the difficulty that the Americans had had to surmount. They had to surmount the American nature itself. Here it is not so, for the atmosphere is favourable to prohibition. Therefore you need not go here cautiously. Arm-chair politicians who have no knowledge of the conditions of India do not distinguish between American and Indian life. They cannot see that we can attain prohibition if only you have the will and courage.

I make a distinction between opium and drink. Opium acts as an opiate and makes a man an idiot, whereas drink makes a man a beast. A woman would rather have her husband an idiot than a drunkard. I am willing to make an exception for the use of liquor or brandy for medicinal purposes. I make also the distinction between England and India. What is good enough for England is not necessarily good enough for India. If we allow this drink problem to continue, our posterity will curse us.

*The Hindu*, 6-9-1927

## THE PLACE OF JESUS

For many years I have regarded Jesus of Nazareth as one among the mighty teachers that the world has had, and I say this in all humility. I claim humility for this expression because this is exactly what I feel. Of course, Christians claim a higher place for Jesus of Nazareth than I, as a non-Christian and a Hindu, am able to feel. I purposely use the word "feel" instead of "give" because I consider that neither I nor anybody else can possibly arrogate to himself the claim of giving a place to a great man.

For the great teachers of mankind have not had their places given to them. That place has belonged to them as a matter of right, as a matter of service; but it is the privilege of the lowest and humblest amongst us to feel certain things about them. The relation between ourselves and the great teachers is somewhat after the style of the relation between wife and husband. It would be a terrible thing, a tragic thing, if I were to argue out intellectually for myself what place I was to give to the wife in my heart. It is not, indeed, a matter of my giving at all. She takes the place that belongs to her as a matter of right in my heart. It is a matter purely for feeling. Thus I can say that Jesus occupies in my heart the place of one of the great teachers who have had a considerable influence on my life.

I say to the seventy-five per cent of Hindus receiving



instruction in this college that your lives also will be incomplete unless you reverently study the teaching of Jesus. I have come to the conclusion in my own experience that those who, no matter to what faith they belong, reverently study the teaching of other faiths, broaden instead of narrowing their own hearts. Personally I do not regard any of the great religions of the world as false. All have served to enrich mankind, and are now even serving their purpose. A liberal education should include, as I have put it, a reverent study of all other faiths.

The message of Jesus is contained in the Sermon on the Mount, unadulterated and taken as a whole. Even in connection with the Sermon on the Mount my own humble interpretation of the message is in many respects different from the orthodox. When I was prematurely discharged from jail, C.F. Andrews than whom I do not own on this earth a closer friend showed me a letter addressed by the bishops to their flock. It may be presumptuous for me to say so, but I did not agree with their interpretation of Christ's words.

One's own religion is after all a matter between oneself and one's Maker. But if I feel impelled to share my thoughts with you, it is because I want to enlist your sympathy in my search for truth, and because so many Christian friends are deeply interested in my thoughts on the teachings of Jesus and wish to know [what place I give to Jesus in my heart.

If, then, I had to face only the Sermon on the Mount and my own interpretation of it, I should not hesitate to say, "Oh, yes, I am a Christian." But I know that at the present moment if I said any such thing I would lay myself open to

the gravest misinterpretation.

But negatively I can tell you that to my mind much of that which passes for Christianity is a negation of the Sermon on the Mount. Please mark my words carefully. I am not at the present moment speaking especially of Christian conduct: I am speaking of Christian belief, of Christianity as it is understood in the West. I am painfully aware of the fact that conduct everywhere falls far short of belief. Therefore I do not say this by way of criticism. I know from the treasures of my own experience that, although I am every moment of my life trying to live up to my professions, nevertheless my conduct falls short of these professions. Far therefore be it from me to say this in a spirit of criticism. But I am placing before you my fundamental difficulties with regard to the appearance of Christianity in the world and the formulation of Christian beliefs.

There is one thing which came forcibly to me in my early studies of the Bible. It seized me immediately when I read one passage. The text was this: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you." I tell you that if you will understand, appreciate, and act up to the spirit of this passage, then you will not even need to know what place Jesus, or any other teacher, occupies in your heart or my heart. If you will do this moral scavenger's work, so as to clean and purify your hearts and get them ready, you will find that all these mighty teachers will take their places without any invitation from us. That, to my mind, is the basis of all sound education. The culture of the mind must be subservient to the culture of the heart. May God help you to become pure!



When I began as a prayerful student to study Christian literature in South Africa in 1893, I asked myself again and again, "Is this Christianity?" And I could only say, "No, no. Certainly this that I see is not Christianity." And the deepest in me tells me that I was right; for it was unworthy of Jesus and untrue to the Sermon on the Mount.

I claim to be a man of faith and prayer, and even if I were to be cut to pieces, I trust God would give me the strength not to deny Him, but to assert that He is. The Mussalmans says: "He is, and there is no one else." The Christian says the same thing, and so does the Hindu. If I may venture to say so, the Buddhist also says the same thing, only in different words. It is true that we may each of us be putting our own interpretation on the word "God". We must of necessity do so; for God embraces, not only this tiny globe of ours, but millions and billions of such globes and worlds beyond worlds. How can we, little crawling creatures, possibly measure His greatness, His boundless love, His infinite compassion? So great is His infinite love and pity that He allows man insolently to deny Him, to wrangle about Him, and even to cut the throat of his fellow-man!

Thus, though we may utter the same words about God, they may not bear the same meaning for us all. But what does that matter? We do not need to proselytize either by our speech or by our writing. We can only do so really with our lives. Let our lives be open books for all to study.

Would that I could persuade all my missionary friends to take this view of their mission! Then there would be no distrust, or suspicion, or jealousy, or dissension amongst us in these religious matters, but only harmony and peace.

Because of its Western, external appearance, we in India have come to distrust the Christian missionary endeavour that has reached us from the West.

The one deduction I would like you students to draw from all this is that you yourselves should not be torn from your moorings; and those from the West should not consciously or unconsciously lay violent hands upon the manners and customs of this country, in so far as they are not repugnant to fundamental morality. Do not confuse Jesus's teaching with what passes as modern civilization. I ask you who are missionaries, pray do not do unconscious violence to the people among whom you cast your lot. It is no part of your call, I assure, you, to tear up the lives of the East by their roots. Tolerate whatever is good in them. As Christ said to us all: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. Forgive, and it shall be forgiven you. For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

In spite of your belief in the greatness of Western civilization, and in spite of your pride in all your achievements, I plead with you to exercise humility. I ask you to leave some little room for honest doubt. Let us simply each one live our life; and if ours is the right life, where is the cause for hurry? It will react of itself.

By all means drink deep of the fountains that are given to you in the Sermon on the Mount; but then you will have to take up sackcloth and ashes also with regard to failure to perform that which is taught in Christ's Sermon. For the teaching of the Sermon was meant for each and every one of us. You cannot serve both God and Mammon. God the Compassionate and the Merciful, Who is Tolerance incarnate, allows Mammon to have his nine days' wonder.



But I say to you, students and youths, fly from that self-destroying but destructive show of Mammon which I see around me today. For you cannot serve Mammon and God together.

The one debaucher I would like you students to draw from all this is that you yourselves should not be taken from your moorings; and those from the West should not

*Young India*, 8-12-1927

constantly or unconsciously lay violent hands upon the manners and customs of this country in so far as they are not repugnant to fundamental morality. Do not confuse Jesus's teaching with what passes as modern civilization. If you who are missionaries, pray do not do unconscious violence to the people among whom you are your lot. It is no part of your call, I assure you, to tear up the lives of the East by their roots. To take whatever is good in them. As Christ said to us all: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

In spite of your belief in the greatness of Western civilization and in spite of your pride in all your achievements, I speak with you to exercise humility. I ask you to leave some little room for honest doubt. Let us simply each one live our life; and if yours is the right life, what is the cause for being? I will wait of itself.

By all means drink deep of the fountain that we give to you in the Sermon on the Mount; but then you will have to take up sackcloth and ashes also with regard to fasting to perform that which is taught in Christ's Sermon. For the teaching of the Sermon was meant for each and every one of us. You cannot serve both God and Mammon. God the Companion and the Merciful, Who is Tolence in- carnate, allows Mammon to give his nine days' wonder.

## BOYCOTT OF FOREIGN CLOTH

The boycott of foreign cloth, not merely boycott of English cloth, is in my opinion indispensable if we are to attain swaraj in terms of the hungry millions.

The Congress accepted this position last year. The Working Committee by accepting the scheme drawn up by me at its instance has also set its seal of approval upon the proposition that I have laid down before you. The Working Committee has invited me to shoulder the burden of guiding its deliberations. I have faith in you, my countrymen, I have faith in God. I have faith in absolute righteousness of this cause and so in fear and trembling and full hope I have shouldered the burden and now ask you to share that burden with me. This meeting is not of my seeking, you have chosen to call this meeting, you have come here well knowing what is to happen here. I hope that this is a sign of your determination to lighten the burden that I have shouldered. I do not want to argue out the pros and cons of the boycott of foreign cloth through khadi. Remember that is the proposition enunciated in the scheme. Before the Working Committee would accept this scheme it wanted to subject me to a fire of cross-examination. The proceedings lasted for four hours and the Working Committee was fully satisfied that this was the only thing we could possibly do if we were to go through this programme during this year and if need be wake up on the first of January next with the whole country as Independence-wallas. If we



are to achieve our purpose this is the only effective programme. I want you therefore to be true to this programme and to yourselves. No longer deceive yourselves and the country by crowding at meetings of this character, by giving applause and then going away forgetting everything about what might happen at such meetings. I want you to translate every word that you say into effective action. I want you to pledge yourselves not before me but before your God that henceforth you are not going to use any foreign cloth, that you are going to give up foreign clothes in your possession, that you will burn them even as you burn rags in your possession which may require to be disinfected, even as a drunkard suddenly becomes a teetotalter, empties his cupboard and destroys every bottle of brandy and whisky in his possession, no matter what it might have cost him. You will count no cost too great against the cause, the liberty and honour of your country.

But there is a fly in the ointment. I have seen a notice served upon the Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee which proceeds somewhat on these lines: That at this meeting no burning of clothes should take place because it is an offence under the Police Act or Police Regulations, whatever that may be called. The clause runs after this fashion that no burning of straw or such other thing can take place in or near any public streets or thoroughfares. Well, I have been taxing my mind as to whether to call this park a thoroughfare or not. Two lawyers put their heads together,—I do not count myself as a lawyer, I am disbarred,—they put their heads together and advised me that by no stretch of meaning could this park be called a thoroughfare. They drew my attention to another section in the Act where a public street, a public thoroughfare and a place of public resort were also mentioned. In this section the place of public resort is specifically omitted. I can well understand this park being a place

of public resort.

In these circumstances what am I to do? I accept this notice as one served upon my humble self. I do not want to avoid the consequences of this law. But today I do not appear before you as a civil breaker of law, I do not appear before you as a civil resister, I do not want you to commit at this moment a breach of any Regulation. I am quite capable of breaking all the Regulations that may hurt my moral sense but that time is not yet for me,—that time may come tomorrow, but it is not tonight. But I have got to discharge a public duty in front of you and in interpreting this law as I do or as I am advised to interpret it, I venture to submit that this notice has no effect upon me, assuming the argument that the service of that notice upon the Secretary is equal to service upon me. If I am taken before a court of law, I make this definite promise that I shall not raise this issue that the notice was not served upon me. I claim this is not a public thoroughfare, I claim also that I am not doing anything that is dangerous. It is well known that it is the settled policy of the Congress or rather of the Working Committee. The Working Committee has got a duty to discharge. I am a member of that Committee. I am the Chairman of the Boycott Committee and I feel that I shall be running away from my duty if I shirk this issue and avoid a prosecution against me.

If I am allowed to go away, I shall be going away tomorrow and I shall return on the 25th or the 26th of this month to undergo and stand a prosecution against myself for having undertaken to burn foreign cloth in a public park which I claim is not a public thoroughfare. That is the important statement I wanted to make before you. You are not burning, the act of burning is by me and it will be on my sole responsibility. You are not hurt by being witnesses—I wish you were



hurt. But today the campaign is not one of civil resistance but one of conducting a boycott, a fierce boycott of foreign clothes, remaining as long as it is possible within the four corners of the law. I do not want you today to be guilty, consciously or unconsciously, of a breach of laws of this kind whatever some of those laws may be. You will get the opportunity if you care to obey the directions of the Working Committee when the proper time comes to break certain laws or all non-moral laws of the country. But as I have said before, the time is not yet and I do not want to precipitate that time and I do not want also to anticipate that time. And if the Government will play the game, if the police will play the game, I promise we shall settle our business with the Government without having to resort to civil disobedience, without the public having to resort to a no-tax campaign which is a part of civil disobedience. Believe me I shall strain every nerve to avoid that issue. Speaking with a full sense of responsibility over my shoulders, I know the tremendous consequences of civil disobedience and of a no-tax campaign in a vast country like this,—a country which has undisciplined masses,—but a man who is mad as I am now after freedom, a man who is hungry after freedom,—and a real hunger for freedom is infinitely more painful than hunger for mere bread,—has got to take tremendous risks, to stake everything that he has in order to gain that precious freedom, and it is because I am hungry for that freedom,—although I am on the threshold of death, I want to see swaraj whilst I have still breath in me—that I want to take all those risks. But at the same time I want to take every precaution and therefore I shall plead with the Government and the powers that be, I shall ask them to come to their senses.

But if you alone will help me we shall be able to avoid all these risks and still find the dawn of freedom breaking

upon us before the 31st of December next.

If you will be truthful, if you will carry out honestly, faithfully and completely the programme that will be set before you from time to time I promise no heroic measures will be necessary to be taken by you. Is boycott of foreign cloth such a heroic measure? Is the putting of the Congress house in order such a heroic measure? Is the registering of thousands upon thousands of members for the Congress or the habitual wearing of khadi on the part of the rich and the poor a heroic act? If you think these are heroic acts I can honestly tell you that you do not know what heroic acts are; heroic acts are made of sterner stuff. Do not run away with the idea that the programme before you is heroic stuff. These easy things have been placed before you for the simple reason that you are millions against one hundred thousand men.

If we were not under the spell of hypnotism or if we were not being acted upon by that great force of inertia, or want of self-confidence, we would find it the most natural thing to breathe the air of freedom which is ours to breathe. If we were not under this hypnotic spell, we would not have to go through even these easy stages. Try and do these things during this year and then come to me and ask me, "Where is swaraj?" You will not need coming to me. You will find it within your grasp. The millions of masses will smile upon you. They will bless you for making a common cause with them by understanding their real grievances. Therefore I ask you to do this.

I have faith in you. This notice from the Commissioner of Police has enabled me to make my appeal to the authorities. I am here to take the risk. I propose to burn the



clothes that have been handed to me and I want you before I perform the sacred ceremony to throw all your clothes at me on the platform. Do not make any noise.

No violence or force must be used so long as you want to have me as a participator in this ceremony. I swear by non-violence—that is my creed. I can see no other way open to me to regain my freedom. So long as you choose to have me in this campaign, in spite of my creed, so long do I plead with you to observe the law of non-violence, you will find that you have done well.

The responsibility for this act of burning is entirely on my shoulders—please remember too that we want the boycott of foreign clothes and not merely of British clothes. Let that confusion be dispelled from your minds. Take it from me that the men who have been a party to this scheme are not thoughtless men. They went into the question of foreign clothes *versus* British clothes and they came to the conclusion that the proper thing was boycott of foreign clothes. I do not want to go into the question of the Indian mills; they will take care of themselves if you will take care of khadi. Otherwise the mills will be a halter round your neck.

*Young India*, 14-3-1929

## ON BONFIRE

Occupying the position I do in public life, I owe an explanation to the court and the public of my conduct which is the subject matter of this prosecution. I am Chairman of the Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee appointed by the Working Committee of the National Congress. The scheme of boycott sanctioned by the Working Committee includes burning of foreign cloth wherever it is possible. Therefore I naturally advised collection and burning of foreign cloth at the meeting that was held at the Shraddhananda Park. The notice from the Commissioner of Police came upon me and my colleagues as a disturbing factor. We saw at once that it was not meant for protection of property from danger of fire but it was meant to prevent the demonstration. It was open to us to conduct the burning demonstration at a private place. But two lawyers came to the conclusion that the interpretation sought to be put upon Section 66 of the Police Act was at least open to question if not altogether wrong. We therefore decided to conduct the full demonstration at the park as advertised and have the Police interpretation tested in a court of law.

This boycott is not part of civil disobedience. There was no intention to defy the police notice for the sake of defiance and courting imprisonment.

I made this absolutely clear in English within the hearing

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Statement made before the Chief Presidency Magistrate, Calcutta,  
March, 26, 1929



of the police at the meeting before I started the burning. I believe that the Deputy Commissioner of Police was present whilst I was speaking. I was therefore surprised and deeply pained to see the police, after the burning was well nigh over, swoop down upon the crowd surrounding the fire, charge it with their big lathis, disperse it and put out the dying embers. The rest of the painful scene I may not describe here though I should gladly answer questions on it if the court so desires.

I venture to submit that by taking the law into their own hands, especially in spite of my very clear statement above referred to, the police put themselves in the wrong and should change places with me. They should be the accused and I should be the complainant. I have before now in other parts of the world been obliged to differ from police interpretations of laws and act contrary to their notices. But they have recognized the civilized practice of testing the points involved in law courts without in the first instance prejudging the issue and thus running the risk of themselves breaking the law and, what is more, of inviting a disturbance of public peace.

I affirm that the crowd was absolutely peaceful and extremely well-behaved. There was no danger to the neighbouring property from the little fire that was lighted. The site chosen for burning was well protected and isolated. It was therefore the duty of the police to refrain from interfering with the peaceful and orderly demonstration. Their interference in my opinion was rudely premature, extremely high-handed and uncalled for. In putting out the fire, they usurped the function of the court and anticipated its judgment. If you believe the statement of facts I have made, I ask your worship to discharge me and my colleagues and take such notice of the conduct of the police as may be open to you. And this dis-

charge I ask irrespective of the interpretation the court may put upon the section under which I am charged.

One word as to the interpretation of the section. Sjt. Sen Gupta was one of the lawyer friends referred to in my speech at the Shraddhananda Park. After having had another argument with him I am clear in my mind that Shraddhananda Park is neither a street nor a thoroughfare within the meaning of the section. Since it is not the intention, so far as possible, of the Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee to offer civil disobedience in connection with the campaign, an authoritative interpretation of the section is necessary. But I may not argue the legal point.

As to three of my colleagues who are charged with the primary offence, I should like to state that the burning was actually started by me. If therefore any offence has been committed by any of us, the primary offence has been committed by me and the rest three are but secondary offenders.

*Forward, 27-3-1929*



## ON EVE OF DANDI MARCH

In all probability this will be my last speech to you. Even if the Government allow me to march tomorrow morning, this will be my last speech on the sacred banks of the Sabarmati. Possibly these may be the last words of my life here.

I have already told you yesterday what I had to say. Today I shall confine myself to what you should do after my companions and I are arrested. The programme of the march to Jalalpur must be fulfilled as originally settled. The enlistment of the volunteers for this purpose should be confined to Gujarat only. From what I have seen and heard during the last fortnight, I am inclined to believe that the stream of civil resisters will flow unbroken.

But let there be not a semblance of breach of peace even after all of us have been arrested. We have resolved to utilize all our resources in the pursuit of an exclusively non-violent struggle. Let no one commit a wrong in anger. This is my hope and prayer. I wish these words of mine reach every nook and corner of the land. My task shall be done if I perish and so do my comrades. It will then be for the Working Committee of the Congress to show you the way and it will be up to you to follow its lead. So long as I have not reached Jalalpur, let nothing be done in contravention to the authority vested in me by the Congress. But once I am

arrested, the whole responsibility shifts to the Congress. No one who believes in non-violence as a creed need, therefore, sit still. My compact with the Congress ends as soon as I am arrested. In that case there should be no slackness in the enrolment of volunteers. Wherever possible, civil disobedience of salt laws should be started. These laws can be violated in three ways. It is an offence to manufacture salt wherever there are facilities for doing so. The possession and sale of contraband salt, which includes natural salt or salt earth, are also an offence. The purchasers of such salt will be equally guilty. To carry away the natural salt deposits on the seashore is likewise violation of law. So is the hawking of such salt. In short, you may choose any one or all of these devices to break the salt monopoly.

We are, however, not to be content with this alone. There is no ban by the Congress and wherever the local workers have self-confidence, other suitable measures may be adopted. I stress only one condition, namely, let our pledge of truth and non-violence as the only means for the attainment of swaraj be faithfully kept. For the rest, everyone has a free hand. But that does not give a licence to all and sundry to carry on on their own responsibility. Where there are local leaders, their orders should be obeyed by the people. Where there are no leaders and only a handful of men have faith in the programme, they may do what they can, if they have enough self-confidence. They have a right, nay it is their duty, to do so. The history of the world is full of instances of men who rose to leadership by sheer force of self-confidence, bravery and tenacity. We, too, if we sincerely aspire to swaraj and are impatient to attain it should have similar self-confidence. Our ranks will swell and our hearts strengthen as the number of our arrests by the Government increases.



Much can be done in many other ways besides these. The liquor and foreign cloth shops can be picketed. We can refuse to pay taxes if we have the requisite strength. The lawyers can give up practice. The public can boycott the law courts by refraining from litigation. Government servants can resign their posts. In the midst of the despair reigning all round people quake with fear of losing employment. Such men are unfit for swaraj. But why this despair? The number of Government servants in the country does not exceed a few hundred thousand. What about the rest? Where are they to go? Even free India will not be able to accommodate a greater number of public servants. A collector then will not need the number of servants he has got today. He will be his own servant. Our starving millions can by no means afford this enormous expenditure. If, therefore, we are sensible enough, let us bid good-bye to Government employment, no matter if it is the post of a judge or a peon. Let all who are co-operating with the Government in one way or another, be it by paying taxes, keeping titles, or sending children to official schools, etc., withdraw their co-operation in all or as many ways as possible. Then there are women who can stand shoulder to shoulder with men in this struggle.

You may take it as my will. It was the message that I desired to impart to you before starting on the march or for the jail. I wish that there should be no suspension or abandonment of the war that commences tomorrow morning or earlier, if I am arrested before that time. I shall eagerly await the news that ten batches are ready as soon as my batch is arrested. I believe there are men in India to complete the work begun by me. I have faith in the righteousness of our cause and the purity of our weapons. And where the means are clean, there God is undoubtedly present with His blessings.

And where these three combine, there defeat is an impossibility. A satyagrahi, whether free or incarcerated, is ever victorious. He is vanquished only when he forsakes truth and non-violence and turns a deaf ear to the inner voice. If, therefore, there is such a thing as defeat for even a satyagrahi, he alone is the cause of it. God bless you all and keep off all obstacles from the path in the struggle that begins tomorrow.

*Mahatma, Vol. III*



## STICK TO NON-VIOLENCE

At last the long expected hour seems to have come.

In the dead of night, my colleagues and companions have roused me from deep slumber and requested me to give them a message. I am therefore giving this message, although I have not the slightest inclination to give any.

Messages I have given enough already. Of what avail would this message be if none of the previous messages evoked a proper response? But information received until this midnight leads me to the belief that my message did not fall flat, but was taken up by the people in right earnest. The people of Gujarat seem to have risen in a body, as it were. I have seen with my own eyes thousands of men and women at Aat and Bhimrad, fearlessly breaking the Salt Act. Not a sign of mischief, not a sign of violence have I seen, despite the presence of people in such large numbers. They have remained perfectly peaceful and non-violent, although Government officers have transgressed all bounds.

Here in Gujarat well-tried and popular public servants have been arrested one after another, and yet the people have been perfectly non-violent. They have refused to give way to panic, and have celebrated the arrests by offering civil disobedience in ever-increasing numbers. This is just as it should be.

If the struggle so auspiciously begun is continued in the same spirit of non-violence to the end, not only shall we see Purna Swaraj established in our country before long, but we shall have given to the world an object-lesson worthy of India and her glorious past.

Swaraj won without sacrifice cannot last long. I would, therefore, like our people to get ready to make the highest sacrifice that they are capable of. In true sacrifice all the suffering is on one side—one is required to master the art of getting killed without killing, of gaining life by losing it. May India live up to this mantra !

At present India's self-respect, in fact her all, is symbolized as it were in a handful of salt in the satyagrahi's hand. Let the fist holding it therefore be broken, but let there be no voluntary surrender of the salt.

Let the Government, if it claims to be a civilized Government, jail those who help themselves to contraband salt. After their arrest the civil resisters will gladly surrender the salt, as they will their bodies, into the custody of their jailors.

But by main force to snatch the salt from the poor, harmless satyagrahis' hands is barbarism pure and simple and an insult to India. Such insult can be answered only by allowing our hand to be fractured without loosening the grasp. Even then the actual sufferer or his comrades may not harbour in their hearts anger against the wrongdoer. Incivility should be answered not by incivility but by a dignified and calm endurance of all suffering in the name of God.



Let not my companions or the people at large be perturbed over my arrest, for it is not I but God Who is guiding this movement. He ever dwells in the hearts of all and He will vouchsafe to us the right guidance if only we have faith in Him. Our path has already been chalked out for us. Let every village fetch or manufacture contraband salt, sisters should picket liquor shops, opium dens and foreign cloth dealers' shops. Young and old in every home should ply the takli and spin and get woven heaps of yarn every day. Foreign cloth should be burnt. Hindus should eschew untouchability. Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Parsis and Christians should all achieve heart unity. Let the majority rest content with what remains after the minorities have been satisfied. Let students leave Government schools and colleges, and Government servants resign their service and devote themselves to the service of the people, and we shall find that Purna Swaraj will come knocking at our doors.

*Young India*, 8-5-1930

## APPEAL TO THE CONSCIENCE OF THE WORLD

In my opinion, the Indian Conference bears in its consequences not only upon India but upon the whole world. India is by itself almost a continent. It contains one-fifth of the human race. It represents one of the most ancient civilizations. It has traditions handed down from tens of thousands of years, some of which, to the astonishment of the world, remain intact. No doubt the ravages of time have affected the purity of that civilization, as they have that of many other cultures and many institutions.

If India is to perpetuate the glory of her ancient past, it can do so only when it attains freedom. The reason for the struggle having drawn the attention of the world I know does not lie in the fact that we Indians are fighting for our liberty, but in the fact that the means adopted by us for attaining that liberty are unique and, as far as history shows us, have not been adopted by any other people of whom we have any record.

The means adopted are not violence, not bloodshed, not diplomacy as one understands it now-a-days, but they are purely and simply truth and non-violence. No wonder that the attention of the world is directed towards this attempt to lead a successful, bloodless revolution. Hitherto, nations have



fought in the manner of the brute. They have wreaked vengeance upon those whom they have considered to be their enemies.

We find in searching national anthems adopted by great nations that they contain imprecations upon the so-called enemy. They have vowed destruction and have not hesitated to take the name of God and seek divine assistance for the destruction of the enemy. We in India have reversed the process. We feel that the law that governs brute creation is not the law that should guide the human race. That law is inconsistent with human dignity.

I, personally, would wait, if need be, for ages rather than seek to attain the freedom of my country through bloody means. I feel in the innermost recesses of my heart, after a political experience extending over an unbroken period of close upon thirty-five years, that the world is sick unto death of blood-spilling. The world is seeing a way out, and I flatter myself with the belief that perhaps it will be the privilege of the ancient land of India to show that way out to the starving world.

I have, therefore, no hesitation whatsoever in inviting all the great nations of the earth to give their hearty co-operation to India in her mighty struggle. It must be a sight worth contemplating and treasuring that millions of people have given themselves to suffering without retaliation in order that they might vindicate the dignity and honour of the nation.

I have called that suffering a process of self-purification. It is my certain conviction that no man loses his freedom except through his own weakness. I am painfully conscious of our own weaknesses. We represent in India all

the principal religions of the earth, and it is a matter of deep humiliation to confess that we are a house divided against itself; that we Hindus and Mussalmans are flying at one another. It is a matter of still deeper humiliation to me that we Hindus regard several millions of our own kith and kin as too degraded even for our touch. I refer to the so-called "untouchables".

These are no small weaknesses in a nation struggling to be free. You will find that in this struggle through self-purification, we have assigned a foremost part of our creed to the removal of this curse of untouchability and the attainment of unity amongst all the different classes and communities of India representing the different creeds.

It is along the same lines that we seek to rid our land of the curse of drink. Happily for us, intoxicating drinks and drugs are confined to comparatively a very small number of people, largely factory hands and the like.

Fortunately for us the drink and drug curse is accepted as a curse. It is not considered to be the fashion for men or women to drink or to take intoxicating drugs. All the same, it is an uphill fight that we are fighting in trying to remove this evil from our midst.

It is a matter of regret, deep regret, for me to have to say that the existing Government has made of this evil a source of very large revenue, amounting to nearly twenty-five crores of rupees. But I am thankful to be able to say that the women of India have risen to the occasion in combating it by peaceful means, that is, by a fervent appeal to those who are given to the drink habit to give it up, and by an equally fervent appeal to the liquor-dealers. A great impression has



been created upon those who are addicted to these two evil habits.

I wish that it were possible for me to say that in this, at least, we were receiving hearty co-operation of the rulers. If we could only have received the co-operation without any legislation, I dare say that we would have achieved this reform and banished intoxicating drinks and drugs from our afflicted land.

There is a force which has a constructive effect and which has been put forth by the nation during this struggle. That is the great care for the semi-starved millions scattered throughout 7,00,000 villages dotted over a surface 1,900 miles long and 1,500 miles broad. It is a painful phenomenon that these simple villagers, through no fault of their own, have nearly six months of the year idle upon their hands.

The time was not very long ago when every village was self-sufficient in regard to the two primary human wants, food and clothing. Unfortunately for us, the East India Company, by means I would prefer not to describe, destroyed that supplementary village industry, and the millions of spinners who had become famous through the cunning of their deft fingers for drawing the finest thread, such as has never yet been drawn by any modern machinery. These village spinners found themselves one fine morning with their noble occupation gone. From that day forward India has become progressively poor.

No matter what may be said to the contrary, it is a historical fact that before the advent of the East India Company, these villagers were not idle, and he who wants may see today that these villagers are idle. It, therefore, required no

great effort or learning to know that these villagers must starve if they cannot work for six months in the year.

May I not, then, on behalf of these semi-starved millions, appeal to the conscience of the world to come to the rescue of a people dying for regaining its liberty?

*New York Times, 14-9-1931*



## THE NATIONAL DEMAND

I must confess at the outset that I am not a little embarrassed in having to state before you the position of the Indian National Congress. I would like to say that I have come to London to attend this sub-committee as also the Round Table Conference, when the proper time comes, absolutely in the spirit of co-operation and to strive to my utmost to find points of agreement. I would like also to give this assurance to His Majesty's Government that at no stage is it, or will it be, my desire to embarrass authority ; and I would like to give the same assurance to my colleagues here, that however much we may differ about our view-points, I shall not obstruct them in any shape or form. Therefore my position here depends entirely upon your goodwill as also the goodwill of His Majesty's Government. If at any time I found that I could not be of any useful service to the Conference, I would not hesitate to withdraw myself from it. I can also say to those who are responsible for the management of this Committee and the Conference that they have only to give a sign and I should have no hesitation in withdrawing.

I am obliged to make these remarks because I know that there are fundamental differences of opinion between the Government and the Congress, and it is possible that there are vital differences between my colleagues and myself. There

is also a limitation under which I shall be working. I am but a poor humble agent acting on behalf of the Indian National Congress ; and it might be as well to remind ourselves of what the Congress stands for and what it is. You will then extend your sympathy to me, because I know that the burden that rests upon my shoulders is really very great.

#### WHAT THE CONGRESS IS

The Congress is, if I am not mistaken, the oldest political organization we have in India. It has had nearly 50 years of life during which period it has, without any interruption, held its annual session. It is what it means—national. It represents no particular community, no particular class, no particular interest. It claims to represent all Indian interests and all classes. It is a matter of the greatest pleasure to me to state that it was first conceived in an English brain. Allan Octavius Hume we knew as the father of the Congress. It was nursed by two great Parsis: Sir Pherozeshah Mehta and Dadabhai Naoroji, whom all India delighted to recognize as its Grand Old Man. From the very commencement the Congress had Mussalmans, Christians, Anglo-Indians, I might say all religions, sects and communities represented upon it more or less fully. The late Badruddin Tyabji identified himself with the Congress. We have had Mussalmans and Parsis as presidents of the Congress. I can recall at least one Indian Christian president at the present moment: W.C. Bonnerji. Kalicharan Bannerji than whom I have not had the privilege of knowing a purer Indian was also thoroughly identified with the Congress. I miss, as I have no doubt all of [you miss, the presence in our midst of Mr. K.T. Paul. Although he never officially belonged to the Congress, he was a nationalist to the full and a sympathizer of the Congress.



As you know, the late Maulana Muhammed Ali, whose presence also we miss today, was a president of the Congress, and at present we have four Mussalmans as members of the Working Committee which consists of 15 members. We have had women as our presidents : Dr. Annie Besant was the first, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu followed. We have her as a member of the Working Committee also: and so, if we have no distinctions of class or creed, we have no distinctions of sex either.

The Congress has, from its very commencement, taken up the cause of the so-called untouchables. There was a time when the Congress had at every annual session as its adjunct the Social Conference, to which the late Ranade had dedicated his energies among his many activities. Headed by him, you will find in the programme of the Social Conference reform in connection with the untouchables taking a prominent place. But in 1920 the Congress took a large step and brought the question of removal of untouchability as a plank on the political platform, and made it an important item of the political programme. Just as the Congress considered Hindu-Muslim unity, thereby meaning unity amongst all the great religions to be indispensable for the attainment of swaraj, so also did the Congress consider the removal of untouchability as an indispensable condition for the attainment of full freedom.

The position the Congress took up in 1920 remains intact today, and so you will see that the Congress has attempted from its very beginning to be what it has described itself to be, namely, national in every sense of the term.

If Your Highnesses will permit me to say it, in the very early stages, the Congress took up your cause also. Let me

remind this Committee that it was the Grand Old Man of India who sponsored the cause of Kashmir and Mysore, and these two great Houses, I venture in all humility to submit, owe not a little to the efforts of Dadabhai Naoroji and the Congress. Even now the Congress has endeavoured to serve the Princes of India by refraining from any interference in their domestic and internal affairs.

I hope that this brief introduction that I thought fit to give will serve to enable the sub-committee and those who are interested in the claims of the Congress to understand that it has endeavoured to deserve the claim that it has made. It has failed, I know, often to live up to the claim, but I venture to submit that if you were to examine the history of the Congress, you would find that it has more often succeeded and progressively succeeded than failed. Above all, the Congress represents in its essence the dumb semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land in its seven hundred thousand villages, no matter whether they come from what is called British India or what is called Indian India. Every interest which, in the opinion of the Congress, is worthy of protection, has to subserve the interest of these dumb millions. You do find now and again an apparent clash between several interests. If there is a genuine and real clash, I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interests of these dumb millions. It is therefore essentially a peasant organization or it is becoming so progressively. You and even the Indian members of the sub-committee will perhaps be astonished to find that today the Congress through its organization, the All-India Spinners' Association, is finding work for nearly 50,000 women in nearly 2,000 villages and these women are possibly 50 per cent Mussalman women. Thousands of them belong



to the so-called untouchable classes. We have thus in this constructive manner penetrated these villages and the effort is being made to cover every one of the 7,00,000 villages. It is a superhuman task but if human effort can do so, you will presently find Congress covering all of these villages and bringing to them the message of the spinning-wheel.

### THE CONGRESS DEMAND

This being the representative character of the Congress, you will not be astonished when I read to you the Congress mandate. I hope that it may not jar upon you. You may consider that the Congress is making a claim which is wholly untenable. Such as it is, I am here to put forth that claim on behalf of the Congress in the gentlest manner possible but also in the firmest manner possible. I have come here to prosecute that claim with all the faith and energy that I can command. If you can convince me to the contrary and show that the claim is inimical to the interests of these dumb millions, I shall revise my opinion. I am open to conviction, but even so I should have to ask my principals to consent to that revision before I could usefully act as the agent of the Congress. At this stage I propose to read to you this mandate so that you can understand clearly the limitations imposed upon me.

This was a resolution passed at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress.

This Congress, having considered the provisional settlement between the Working Committee and the Government of India, endorses it and desires to make it clear that the Congress goal of Purna Swaraj, meaning complete independence, remains intact. In the event of a way remaining other-

wise open to the Congress to be represented at any conference with the representatives of the British Government, the Congress delegation will work for this goal and in particular so as to give the nation control over the army, external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy and to have a scrutiny by an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India, to examine and assess the obligation to be undertaken by India or England and the right for either party to end the partnership at will, provided, however, that the Congress delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably necessary in the interests of India.

Then follows the appointment. I have in the light of this mandate endeavoured to study as carefully as I was capable of studying the provisional conclusions arrived at by the several sub-committees appointed by the Round Table Conference. I have also carefully studied the Prime Minister's statement giving the considered policy of His Majesty's Government. I speak subject to correction but, so far as I have been able to understand, this document falls short of what is aimed at and claimed by the Congress. True, I have the liberty to accept such adjustments as may be demonstrably in the interests of India, but they have all to be consistent with the fundamentals stated in this mandate.

I remind myself at this stage of the terms of what is to me a sacred settlement—the settlement arrived at at Delhi between the Government of India and the Congress. In the settlement the Congress has accepted the principle of federation: the principle that there should be responsibility at the centre, and has accepted also the principle that there should be safeguards in so far as they may be necessary in the interests of India.



## EQUAL PARTNERSHIP

There was one phrase used yesterday, I forget by which delegate, but it struck me very forcibly. He said: "We do not want a merely political constitution." I do not know that he gave that expression the same meaning that it immediately bore to me; but I immediately said to myself, this phrase has given me a good expression. It is true the Congress will not be and, personally speaking, I myself would never be, satisfied with a mere political constitution which, to read, would seem to give India all she can possibly politically desire but in reality would give her nothing. If we are intent upon complete independence it is not from any sense of arrogance, it is not because we want to parade before the universe that we have now severed all connection with the British people. Nothing of the kind. On the contrary you find in this mandate itself that the Congress contemplates a partnership; the Congress contemplates a connection with the British people, but that connection should be such as can exist between two absolute equals. Time was when I prided myself on being, and being called, a British subject. I have ceased for many years to call myself a British subject: I would far rather be called a rebel more than a subject; but I have now aspired, I still aspire, to be a citizen not in the Empire but in a Commonwealth, in a partnership if possible; if God wills it, an indissoluble partnership but not a partnership superimposed upon one nation by another. Hence you find here that the Congress claims that either party should have the right to sever this connection, to dissolve the partnership. It has got to be necessarily therefore of mutual benefit. May I say—it may be irrelevant to the consideration but not irrelevant to me—that as I have said elsewhere, I can quite understand responsible British statesmen today being wholly engrossed in domestic affairs in trying to make both ends

meet. We could not expect them to do anything less, and I felt, even as I was sailing towards London, whether we, in the sub-committee at the present moment, would not be interlopers. And yet, I said to myself, it is possible that we might not be interlopers, it is possible that the British Ministers themselves might consider the proceedings of the Round Table Conference to be of primary importance even in terms of their domestic affairs. Yes, India can be held by the sword. But what will conduce to the prosperity of Great Britain and the economic freedom of Great Britain—an enslaved but a rebellious India, or an India, an esteemed partner with Britain to share her sorrows, to take part side by side with Britain in her misfortunes?

#### MY DREAM

Yes, if need be, but at her own will, to fight side by side with Britain, not for the exploitation of a single race or a single human being on earth, but it may be conceivably for the good of the whole world. If I want freedom for my country, believe me, if I can possibly help it, I do not want that freedom in order that I, belonging to a nation which counts one-fifths of the human race, may exploit any other race upon earth, or any single individual. If I want that freedom for my country, I would not be deserving of that freedom if I did not cherish and treasure the equal right of every other race—weak or strong—to the same freedom. And so I said to myself, whilst I was nearing the shores of your beautiful Island that, perchance it might be possible for me to convince the British Ministers that India as a valuable partner, not held by force but by the silken cord of love, an India of that character might be conceivably of real assistance to you in balancing your budget not for one year but for many years. What cannot the two nations do—one



a handful but brave, with a record for bravery perhaps unsurpassed, a nation noted for having fought slavery, a nation that has at least claimed times without number to protect the weak—and another a very ancient nation, counted in millions, with a glorious and ancient past, representing at the present moment two great cultures—the Islamic and the Hindu cultures—and if you will, also containing not a small but a very large Christian population, and certainly absorbing the whole of the splendid Zoroastrian stock, in numbers almost unequalled, certainly unsurpassed? We have got all these cultures concentrated in India, and supposing that God fires both Hindus and Mussalmans represented here with a proper spirit so that they close their ranks and come to an honourable understanding, take that nation and this nation together, I again ask myself and ask you whether with an India free, completely independent as Great Britain is, an honourable partnership between these two nations cannot be mutually beneficial even in terms of the domestic affairs of this great nation. And so, in that dreamy hope I have approached the British Isles, and I shall still cherish that dream.

And when I have said this perhaps I have said all, and you will be able to dot the i's and cross the t's, not expecting me to fill in all the details and tell you what I mean by control over the army, what I mean by control over external affairs, finance, fiscal and economic policy, or even the financial transactions which a friend yesterday considered to be sacrosanct. I do not take that view. If there is a stock-taking between incoming and outgoing partners, their transactions are subject to audit and adjustment, and the Congress will not be guilty of any dishonourable conduct or crime in saying that the nation should understand what it is taking over and what it should not take over. This audit, this

scrutiny, is asked for not merely in the interests of India; it is asked for in the interests of both. I am positive that the British people do not want to saddle upon India a single burden which it should not legitimately bear, and I am here to declare on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will never think of repudiating a single claim or a burden that it should justly discharge. If we are to live as an honourable nation worthy of commanding credit from the whole world, we will pay every farthing of legitimate debt with our blood.

I do not think I should take you any further through the clauses of this mandate and analyse for you the meaning of these clauses as Congressmen give them. If it is God's will that I should continue to take part in these deliberations, as the deliberations proceed, I shall be able to explain the implications of these clauses. As the deliberations proceed, I would have my say in connection with the safeguards also. But I think I have said quite enough in having, with some elaboration and with your generous indulgence, Lord Chancellor, taken the time of this meeting. I had not intended really to take that time, but I felt that I could not possibly do justice to the cause I have come to expound to you, the sub-committee, and to the British nation of which we the Indian delegation are at present the guests, if I did not give you out of the whole of my heart my cherished wish even at this time. I would love to go away from the shores of the British Isles with the conviction that there was to be an honourable and equal partnership between Great Britain and India.

I cannot do anything more than say that it will be my fervent prayer during all the days that I live in your midst that this consummation may be reached. I thank you, Lord Chancellor, for the courtesy that you have extended to me



in not stopping me although I have taken close upon forty-five minutes. I was not entitled to all that indulgence and I thank you once more.

**The Nation's Voice**

## VOLUNTARY POVERTY

You will be astonished to hear from me that, although to all appearances my mission is political, I would ask you to accept my assurance that its roots are—if I may use that term—spiritual. It is commonly known, though perhaps not believed, that I claim that at least my politics are not divorced from morality, from spirituality, from religion. I have claimed—and the claim is based upon extensive experience—that a man who is trying to discover and follow the will of God cannot possibly leave a single field of life untouched. I came also, in the course of my service, to the conclusion that if there was any field of life where morality, where truth, where fear of God, were not essential, that field should be given up entirely.

But I found also that the politics of the day are no longer a concern of kings, but that they affect the lowest strata of society. And I found, through bitter experience, that, if I wanted to do social service, I could not possibly leave politics alone.

Do not please consider that I want to speak to you tonight about politics and somehow or other connect voluntary poverty with politics. That is not my intention. I have simply given you an introduction to how I came to believe in the necessity of voluntary poverty for any social worker or for any political worker who wanted to remain



untouched by the hideous immorality and untruth that one smells today in ordinary politics. The stench that comes from that life has appeared to some to be so suffocating that they came to the conclusion that politics were not for a god-fearing man.

Had that been really so, I feel that it would have been a disaster for mankind. Find out for yourselves, in the light of what I am now saying, whether directly or indirectly every activity of yours today in this one of the greatest cities of the world is not touched by politics.

Well, then, when I found myself drawn into the political coil, I asked myself what was necessary for me in order to remain absolutely untouched by immorality, by untruth, by what is known as political gain.

In the course of my search, I made several discoveries which I must, for tonight, leave alone. But, if I am not mistaken, this necessity for poverty came to me first of all.

I do not propose to take you through all the details of that act or performance—interesting and, to me, sacred though they are—but I can only tell you that it was a difficult struggle in the beginning and it was a wrestle with my wife and—as I can vividly recall—with my children also.

Be that as it may, I came definitely to the conclusion that, if I had to serve the people in whose midst my life was cast and of whose difficulties I was witness from day to day, I must discard all wealth, all possession.

I cannot tell you with truth that, when this belief came to me, I discarded everything immediately. I must confess to

you that progress at first was slow. And now, as I recall those days of struggle, I remember that it was also painful in the beginning. But, as days went by, I saw that I had not thrown overboard many other things which I used to consider as mine, and a time came when it became a matter of positive joy to give up those things. And one after another, then by almost geometric progression, the things slipped away from me. And, as I am describing my experiences, I can say a great burden fell off my shoulders, and I felt that I could now walk with ease and do my work also in the service of my fellowmen with great comfort and still greater joy. The possession of anything then became a troublesome thing and a burden.

Exploring the cause of that joy, I found that, if I kept anything as my own, I had to defend it against the whole world. I found also that there were many people who did not have the thing, although they wanted it; and I would have to seek police assistance also if hungry famine-stricken people, finding me in a lonely place, wanted not merely to divide the thing with me but to dispossess me. And I said to myself: If they want it and would take it, they do not do so from any malicious motive, but they would do it because theirs was a greater need than mine.

And then I said to myself: possession seems to me to be a crime. I can only possess certain things when I know that others, who also want to possess similar things, are able to do so. But we know—every one of us can speak from experience—that such a thing is an impossibility. Therefore, the only thing that can be possessed by all is non-possession, not to have anything whatsoever. In other words, a willing surrender.



You might then well say to me: but you are keeping many things on your body even as you are speaking about voluntary poverty and not possessing anything whatsoever ! And your taunt would be right, if you only superficially understood the meaning of the thing that I am speaking about just now. It is really the spirit behind. Whilst you have the body, you will have to have something to clothe the body, not all that you can get, but the least possible, the least with which you can do. You will take for your house not many mansions, but the least cover that you can do with. And similarly with reference to your food and so on.

Now you see that there is here a daily conflict between what you and we understand today as civilization and the state which I am picturing to you as a state of bliss and a desirable state. On the one hand, the basis of culture for civilization is understood to be the multiplication of all wants. If you have one room, you will desire to have two rooms, three rooms, the more the merrier. And similarly, you will want to have as much furniture as you can put in your house, and so on, endlessly. And the more you possess, the better culture you represent, or some such thing. I am putting it, perhaps, not as nicely as the advocates of that civilization would put it, but I am putting it to you in the manner I understand it.

And, on the other hand, you find the less you possess, the less you want, the better you are. And better for what ? Not for enjoyment of this life, but for enjoyment of personal service to you fellow beings ; service to which you dedicate yourselves, body, soul and mind.

Well, here you find there is ample room for hypocrisy and humbug, because a man or a woman may easily deceive himself or herself and deceive his or her neighbours also, by

saying : In spirit I have given up all possessions, and yet externally I am possessing these things ; you must not examine my deed, you must examine my intention ; and of my intention only I must remain the sole witness.

That is a trap, and a death trap. How are you then to justify the possession even of a piece of cloth two or three or four yards, say, in length and a yard in width ? How can you justify even the possession of that piece of cloth in order to cover your body somewhat, when you know that if you left that piece of cloth alone, even that would be taken over by someone—not maliciously again—but because he would want it, for he has not even so much as that piece of cloth ? I am witness, eye witness, of millions of human beings who have not even so much as that piece of cloth. How are you then to justify your act of possessing this thing with your intention not to possess anything at all ?

Well, there is a remedy provided for this dilemma, this difficulty, this contradiction in life—that if you must possess these things, you must hold them at the disposal of those who want them. What happens is that, if somebody comes and wants your piece of cloth, you are not going to keep it from him, you are not going to shut any doors, you are certainly not going to the policeman to ask him to help you to keep these things.

And you have also got to be content with what the world will give you. The world may give you that piece of cloth or may not because, if you do not possess anything, naturally you do not possess the token coin with which you may buy clothing or food. You have got then to live purely on the charity of the world. And even when charitable people give you something, that something does not become an intention of that



thing being surrendered to anybody who wishes to take it. If somebody comes and uses force against you to dispossess you, you may not go and report to the next policeman you meet and say you have been assaulted. You will not have been assaulted.

Well, that, to my mind, is the meaning of voluntary poverty. I have given you an ideal. Dr. Royden has claimed that I am the greatest exponent of voluntary poverty in the world. I must, in all humility, disown any such claim whatsoever. And this I say to you not because of false modesty, but I say it to you sincerely, believing it to be true. I have given you but a little of my conception of voluntary poverty. And I must own to you that I am far from having realized that idea in its fulness. In order to realize that ideal in its fulness, there must be a definite intention and conviction in my mind that I do not want to. I must not possess anything on this earth as my property, not even this body, because this body also is a possession.

If you believe with me—as you must believe with me if you are church-goers—that is, if you believe in God, you believe that body and soul are not one and the same thing, but that the body is a house only, temporary residence for a soul or a spirit within; and if you believe that, as you do believe, I take it—then it follows that even the body is not yours. It has been given to you as a temporary possession, and it can also be taken from you by him who has given it to you.

Therefore, having that absolute conviction in me, such must be my constant desire, that this body also may be surrendered at the will of God, and while it is at my disposal, must be used not for dissipation, not for self-indulgence, not

for pleasure, but merely for service and service during the whole of your waking hours.

And if this is true with reference to the body, how much more so with reference to clothing and many other things that we use ?

Having got that conviction and held it for so many years, I am here to give you my evidence against myself that I have not reached that perfect state of voluntary poverty. I am a poor man, in the sense, you understand, of struggling to reach that ideal, not poor in the sense in which we ordinarily use the word poor.

As a matter of fact, when I was once challenged by someone, I was able to claim that to my neighbours and people in the world I seemed to be the richest man on earth, for the richest man is really one who, possessing nothing, has everything at his disposal.

And those who have actually followed out this vow of voluntary poverty to the fullest extent possible (to reach absolute perfection is an impossibility, but the fullest possible extent for a human being), those who have reached the ideal of that state, they testify that, when you dispossess yourself of everything you have, you really possess all the treasures of the world. In other words, you really get all that is in reality necessary for you, everything. If food is necessary, food will come to you.

Many of you are men and women of prayer, and I have heard from very many Christian lips that they got their food in answer to prayer, that they get everything in answer to prayer. I believe it. But I want you to come with me



a step further, and believe with me that those who voluntarily give up everything on earth, including the body; that is to say, have readiness to give up everything (and they must examine themselves critically, rigidly, and give always an adverse judgment against themselves)—those who will follow this out will really find that they are never in want.

And I will confess to you that, when I felt God had given me some portion of the riches of the earth and when I had many possessions, I had not the facilities for possessing things that I have at this time. I had not certainly one millionth part of the ability to command money and everything that I need for service.

A spirit of service had come to me even when I was practising and earning money and was in possession of several things, but at that time I had certainly not the capacity for getting whatever I wanted for service. But today (whether it is good for me or bad for me I do not know, God alone knows) I can give you this evidence, that I have never been in want.

After a period when I had really dispossessed myself by intention and had no hankering after anything that I could call my own, and began to share everything I possessed in common with my neighbours (I cannot share everything with the whole world, if I share with my neighbours, I do share with the whole world, my neighbours also doing likewise; if we do that, it is all a limited human being can do) but immediately I came to that state to a fair extent, I found that I was never in want.

Want must not again be taken literally. God is the hardest task-master I have known on this earth, and He tries

you through and through. And when you find that your faith is failing or your body is failing you and you are sinking, He comes to your assistance somehow or other and proves to you that you must not lose your faith and that He is always at your beck and call, but on His terms, not on your terms. So I have found I cannot really recall a single instance when at the eleventh hour, He has forsaken me. And I have got this reputation, which I can repeat to you, a reputation for being one of the best beggars in India. And, as my critics will tell you, at one time I collected one crore of rupees; in pound, shillings and pence I cannot count it for you, but it is some horribly large sum (about £750,000), but I had no difficulty in collecting it. And since then, whenever any emergency has arisen, not for any consideration, not in the soul of my fundamental being, can I recall a single instance of my failing to obtain whatever was necessary for service.

But you will say: this is in answer to prayer. It is not just an answer to prayer, it is a scientific result of this vow of non-possession or vow of voluntary poverty. You do not want to possess anything whatever and the more therefore you simplify your life, dispossess yourself, the better it is for you.

Immediately you come to that, you can command anything. You can command vanities, but if you only once take possession of these, this power will immediately be gone; you must not take anything for yourself. If you do, you are done for. I have known this happen in so many instances. Many a man has said:

"Oh yes, God has now answered my prayer for money or possessions. I will now keep this—this Koh-i-noor



diamond, or whatever it may be." That will be the last time. He won't be able to defend that diamond.

Therefore, all I am just now holding out before you as a grand thing is that you can command all the resources of the world for service. To one who does not believe in that, it may seem an arrogant statement to make. But, as I believe, it is not an arrogant thing to say that you can command all the resources of the earth for service—to the extent of your ability to serve. If you want to command the whole services of the world, it is not enough to go down to some of those houses in the East End, find out the distress of those who live there and fling in their faces a few coppers; you will not have all the resources of the world for that; God will fling in your face also a few coppers.

But if you surrender yourself, body and soul and mind, and give yourself up to the world, then I say the treasures of the world are at your feet, not for your enjoyment, but for the enjoyment of that service, only yours for that service.

The moral that I would have us to draw from this talk that I have given to you is really very apposite at this time. I want you to believe me when I tell you that my whole heart goes out to this nation in its distress. I cannot possibly present my solution of your financial difficulty. You are great enough, resourceful enough, to find out your own remedies. But I would ask you to elaborate this thought in your own minds in connection with the present distress.

Mr. C.F. Andrews brought to my notice a letter that was written by the Prime Minister to a correspondent and which he told me yesterday was being used as an advertisement throughout the District Railway, probably in the Tubes

also; it runs somewhat like this: "You must buy only British goods, must employ only British labour, and try to buy as much as you can." That is one remedy I know. But I want to suggest to you that, in order to solve the problem of distress in the world, this idea of voluntary poverty is a root idea. No doubt, with your resourcefulness, you will tide over the difficulty and feel that there was nothing wrong. If you will permit me to say so, that would be perhaps short-sighted, for a time perhaps has come for a revision of values.

But again I must not go into deep waters. I can only throw out this hint to those who can appreciate the necessity of voluntary poverty for service. I have not tonight presented this blessed thing for the acceptance of all; though let me add that, in the innermost recesses of my heart, I feel that the world would not go all wrong, would not become a world of idiots, if all of us took the vow of voluntary poverty. But I know that this is almost an impossible thing. Everything is possible for God but, humanly speaking, it is wise to say that it is an impossible thing. But it is not an impossible thing; indeed, I hold it to be absolutely indispensable that those who give themselves wholly to the service of their fellow-beings must take the vow of voluntary poverty.

Try to find out for yourself whether you are not thereby assisting very materially in solving this great national problem that today faces you.

You will not have solved the problem if the people who do not want to give up their salaries or whatever they are required to give up, are compelled to give them up by law. While they say: "What can we do? We do not want to resist; we cannot resist," their minds are still hankering after these things.



But imagine that, in the midst of this hankering, there is a body of servants arising who will themselves become voluntarily poor. They would be like lighthouses to guide the paths of those who do not know what voluntary poverty is because they know only involuntary poverty. I do not go among my fellows who starve and talk of voluntary poverty ; I do not tell them how blessed they would be if they changed that involuntary poverty into voluntary poverty. There is no such thing as magic of that character on this earth. It is a painful process, and these men have first of all to have the necessities of life before I can talk to them of voluntary poverty.

What does happen is this : What a man like me going among them, living in their midst, their life, as best he can, can bring a ray of hope into their hearts. They will accept remedies that a man like me may suggest to them. At least, if I cannot suggest any immediate remedy, they would find in a man like me a friend. They would say : "He is happy although he possesses nothing ; how is it so ?" I do not need to argue with them ; they begin to argue for themselves.

How can I share these richest treasures from my experiences with everybody on earth ? I could not. But today, having undertaken to speak on voluntary poverty, I am sharing, to a certain extent only, these treasured experiences of mine not amongst a few hundred people here but amongst millions of people. I tell you that it is beyond description, the bliss, the happiness, and the ability that this voluntary poverty gives one. I can only say : try it and experiment with it, test it for yourselves.

## PURIFICATION THROUGH SELF-SACRIFICE

It may be that the seed which is being sown now may result in softening the British spirit and that it may result in the prevention of the brutalization of human beings. I have known the English nature in its hideous form in the Punjab. I have known it elsewhere also, during these fifteen years of my experience and through history, I have known the same thing happening. It is my purpose by every means at my command to prevent such a catastrophe occurring. Again I am more concerned in preventing the brutalization of human nature than in preventing the sufferings of my own people.

I have often gloated over the sufferings of my own people. I know that people who voluntarily undergo a course of suffering raise themselves and the whole of humanity, but I also know that people who become brutalized in their desperate efforts to get victory over their opponents or to exploit weaker nations or weaker men, not only drag down themselves but mankind also. And it cannot be a matter of pleasure to me or anyone else to see human nature dragged in the mire. If we are all sons of the same God and partake of the same divine essence, we must partake of the sin of every person whether he belongs to us or to another race. You can understand how repugnant it must be to invoke the beast in any human being, how much more so in Englishmen, amongst whom I count numerous friends! I invite you to give all the help you can in the endeavour that



I am making.

To the Indian students my appeal is to study this question in all thoroughness and if you really believe in the power of non-violence and truth, then for God's sake express these two things in your daily life—not merely in the political field—and you will find that whatever you do in this direction will help me in the struggle. It is possible that Englishmen and Englishwomen who come into close touch with you will assure the world that they have never seen students so good, so truthful, as Indian students. Don't you think that that would go a long way towards vindicating our nation? The words "self-purification" occurred in a Congress resolution in 1920. From that moment the Congress realized that we were to purify ourselves. We were by self-sacrifice to purify ourselves so that we would deserve liberty and so that God would also be with us. If that is the case, every Indian whose life bears testimony to the spirit of self-sacrifice helps his country, without having to do anything more. Such, in my opinion, is the strength of the means which the Congress adopted. Therefore, in the battle for freedom, every student here need do nothing more than that he should purify himself and present a character above reproach and above suspicion.

*Young India*, 29-10-1931

## EDUCATING CHILDREN

Madam, you have overwhelmed me with your words. It is perfectly true, I must admit it in all humility, that however indifferently it may be, I endeavour to represent love in every fibre of my being. I am impatient to realize the presence of my Maker, Who to me embodies Truth, and in the early part of my career I discovered that if I was to realize Truth I must obey, even at the cost of my life, the law of love. And having been blessed with children, I discovered that the law of love could be best understood and learnt through little children. Were it not for us, their ignorant poor parents, our children would be perfectly innocent. I believe implicitly that the child is not born mischievous in the bad sense of the term. If parents would behave themselves whilst the child is growing, before it is born and after, it is a well-known fact that the child would instinctively obey the law of truth and the law of love. And when I understood this lesson in the early part of my life, I began a gradual but distinct change in life.

I do not propose to describe to you the several phases through which this stormy life of mine has passed, but I can only, in truth and in perfect humility, bear witness to the fact that to the extent that I have represented Love in my life, in thought, word, and deed, I have realized the peace that passeth understanding. I have baffled many of my friends when they have noticed in me peace that they have

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Speech at Montessori Training College, London, October 28, 1931



envied, and they have asked me for the cause of that priceless possession. I have not been able to explain the cause in me, it was due to my attempt to obey this, the greatest law of our being.

It was in 1915 when I reached India, that I first became acquainted with your activities. It was in a place called Amreli that I found that there was a little school being conducted after the Montessori system. Your name had preceded that first acquaintance. I found no difficulty in finding out at once that this school was not carrying out the spirit of your teaching; the letter was there, but whilst there was an honest—more or less honest—effort being made, I saw there was a great deal of tinsel about it.

I came in touch, then, with more such schools, and the more I came in touch with them, the more I began to understand that the foundation was good and splendid, if the children could be taught through the laws of nature—nature, consistent with human dignity, not nature that governs the beast. I felt instinctively from the way in which the children were being taught that whilst they were being indifferently taught, the original teaching was conceived in obedience to this fundamental law. Since then, I have had the pleasure of coming across several of your pupils, one of whom had even made a pilgrimage to Italy and had received your personal blessings. I was looking forward to meeting the children here and you all and it was a great pleasure to me to see these children. I had taken care to learn something about these little children. I had a foretaste of what I saw here, in Birmingham, where there is a school between which and this there is a difference. But I also saw that there also human nature was struggling to express itself. I see the same thing here and it was a matter of inexpressible joy to me that from their childhood the

children were brought to understand the virtue of silence, and how in response to the whisper from their teacher the children came forward one after another in that pin-drop silence. It gave me great joy to see all those beautiful rhythmic movements and, as I was watching those movements of the children, my whole heart went out to the millions of children of the semi-starved villages of India, and I asked myself as my heart went out to those children, "Is it possible for me to give them those lessons and the training that are being given under your system to these children?" We are conducting an experiment amongst the poorest of the children in India. I do not know how far the experiment will go. We have the problem of giving real vital education to these children of India's hovels, and we have no material means.

We have to fall back upon the voluntary assistance of teachers, but when I look for teachers, they are very few, especially, teachers of the type wanted, in order to draw the best from the children through understanding, through studying their individuality and then putting the child on its own resources, as it were, on its own honour. And believe me from my experience of hundreds, I was going to say thousands, of children,—I know that they have perhaps a finer sense of honour than you and I have. The greatest lessons in life—if we would but stop and humble ourselves, we would learn not from grown-up learned men, but from the so-called ignorant children. Jesus never uttered a loftier or a grander truth than when he said that wisdom cometh out of the mouths of babes. I believe it, I have noticed it in my own experience that if we would approach babes in humility and in innocence, we would learn wisdom from them.

I must not take up your time. I have simply given you what is, at the present moment, agitating me; namely, the



delicate problem considered in human terms of drawing out the best from these millions of children of whom I have told you. But I have learnt this one lesson—that what is impossible with man is child's play with God and if we have faith in that Divinity which presides over the destiny of the meanest of His creation, I have no doubt that all things are possible and in that final hope I live and pass my time and endeavour to obey His will. Therefore, I repeat that even as you, out of your love for children, are endeavouring to teach those children through your numerous institutions the best that can be brought out of them, even so I hope that it will be possible not only for the children of the wealthy and the well-to-do, but for the children of paupers to receive training of this nature. You have very truly remarked that if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children and if they will grow up in their natural innocence, we won't have the struggle, we won't have to pass fruitless idle resolutions, but we shall go from love to love and peace to peace, until at last all the corners of the world are covered with that peace and love for which, consciously or unconsciously, the whole world is hungering.

*Young India*, 19-11-1931

## ON GOD

There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it.

It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and that defies all proof because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It transcends the senses because it is possible to reason out the existence of God only to a limited extent.

Even in ordinary affairs we know that people do not know who rules or why or how He rules, but that they know that there is a power that certainly rules.

In my tour, some years ago, of Mysore, I met many poor villagers and I found, upon inquiry, that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They simply said some God ruled it. If the knowledge of these people was so limited about their ruler, I, who am an infinitely lesser being in respect to God than they to their ruler, need not be surprised if I do not realize the presence of God, the King of Kings. Nevertheless, I do feel, as the poor villagers felt about Mysore, that there is orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives.

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Recorded talk given at the request of the Columbia Broadcasting Company, London, October 30, 1931



It is not a blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings and, thanks to the marvellous researches of Sir J. C. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That law, then, which governs all life is God.

The law and the law-giver are one. I may not deny the law or the law-giver, because I know so little about it or Him. Just as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, even so my denial of God and His law will not liberate me from its operation, whereas a humble and mute acceptance of divine authority makes life's journey easier even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier. I do perceive that whilst everything around me is ever-changing and ever-dying, there is, underlying all that change, a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power of spirit is God. And since nothing else that I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent, for I can see that, in the midst of death, life persists; in the midst of untruth, truth persists; in the midst of darkness, light persists. Hence I gather that God is life, truth and light. He is love, He is the supreme good.

But he is no God who merely satisfies the intellect if He ever does. God, to be God, must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every smallest act of His votary. This can be done only through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be and often are false and deceptive,

however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses, it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within.

Such testimony is to be found in the experience of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself. This realization is preceded by immovable faith. He who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence can do so by living faith and since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law—the law of truth and love.

Exercise of faith will be the safest, where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to truth and love.

I confess that I have no argument to convince through reason. Faith transcends reason. All I can advise is not to attempt the impossible.

I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be co-equal with God. I am, therefore, humble enough to recognize evil as such and I call God long-suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Himself and yet if there is to be evil, He is the author of it and yet untouched by it.

I know, too, that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil even at the cost of life itself. I



am fortified in this belief by my own humble and limited experience. The purer I try to become, the nearer to God I feel myself to be. How much more should I be nearer to Him when my faith is not a mere apology as it is today, but has become as immovable as the Himalayas and as white as the snows on their peaks ?

*The Bombay Chronicle, 21-10-1931*

## THE WRITING ON THE WALL

I do not think that anything that I can say this evening can possibly influence the decision of the Cabinet. Probably the decision has been already taken. Matters of liberty of practically a whole Continent can hardly be decided by mere argumentation, or even negotiation. Negotiation has its play, but only under certain conditions. Without those conditions, negotiations are a fruitless task. But I do not want to go into all these matters. I want as far as possible to confine myself within the four corners of the conditions that you, Mr. Prime Minister, read to this Congress at its opening meeting. I would, therefore, first of all say a few words in connection with the reports that have been submitted to this Conference. You will find in these reports that generally it has been stated that such and such is the opinion of a large majority, some, however, have expressed an opinion to the contrary, and so on. Parties who have dissented have not been stated. I had heard when I was in India, and I was told when I came here, that no decision or decisions would be taken by the ordinary rule of majority, and I do not want to mention this fact here by way of complaint that the reports have been so framed as if the proceedings were governed by the test of majority.

But it was necessary for me to mention this fact, because on most of these reports you will find that there is a

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Speech at the plenary session of the Round Table Conference,  
London, December 1, 1931



dissenting opinion, and in most of the cases that dissent unfortunately happens to belong to me. It was not a matter of joy to have to dissent from fellow delegates. But I felt that I could not truly represent the Congress unless I had notified that dissent.

There is another thing which I want to bring to the notice of this Conference, namely, what is the meaning of the dissent of the Congress? I said at one of the preliminary meetings of the Federal Structure Committee that the Congress claimed to represent over 85 per cent of the population of India, that is to say, the dumb, toiling, semi-starved millions. But I went further: that the Congress claimed also, by right of service, to represent even the Princes, if they would pardon my putting forth that claim, and the landed gentry, and the educated class. I wish to repeat that claim and I wish this evening to emphasize that claim.

All the other parties at this meeting represent sectional interests. The Congress alone claims to represent the whole of India and all interests. It is no communal organization; it is a determined enemy of communalism in any shape or form. The Congress knows no distinction of race, colour or creed; its platform is universal. It may not always have lived up to its creed. I do not know a single human organization that lives up to its creed. The Congress has failed very often to my knowledge. It may have failed more often to the knowledge of its critics. But the worst critics will have to recognize, as it has been recognized, that the Indian National Congress is a daily growing organization, that its message penetrates the remotest village of India, that on given occasions the Congress has been able to demonstrate its influence over and among these masses who inhabit its 7,00,000 villages.

And yet, here I see that the Congress is treated as one of the parties. I do not mind it ; I do not regard it as a calamity for the Congress ; but I do regard it as a calamity for the purpose of doing the work for which we have gathered together here. I wish I could convince all the British public men, the British Ministers, that the Congress is capable of delivering the goods. The Congress is the only all-India national organization, bereft of any communal bias ; that it does represent all minorities which have lodged their claim—I hold unjustifiably—to represent 46 per cent of the population of India. The Congress, I say, claims to represent all these minorities.

What a great difference it would be today if this claim on behalf of the Congress was recognized. I feel that I have to state this claim with some degree of emphasis on behalf of peace, for the sake of achieving the purpose which is common to all of us, to you Englishmen who sit at this table and to us the Indian men and women who also sit at this table. I say so for this reason : The Congress is a powerful organization ; the Congress is an organization which has been accused of running or desiring to run a parallel Government ; and in a way I have endorsed the charge. If you could understand the working of the Congress, you would welcome an organization which could run a parallel Government and show that it is possible for an organization, voluntary, without any force at its command, to run the machinery of Government even under adverse circumstances.

But no. Although you have invited the Congress, you distrust the Congress. Although you have invited the Congress, you reject its claim to represent the whole of India. Of course, it is possible at this end of the world to dispute that claim, and it is not possible for me to prove this claim ;



but, all the same, if you find me asserting that claim, I do so because a tremendous responsibility rests upon my shoulders.

### THE WAY OF NEGOTIATION

The Congress represents the spirit of rebellion. I know that the word 'rebellion' must not be whispered at a Conference which has been summoned in order to arrive at an agreed solution of India's troubles through negotiation. Speaker after speaker has got up and said that India should achieve her liberty through negotiation, by argument, and that it will be the greatest glory of Great Britain if Great Britain yields to India's demands by argument. But the Congress does not hold quite that view. The Congress has an alternative which is unpleasant to you.

### THE OLD WAR

I heard several speakers—I have tried to follow every speaker with the utmost attention and with all the respect that I could possibly give to these speakers saying what a dire calamity it would be if India was fired with the spirit of lawlessness, rebellion, terrorism and so on. I do not pretend to have read history, but as a school boy I had to pass a paper in history also, and I read that the page of history is soiled red with the blood of those who fought for freedom. I do not know an instance in which nations have attained their own without having to go through an incredible measure of travail. The dagger of the assassin, the poison bowl, the bullet of the rifleman, the spear and all these weapons and methods of destruction have been up to now used by, what I consider, blind lovers of liberty and freedom. And the historian has not condemned them. I hold no brief for the terrorists. Mr. Ghaznavi brought in the terrorists and he brought

in the Calcutta Corporation. I felt hurt when he mentioned an incident that took place at the Calcutta Corporation. He forgot to mention that the Mayor of that Corporation made handsome reparation for the error into which he himself was betrayed, and the error into which the Calcutta Corporation was betrayed, through the instrumentality of those members of the Corporation who were Congressmen.

I hold no brief for Congressmen who directly or indirectly would encourage terrorism. As soon as this incident was brought to the notice of the Congress, the Congress set about putting it in order. It immediately called upon the Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation to give an account of what was done and the Mayor, the gentleman that he is, immediately admitted his mistake and made all the reparation that it was then legally possible to make. I must not detain this Assembly over this incident for any length of time. He mentioned also a verse which the children of the forty schools conducted by the Calcutta Corporation are supposed to have recited. There were many other mis-statements in that speech which I could dwell upon, but I have no desire to do so. It is only out of regard for the great Calcutta Corporation, and out of regard for truth, and on behalf of those who are not here tonight to put in their defence, that I mention these two glaring instances. I do not for one moment believe that this was taught in the Calcutta Corporation schools with the knowledge of the Calcutta Corporation. I do not know that in those terrible days of last year several things were done for which we have regret, for which we have made reparation.

If our boys in Calcutta were taught those verses which Mr. Ghaznavi has recited, I am here to tender an apology on their behalf, but I should want it proved that the boys



were taught by the schoolmasters of these schools with the knowledge and encouragement of the Corporation. Charges of this nature have been brought against Congress times without number, and times without number these charges have also been refuted, but if I have mentioned these things at this juncture, it is again to show that for the sake of liberty people have fought, people have lost their lives, people have killed and have sought death at the hands of those whom they have sought to oust.

#### THE NEW WAY

The Congress then comes upon the scene and devises a new method not known to history, namely, that of civil disobedience, and the Congress has been following up that method. But again, I am up against a stone wall and I am told that is a method that no Government in the world will tolerate. Well, of course, the Government may not tolerate, no Government has tolerated open rebellion. No Government may tolerate civil disobedience, but Governments have to succumb even to these forces, as the British Government has done before now, even as the great Dutch Government after eight years of trial had to yield to the logic of facts. General Smuts, a brave general, a great statesman, and a very hard taskmaster also, but he himself recoiled with horror from even the contemplation of doing to death innocent men and women who were merely fighting for the preservation of their self-respect. Things which he had vowed he would never yield in the year 1908, reinforced as he was by General Botha, he had to do in the year 1914 after having tried these civil resisters through and through. And in India, Lord Chelmsford had to do the same thing. The Governor of Bombay had to do the same thing in Borsad and Bardoli. I suggest to you, Mr. Prime Minister, it is too late today to resist this,

and it is this thing which weighs me down, this choice that lies before them, the parting of the ways probably. I shall hope against hope, I shall strain every nerve to achieve an honourable settlement for my country, if I can do so without having to put the millions of my countrymen and countrywomen, and even children, through this ordeal of fire. It can be a matter of no joy and comfort to me to lead them again to a fight of that character, but, if a further ordeal of fire has to be our lot, I shall approach that with the greatest joy and with the greatest consolation that I was doing what I felt to be right, the country was doing what it felt to be right and the country will have the additional satisfaction of knowing that it was not at least taking lives, it was giving lives: it was not making the British people directly suffer, it was suffering. Professor Gilbert Murray told me—I shall never forget that, I am paraphrasing his inimitable language—"Do you not consider for one moment that we Englishmen do not suffer when thousands of your countrymen suffer, that we are so heartless?" I do not think so, I do not know that you will suffer but I want you to suffer because I want to touch your hearts; and when your hearts have been touched then will come the psychological moment for negotiation. Negotiation there always will be; and if this time I have travelled all these miles in order to enter upon negotiation, I thought that your countryman, Lord Irwin, had sufficiently tried us through his ordinances, that he had sufficient evidence that thousands of men and women of India and thousands of children had suffered; and that, ordinance or no ordinance, lathis or no lathis, nothing would avail to stem the tide that was onrushing and to stem the passions that were rising in the breasts of the men and women of India who were thirsting for liberty.



## THE PRICE

Whilst there is yet a little sand left in the glass, I want you to understand what this Congress stands for. My life is at your disposal. The lives of all the members of the Working Committee, the All-India Congress Committee, are at your disposal. But remember that you have at your disposal the lives of all these dumb millions. I do not want to sacrifice those lives if I can possibly help it. Therefore, please remember that I will count no sacrifice too great if, by chance, I can pull through an honourable settlement. You will find me always having the greatest spirit of compromise if I can but fire you with the spirit that is working in the Congress, namely, that India must have real liberty. Call it by any name you like; a rose will smell as sweet by any other name, but it must be the rose of liberty that I want and not the artificial product. If your mind and the Congress mind, the mind of this Conference and the mind of the British people, means the same thing by the same word, then you will find the amplest room for compromise, and you will find the Congress itself always in a compromising spirit. But so long as there is not that one mind, that one definition, not one implication for the same word that you and I and we may be using, there is no compromise possible. How can there be any compromise when each one of us has a different definition for the same words that we may be using? It is impossible, Mr. Prime Minister, I want to suggest to you in all humility, that it is utterly impossible then to find a meeting ground, to find a ground where you can apply the spirit of compromise. And I am very grieved to have to say up to now I have not been able to discover a common definition for the terms that we have been exchanging during all these weary weeks.

## OUR GOAL

I was shown last week the Statute of Westminster by a sceptic, and he said, "Have you seen the definition of Dominion?" I read the definition of "Dominion" and naturally I was not at all perplexed or shocked to see that the word 'Dominion' was exhaustively defined and it had not a general definition but a particular definition. It simply said: the word 'Dominion' shall include Australia, South Africa, Canada and so on ending with the Irish Free State. I do not think I noticed Egypt there. Then he said, "Do you see what your Dominion means?" It did not make any impression upon me. I do not mind what my Dominion means or what complete independence means. In a way I was relieved.

I said I am now relieved from having to quarrel about the word 'Dominion', because I am out of it. But I want complete independence, and even so, so many Englishmen have said, "Yes, you can have complete independence, but what is the meaning of complete independence?" and again we come to different definitions.

One of your great statesmen was debating with me, and said: "Honestly I did not know that you meant this by complete independence." He ought to have known but he did not know, and I shall tell you what he did not know. When I said to him: "I cannot be a partner in an Empire," he said: "Of course, that is logical." I replied: "But I want to become that. It is not as if I shall be if I am compelled to, but I want to become a partner with Great Britain. I want to become a partner with the English people; but I want to enjoy precisely the same liberty that your people enjoy, and I want to seek this partnership not merely for the benefit



of India, and not merely for mutual benefit ; I want to seek this partnership in order that the great weight that is crushing the world to atoms may be lifted from its shoulders."

This took place ten or twelve days ago. Strange as it may appear, I got a note from another Englishman, whom also you know, and whom also you respect. Among many things, he writes : "I believe profoundly that the peace and happiness of mankind depend on our friendship;" and, as if I would not understand that, he says : "Your people and mine," I must read to you what he also says : "And of all Indians, you are the one that the real Englishman likes and understands."

He does not waste any words on flattery, and I do not think he has intended this last expression to flatter me. It will not flatter me in the slightest degree. There are many things in this note which, if you understand better the significance of this expression, but let me tell you that when he writes this last sentence he does not mean me personally. I personally signify nothing, and I know I would mean nothing to any single Englishman ; but I mean something to some Englishmen because I represent a cause, because I seek to represent a nation, a great organization which has made itself felt. That is the reason why he says this.

But then, if I could possibly find that working basis, Mr. Prime Minister, there is ample room for compromise. It is for friendship I crave. My business is not to throw overboard the slave-holder and tyrant. My philosophy forbids me to do so, and today the Congress has accepted that philosophy, not as a creed, as it is to me, but as a policy, because the Congress believes that is the right and the best thing for India, a nation of 350 millions to do.

## OUR WEAPON

A nation of 350 million people does not need the dagger of the assassin, it does not need the poison bowl, it does not need the sword, the spear or the bullet. It needs simply a will of its own, an ability to say 'no', and that nation is today learning to say 'no'.

But what is it that the nation does? To summarily, or at all, dismiss Englishmen? No. Its mission is today to convert Englishmen. I do not want to break the bond between England and India, but I do want to transform that bond. I want to transform that slavery into complete freedom for my country. Call it complete independence or whatever you like, I will not quarrel about the word, and even though my countrymen may dispute with me for having taken some other word, I shall be able to bear down that opposition to so long as the content of the word that you may suggest to me bears the same meaning. Hence, I have times without number to urge upon your attention that the safeguards that have been suggested are completely unsatisfactory. They are not in the interests of India.

## FINANCIAL CRAMP

Three experts from the Federation of Commerce and Industry have, in their own way, each in his different manner, told out of their expert experiences how utterly impossible it is for any body of responsible Ministers to tackle the problem of administration when 30 per cent of her resources are mortgaged irretrievably. Better than I could have shown to you they have shown out of the amplitude of their knowledge what these financial safeguards mean for India. These mean the complete cramping of India. They have discussed



at this table financial safeguards but that includes necessarily the question of Defence and the question of the Army. Yet while I say that the safeguards are unsatisfactory as they have been presented, I have not hesitated to say, and I do not hesitate to repeat that the Congress is pledged to giving safeguards, endorsing safeguards which may be demonstrated to be in the interest of India.

At one of the sittings of the Federal Structure Committee I had no hesitation in amplifying the admission and saying that those safeguards must be also of benefit to Great Britain. I do not want safeguards which are merely beneficial to India and prejudicial to the real interests of Great Britain. The fancied interests of India will have to be sacrificed. The fancied interests of Great Britain will have to be sacrificed. The illegitimate interests of India will have to be sacrificed. The illegitimate interests of Great Britain will also have to be sacrificed. Therefore, again I repeat, if we have the same meaning for the same word, I will agree with Mr. Jayakar, with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and other distinguished speakers who have spoken at this Conference.

I will agree with them all that we have, after all these labours, reached a substantial measure of agreement, but my despair, my grief, is that I do not read the same words in the same light. The implications of the safeguards of Mr. Jayakar, I very much fear, are different from my implications, and the implications of Mr. Jayakar and myself are perhaps only different from the implications that Sir Samuel Hoare, for instance, has in mind ; I do not know. We have never really come to grips. We have never got down to brass tacks, as you put it, and I am anxious—I have been pining—to come to real grips and to get down to brass tacks all these days and all these nights, and I have felt : why are we not

coming nearer and nearer together, and why are we wasting our time in eloquence, in oratory, in debating, and in scoring points? Heaven knows, I have no desire to take part in any debating. I know that liberty is made of sterner stuff, and I know that the freedom of India is made of much sterner stuff. We have problems that would baffle any statesman. We have problems that other nations have not to tackle. But they do not baffle me; they cannot baffle those who have been brought up in the Indian climate. Those problems are there with us. Just as we have to tackle bubonic plague, we have to tackle the problem of malaria. We have to tackle, as you have not, the problem of snakes and scorpions, monkeys, tigers and lions. We have to tackle these problems because we have been brought up under them.

They do not baffle us. Somehow or other we have survived the ravages of these venomous reptiles and various creatures. So also shall we survive our problems and find a way out of those problems. But today you and we have come together at a Round Table and we want to find a common formula which will work. Please believe me that whilst I abate not a little of the claim that I have registered on behalf of the Congress, which I do not propose to repeat here, while I withdraw not one word of the speeches that I had to make at the Federal Structure Committee, I am here to compromise; I am here to consider every formula that British ingenuity can prepare, every formula that the ingenuity of such constitutionalists as Mr. Sastri, Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, Mr. Jinnah, Sir Muhammad Shafi and a host of others can weave into being.

#### MUTUAL TRUST

I will not be baffled. I shall be here as long as I am



required because I do not want to revive civil disobedience. I want to turn the truce that was arrived at in Delhi into a permanent settlement. But for heaven's sake give me, a frail man 62 years gone, a little bit of a chance. Find a little corner for him and the organization that he represents. You distrust that organization though you may seemingly trust me. Not for one moment differentiate me from the organization of which I am but a drop in the ocean. I am no greater than the organization to which I belong. I am infinitely smaller than that organization ; and if you find me a place, if you trust me, I invite you to trust the Congress also. Your trust in me otherwise is a broken reed. I have no authority save what I derive from the Congress. If you will work the Congress for all it is worth, then you will say good-bye to terrorism ; then you will not need terrorism. Today you have to fight the school of terrorists which is there with your disciplined and organized terrorism, because you will be blind to the facts or the writing on the wall. Will you not see the writing that these terrorists are writing with their blood ? Will you not see that we do not want bread of wheat, but we want the bread of liberty ; and without that liberty there are thousands today who are sworn not to give themselves peace or to give the country peace ?

I urge you then to read that writing on the wall. I ask you not to try the patience of a people known to be proverbially patient. We speak of the mild Hindu, and the Mussalman also by contact good or evil with the Hindu has himself become mild. And the mention of the Mussalman reminds me that the problem exists here, and I repeat what I used to say in India—I have not forgotten those words—that without the problem of minorities being solved, there is no swaraj for India, there is no freedom for India. I know and I realize it ; and yet I came here in the hope 'perchance' that

I might be able to pull through a solution here. But I do not despair of some day or other finding a real and living solution in connection with the minorities problem. I repeat what I have said elsewhere that so long as the wedge in the shape of foreign rule divides community from community and class from class, there will be no real living solution, there will be no living friendship between these communities.

It will be after all and at best a paper solution. But immediately you withdraw that wedge, the domestic ties, the domestic affections, the knowledge of common birth—do you suppose that all these will count for nothing?

Were Hindus and Mussalmans and Sikhs always at war with one another when there was no British rule, when there was no English face seen there? We have chapter and verse given to us by Hindu historians and by Mussalman historians to say that we were living in comparative peace even then. And Hindus and Mussalmans in the villages are not even today quarrelling. In those days they were not known to quarrel at all. The late Maulana Muhammad Ali often used to tell me, and he was himself a bit of an historian—‘If God’—‘Allah’ as he called out—‘gives me life, I propose to write the history of Musalman rule in India; and then I will show, through documents that British people have preserved, that Aurangzeb was not so vile as he has been painted by the British historian; that the Mogul rule was not so bad as it has been shown to us in British History;’ and so on. And so have Hindu historians written. This quarrel is not old; this quarrel is coeval with this acute shame. I dare to say, it is coeval with the British advent and immediately this relationship, the unfortunate, artificial, unnatural relationship between Great Britain and India is transformed into a natural relationship, when it becomes, if it does



become, a voluntary partnership to be given up, to be dissolved at the will of either party, when it becomes that you will find that Hindus, Mussalmans, Sikhs, Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Christians, Untouchables will all live together as one man.

I do not intend to say much tonight about the Princes, but I should be wronging them and should be wronging the Congress if I did not register my claim, not with the Round Table Conference but with the Princes. It is open to the Princes to give their terms on which they will join the Federation. I have appealed to them to make the path easy for those who inhabit the other part of India, and therefore, I can only make these suggestions for their favourable consideration, for their earnest consideration. I think that if they accepted, no matter what they are, but some fundamental rights as the common property of all India, and if they accepted that position and allowed those rights to be tested by the Court, which will be again of their own creation, and if they introduced elements—only elements—of representation on behalf of their subjects, I think that they would have gone a long way to conciliate their subjects. They would have gone a long way to show to the world and to show to the whole of India that they are also fired with a democratic spirit, that they do not want to remain undiluted autocrats, but that they want to become constitutional monarchs even as King George of Great Britain is.

#### AS AUTONOMOUS FRONTIER PROVINCE

Let India get what she is entitled to and what she can really take, but whatever she gets, and whenever she gets it, let the Frontier Province get complete autonomy today. That Frontier will then be a standing demonstration to the

whole of India, and therefore, the whole vote of the Congress will be given in favour of the Frontier Province getting Provincial Autonomy tomorrow. Mr. Prime Minister, if you can possibly get your Cabinet to endorse the proposition that from tomorrow the Frontier Province becomes a full-fledged autonomous province, I shall then have proper footing amongst the Frontier tribes and convene them to my assistance when those over the border cast an evil eye on India.

#### THANKS

Last of all, my last is a pleasant task for me. This is perhaps the last time that I shall be sitting with you at negotiations. It is not that I want that. I want to sit at the same table with you in your closets and to negotiate and to plead with you and to go down on bended knees before I take the final lead and final plunge.

But whether I have the good fortune to continue to tender my co-operation or not does not depend upon me. It largely depends upon you. But it may not even depend upon you. It depends upon so many circumstances over which neither you nor we may have any control whatsoever. Then, let me perform this pleasant task of giving my thanks to all from Their Majesties down to the poorest men in the East End where I have taken up my habitation.

In that settlement, which represents the poor people of the East End of London, I have become one of them. They have accepted me as a member, and as a favoured member of their family. It will be one of the richest treasures that I shall carry with me. Here, too, I have found nothing but courtesy and nothing but a genuine affection from all with



whom I have come in touch. I have come in touch with so many Englishmen. It has been a priceless privilege to me. They have listened to what must have often appeared to them to be unpleasant, although it was true. Although I have often been obliged to say these things to them they have never shown the slightest impatience or irritation. It is impossible for me to forget these things. No matter what befalls me, no matter what the fortunes may be of this Round Table Conference, one thing I shall certainly carry with me, that is, that from high to low I have found nothing but the utmost courtesy and the utmost affection. I consider that it was well worth my paying this visit to England in order to find this human affection.

It has enhanced, it has deepened my irrepressible faith in human nature that although Englishmen and Englishwomen have been fed upon lies that I see so often disfiguring your Press, that although in Lancashire, the Lancashire people had perhaps some reason for becoming irritated against me, I found no irritation and no resentment even in the operatives. The operatives, men and women, hugged me. They treated me as one of their own. I shall never forget that.

I am carrying with me thousands upon thousands of English friendships. I do not know them but I read that affection in their eyes as early in the morning I walk through your streets. All this hospitality, all this kindness will never be effaced from my memory, no matter what befalls my unhappy land. I thank you for your forbearance.

## GOD IS TRUTH

You have asked me why I consider that God is Truth. In my early childhood or youth I was taught to repeat what in Hindu scriptures is one thousand names of God. Among the several little things one of the religious teachers my family had was a little pamphlet which contained these thousand names of God. But these thousand names of God were by no means an exhaustive list. We believe and I think it is the truth—that God has as many names as there are creatures and therefore we also say that God is nameless and since God has many forms we also consider Him formless, and since He speaks to me through many tongues we consider Him to be speechless and so on. And so when I came to study Islam I found that Islam too had many names, but I had not come to recognize God for my personal satisfaction as Truth. I would say for those who say God is love, God is love. But deep down in me I say God may be love, but God is Truth. If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, for myself I have come to the conclusion that God is Truth. But two years ago I went a step further and said Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the two statements: God is Truth and Truth is God. And that conclusion I came to after a continuous relentless search after truth which began so many years ago. I found that the nearest approach to Truth is through love. But I found also that love has many meanings in the English language at least and human love in the sense of passion becomes



a degrading thing also. I found too that love in the sense of ahimsa and non-violence has only a limited number of votaries in the world. And as I made progress in my search I made no dispute with "God is love". It is very difficult to understand "God is love" (because of a variety of meanings of love) and love in the sense of human passion becomes a degraded thing, but I never found a double meaning in connection with truth and not even atheists have denied the necessity or power of truth. Not only so. In their passion for discovering truth they have not hesitated even to deny the very existence of God—from their own point of view rightly. And it was because of their reasoning that I saw that I was not going to say "God is Truth" but "Truth is God". Therefore I recall the name of Charles Bradlaugh—great Englishman—who lived 50 years ago. He delighted to call himself an atheist. But knowing as I do something of his life I never considered him an atheist. I would call him a godfearing man although he would reject the claim, and I know his face would redden. I would say: No Mr. Bradlaugh, you are a truth-fearing man, not a godfearing man, and I would disarm his criticisms by saying "Truth is God" as I have disarmed criticisms of many a young man. Add to this the great difficulty that millions have taken the name of God and have committed nameless atrocities in the name of God. Not that scientists do not very often commit cruelties in the name of truth. I know today in the name of truth and science inhuman cruelties are perpetrated on animals when men perform vivisection. To me it is a denial of God whether you recognize Him as Truth or by any other name. So I know that there are these difficulties in one's way, no matter how one describes God. But human mind is a limited thing, and you have to labour under limitations when you think of a being or entity who is beyond the power of man to grasp. But we have another thing in Hindu philosophy viz., God

alone is and nothing else exists. Now the same truth you find emphasized and exemplified in the *kalema* of Islam. There you find it clearly stated—a Mussalman has to recite it at all his prayers—that God alone is and nothing else is and that is the same about truth. And the name that Sanskrit has for truth literally means that which is—*Sat*. For these and several other reasons that I can give you I have come to the conclusion that the definition “Truth is God” gives me the greatest satisfaction. And when you want to find truth as God, the only inevitable means is love, non-violence—and since I believe that ultimately means and ends are convertible terms—I should not hesitate to say that God is love.

#### WHAT IS TRUTH ?

A difficult question, but I have solved it for myself by saying that it is what the voice within tells one. How then, you ask, different people think of different and contrary truths ?

Seeing that the human mind works through innumerable media and that the evolution of the human mind is not the same for all, it follows that what may be truth for one may be untruth for another and hence those who have made these experiments have come to the conclusion that there are certain conditions to making experiments. Just as for science there is an indispensable course common for all, even so is it true for persons who would make experiments in the spiritual realm—they must submit to certain conditions. And since everybody says it is his inner voice which speaks, you must listen to the voice, and you will then find out your limitations as you go along the path. Therefore we have the belief based upon uninterrupted experience that those who would make diligent search after truth—God—must go through these



vows: the vow of truth—speaking and thinking of truth, the vow of *brahmacharya*, of non-violence, poverty and non-possession. If you do not take these fine vows, you may not embark on the experiment. There are several other things which were prescribed but I must not take you through all those. But those who have made these experiments know that it is not proper for everyone to claim to hear the voice of conscience and it is because we have at the present moment everybody claiming the right of conscience without going through any discipline whatsoever that there is so much untruth being delivered to a bewildered world. All therefore that I can in all humility present to you is that truth is not to be found by anybody who has not got an abundant sense of humility. If you would swim on the bosom of the ocean of truth, you must reduce yourself to a zero. Further than this I may not tonight go along this fascinating path.

*Mahadev Desai's Diary*

## HOPES OF CO-OPERATION DASHED TO PIECES

Last night I was expecting that I would be able to speak before you something different than what I propose to do now. But evidently God has willed otherwise. I did not know till I landed this morning that there had been firing in Peshawar, nor did I know that Pandit Jawaharlal and Sjt. Sherwani were jailed or were to be prosecuted. I take these as Christmas presents to me from Lord Willingdon. It was natural that he should have made presents to me on my return home. In the Frontier Province Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, his brother and several others have been arrested and we do not know how many more will be jailed. We may not even get the news from that Province. What better presents can there be for a satyagrahi than these ?

If we had committed any offence and were punished for that, there would have been occasion for us to regret it. But I am as certain as there is life in me that Khan Abdul Gaffar is a true believer in the cult of satyagraha and he has understood its meaning. I need say nothing about Pandit Jawaharlal and Sjt. Sherwani. You know them as much as I do.

The question now before us is what is our duty. Shall we take the hint from the action of the Government and launch a campaign of satyagraha or shall we try some other



means ? I cannot give you my opinion just at present.

I will only say that if fate wills that we should go through the ordeal again, and if the Congress Working Committee decides on the renewal of the fight, I shall not hesitate to ask you to join it. But if there is any possibility of avoiding satyagraha, I shall do my utmost to prevent it and advise you to have patience. I think after years of experience India has learnt to hold herself in patience.

#### NO JUSTIFICATION FOR ORDINANCE

I was grieved to learn on board the steamer that in Bengal, two of our young girls are said to have committed a murder. It pained me as a satyagrahi, because our creed is to be ready to die and not to kill. Our fight is based on love. Even if we fight the Government, it is with the weapon of love and there can be no room for hatred in it. When I heard of that incident I was sorry but that does not mean that there is the least justification for what the Government has been doing in Bengal. A Government has every right to punish the wrongdoers but it does not behove a Government to victimize people for acts for which they are not responsible. There can be no justification for the ordinances promulgated in the U.P. or the North-West Frontier Province. We cannot tolerate any of them.

I had hoped that it would be possible to find a way to co-operate with the Government. I will even now do my best to find a way out. But I must admit the signs that I have noticed have considerably weakened my hopes. And if ever we have to fight we should be prepared to do our utmost. Ours is a fight in which one and all can join. It is a fight to court sufferings. It is a struggle to give life and

not to take life. In this struggle even children can play a part.

### STICK TO NON-VIOLENCE

Last year we faced lathis, but this time we must be prepared to face bullets. I do not wish that the Pathans in the Frontier alone should court bullets. If bullets are to be faced, Bombay and Gujarat also must take their shares. I had said in London that if we have to offer even a million lives for achieving freedom, I would be prepared for sacrifice without the least compunction. I believe that we must get rid of the fear of death, and when we have to court death we must embrace it as we embrace a friend. But in spite of our readiness to offer our lives, we must see to it that not even a hair of an Englishman is hurt. We must hope that by our sacrifice we shall be able to bring about a change of heart in the same Englishman who strikes us.

By my visit to Europe, my faith in non-violence has immensely increased. I believe that non-violence has the power to melt the stoniest heart. Some people thought that during my visit to Europe I would learn something new, but I honestly say that I learnt nothing new except that my faith in non-violence increased.

Another experience that I got during my visit to London was that the British Cabinet believes—and there is no reason to doubt its sincerity—that we are not fit for self-government. They believe, that although the Congressmen speak of non-violence, they do not honestly believe in it. The reason is that in the reports they get from their officials in India, it is represented that Indians are unfit for self-government, and that Congress has no control over the



masses. That is why they have been declaring Congress organizations unlawful. Our duty is not to find fault with the Englishman nor to be angry with him, but to get rid of our shortcomings and to act up to the creed of non-violence.

Maybe that many of you have accepted it as a policy, but so long as the Congress has adopted that creed, we must stick fast to it. By our actions we must prove beyond doubt that we, Congressmen, exist not to harm anyone but to protect others at the cost of our own lives. The Congress stands to achieve freedom by sacrificing lives. Those who do not subscribe to that view had better leave the Congress. If we do that, we shall enhance the influence and reputation that we have earned, and if we lose it, we will not be able to attain freedom.

If we have not so far been able to attain swaraj, it does not mean that we should give up the attempt. India has not only to attain her freedom but also to give the message of peace and non-violence to the world. Even if years are required to achieve that object, it should not dishearten us.

#### SATYAGRAHA—THE WEAPON

I hear people saying that if the Congress gave up satyagraha it will be able to deal with the Government. I must make it clear that the Congress and satyagraha are inseparable. In satyagraha lies that power of the Congress and the Government will have ultimately to come to terms with the Congress. I made this clear in London and I repeat it today before you and the whole world. The Congress does not belong to the Hindus alone. It stands equally for Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians, Jews and in fact all those who have made India

their home. The Congress stands for those Englishmen also who have made India their home. I made the claim in London on behalf of the Congress that it stands for the whole of India and I repeat it here. Its influence is bound to increase.

### COMMUNAL SOLUTION

We would not solve the communal problem in London. I know that it could never be solved there. It can be solved by the Congress and it is doing all that it can to solve it. The remedy is to serve all classes and communities. If the Congress serves the Sikhs and Muslims, they are sure to claim the Congress as their own.

### STATUS OF UNTOUCHABLES

One word about the untouchables. I claim myself to be one of them. I have served them for my whole life. I started their service even before I took up Congress work. How can I then do anything that will harm them? The untouchables have been so much oppressed by the caste Hindus that we can find no parallel to it in any other religion. Therefore if they get angry and do harm to ten or twenty Hindus, it should not give us cause to retaliate. I am not prepared for any concession like reservation of seats, etc., to the untouchables, because I believe that it would be perpetuating untouchability. Let the future legislatures of free India be filled with untouchables alone but let them come in as equals. Unless we raise them to our level, our freedom will be futile. So long as a person, whether man or woman, touchable or untouchable, rich or poor, is oppressed and does not enjoy equal rights with other citizens of the country, we cannot enjoy freedom. It will be slavery in the garb of



freedom. What I did in London was only to safeguard their rights.

I had a mind to speak on many things. I had to place before you an account of what I did in London in connection with the R. T. C. If I am left free, I may do it on some other occasion or you may know it through other means.

What I have to tell you now is that if there is to be a fight, be prepared for every sacrifice but take a pledge that you will not do harm to others. I will do all that lies within the power of a human being to prevent another fiery ordeal, but if I find there is no other way out, I will not hesitate to call upon you to go through it, whatever the magnitude of sufferings may be. May God give us the strength to suffer and sacrifice in the cause of freedom.

*The Bombay Chronicle, 29-12-1931*

## GITA—THE MOTHER

I have been asked by Acharya Anandshanker Dhruva to say a few words on the *Gita* to the students of the Kashi Vishvavidyalaya. It is not without hesitation that I have accepted the invitation. What right can a layman like myself have to discourse on a theme like this in the presence of a *savant* like him? . . . Which is the one book that can be to the Hindus what the Bible is to the Christians or the Koran to the Musalmans? Is it the Vedas? No. The *Bhagavat*? No. *Devipurāṇ*? No. Early in my childhood I had felt the need of a scripture that would serve me as an unfailing guide through the trials and temptations of life. The Vedas could not supply that need, if only because to learn them would require fifteen to sixteen years of hard study at a place like Kashi for which I was not ready then. But the *Gita*, I had read somewhere, gave within the compass of its 700 verses the quintessence of all the shastras and the *Upanishads*. That decided me. I learnt Sanskrit to enable me to read the *Gita*. Today the *Gita* is not only my Bible or my Koran; it is more than that—it is my mother. I lost my earthly mother who gave me birth long ago; but this eternal mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since. She has never changed, she has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom. Often in the course of my struggle against untouchability, I am confronted with conflicting opinions delivered by doctors of learning. Some of them tell me that untouchability as it is practised



today has no sanction in Hinduism and they bless my efforts to eradicate it ; but there are some others who maintain that untouchability has been an essential part of Hinduism from the very beginning. Which authority should I follow under the circumstances ? I feel absolutely at sea. The Vedas and the *Smritis* are of no avail to me. I then approach the Mother and say : "Mother, these learned pandits have put me in a predicament. Help me out of my perplexity." And the Mother, with a smile, says in reply : "The assurance held out by me in the ninth chapter is not meant for the Brahmins only, but for the sinner and the outcaste, the downtrodden and the disinherited, too." But in order to be worthy of that promise, we must be obedient and devoted children of the Mother and not disobedient and disloyal children, who only make a pretence of devotion.

It is sometimes alleged against the *Gita* that it is too difficult a work for the man in the street. The criticism, I venture to submit, is ill-founded. The *Gita* enabled the late Lokamanya, out of his encyclopaedic learning and study, to produce a monumental commentary. For him it was a storehouse of profound truths to exercise his intellect upon. But that need not scare away a lay reader. If you find all the eighteen chapters too difficult to negotiate, make a careful study of the first three chapters only. They will give you in a nutshell what is propounded in greater detail and from different angles in the remaining fifteen chapters. Even these three chapters can be further epitomized in a few verses that can be selected from these chapters. Add to this the fact that at three distinct places the *Gita* goes even further and exhorts us to leave alone all 'isms' and take refuge in the Lord alone, and it will be seen how baseless is the charge that the message of the *Gita* is too subtle or complicated for lay minds to understand. The *Gita* is the universal mother.

She turns away nobody. Her door is wide open to anyone who knocks. A true votary of the *Gita* does not know what disappointment is. He ever dwells in perennial joy and peace that passeth understanding. But that peace and joy come not to the sceptic or to him who is proud of his intellect or learning. It is reserved only for the humble in spirit who brings to her worship a fullness of faith and an undivided singleness of mind. There never was a man who worshipped her in that spirit and went back disappointed.

Our students are prone to be upset by trifles. A trivial thing like failure in an examination plunges them into the darkest despair. The *Gita* inculcates in them the duty of perseverance in the face of seeming failure. It teaches us that we have a right to actions only but not to the fruit thereof and that success and failure are one and the same thing at bottom. It calls upon us to dedicate ourselves, body, mind and soul, to pure duty, and not to become mental voluptuaries at the mercy of all chance desires and undisciplined impulses. As a satyagrahi, I can declare that the *Gita* is ever presenting me with fresh lessons. If somebody tells me that this is my delusion, my reply to him would be that I shall hug this delusion as my richest treasure.

I would advise the students to begin their day with an early morning recitation of the *Gita*. I am a lover and devotee of Tulsidas. I adore the great spirit that gave to an aching world the all-healing mantra of Ramanama. But I am here today not to present Tulsidas to you, but to ask you to take up the study of the *Gita*, not in a carping or critical spirit, but in a devout and reverent spirit. Thus approached, she will grant your every wish. It is no joke, I admit, remembering by heart all the eighteen chapters, but it is worth while to make an attempt. Once you have tasted of its sweet



nectar, your attachment to it will grow from day to day. The recitation of the *Gita* verses will support you in your trials and console you in your distress, even in the darkness of solitary confinement. And, if with these verses on your lips you receive the final summons and deliver up your spirit, you will attain *Brahma Nirvan*—the Final Liberation. What that blessed state is—I leave it for your learned Acharyas to explain to you.

*Harijan*, 24-8-1934

## A RESTATEMENT OF FAITH

I am going to say nothing new today. The cult of the spinning-wheel is 18 years old. I said in 1918 that we could win swaraj through the spinning-wheel. My faith in the ability of the spinning-wheel is as bright today as when I first declared it in 1918. It has become richer for the experience and experiment of all these years.

But you should know the implication of the wheel or its product, khadi. It is not enough that one wears khadi on ceremonial occasions or even wears it to the exclusion of all other cloth if one surrounds oneself with *Videshi* in everything else. Khadi means the truest swadeshi spirit, identification with the starving millions.

Let there be no mistake about my conception of swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and the social, the corresponding end, is dharma, i. e., religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all. You may recognize it by the name of Truth, not the honesty of expedience but the living Truth that pervades everything and will survive all destruction and all transformation. Moral and social uplift may be recognized by the term we are used



to, i. e., non-violence. Let us call this the square of swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue. In the language of the Congress we cannot achieve this political and economic freedom without truth and non-violence, in concrete terms without a living faith in God and hence moral and social elevation.

### POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

By political independence I do not mean an imitation of the British House of Commons, or the Soviet rule of Russia or the Fascist rule of Italy or the Nazi rule of Germany. They have systems suited to their genius. We must have ours suited to ours. What that can be is more than I can tell. I have described it as Ramraj, i. e., sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority. The Congress constitutions of Nagpur and Bombay for which I am mainly responsible are an attempt to achieve this type of swaraj.

Then take economic independence. It is not a product of industrialization of the modern or the Western type. Indian economic independence means to me the economic uplift of every individual male and female by his or her own conscious effort. Under the system all men and women will have enough clothing—not the mere loin-cloth, but what we understand by the term necessary articles of clothing—and enough food including milk and butter which are today denied to millions.

This brings me to socialism. Real socialism has been handed down to us by our ancestors who taught : “All land belongs to Gopal, where then is the boundary line? Man is the maker of that line and he can therefore unmake it.” Gopal literally means shepherd ; it also means God. In

modern language, it means the State, i.e., the people. That the land today does not belong to the people is too true. But the fault is not in the teaching. It is in us who have not lived up to it.

I have no doubt that we can make as good an approach to it as is possible for any nation, not excluding Russia, and that without violence. The most effective substitute for violent dispossession is the wheel with all its implications. Land and all prosperity is his who will work it. Unfortunately the workers are, or have been, kept ignorant of this simple fact.

Let us now see how India came to be utterly impoverished. History tells us that the East India Company ruined the cotton manufacture and by all kinds of means made her dependent upon Lancashire for her cloth, the next great necessity of man. It is still the largest item of import. It thus created a huge army of partially unemployed men and women counted in millions and gave them no other employment in return. With the destruction of hand-ginning, carding, spinning and weaving to a certain extent, perished the other industries of India's villages. Continuous unemployment has induced in the people a kind of laziness which is most depressing. Thus whilst the alien rule is undoubtedly responsible for the growing pauperism of the people, we are more responsible for it. If the middle class people, who betrayed their trust and bartered away the economic independence of India for a mess of pottage, would now realize their error and take the message of the wheel to the villagers and induce them to shed their laziness and work at the wheel, we can ameliorate the condition of the people to a great extent. It would be a terrible thing if laziness replaces industry and despair triumphs over hope.



## PARLIAMENTARY PROGRAMME

The parliamentary programme is in the air. It has come to stay and rightly. But it cannot bring us independence. Its function is strictly limited though quite necessary. Its success will prevent the Government from claiming that ordinance rule or any measure restricting our progress to the goal was sanctioned by popular representatives. Hence the necessity for voting for the Congress candidates who dare not vote for unpopular measures without being liable to Congress discipline. The success of that programme may also bring some relief in individual cases such as the release of Shri Subhas Bose or the detenus. But that is not independence, political or economic.

Then look at it in another way. Only a limited number of men and women can become members of legislatures, say 1,500. How many from this audience can become legislators? And just now no more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  crores can vote for these 1,500 members. What about the remaining  $31\frac{1}{2}$  crores? In our conception of swaraj, they are the real masters and the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  crores are the former's servants who in their turn are masters of the 1,500. Thus the latter are doubly servants, if they will be true to their trust.

But the  $31\frac{1}{2}$  crores have also a trust to discharge towards themselves and the nation of which they as individuals are but tiny parts. And if they remain lazy, know nothing of swaraj and how to win it, they will themselves become slaves of the 1,500 legislators. For my argument the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  crores of voters here belong to the same category as the  $31\frac{1}{2}$  crores. For if they do not become industrious and wise, they will be so many pawns in the hands of 1,500 players, it is of little consequence whether they are Congressmen or otherwise. If

the voters wake up only to register their votes every three years or more and then go off to sleep, their servants will become their masters.

The only way I know to prevent such a catastrophe is for the 35 crores to be industrious and wise. This they can only be, if they will take up the spinning-wheel and the other village industries. They will not take to them unintelligently. I can tell you from experience that the effort means adult education of the correct type and requires possession of patience, moral fibre and a scientific and practical knowledge of the industry the worker seeks to introduce in the village of his choice.

#### THE ECONOMIC SOLAR SYSTEM

In such a scheme the spinning-wheel becomes its centre. If you call it the solar system, the wheel becomes the golden disc and industries the planets revolving round it in obedience to the inviolable law of the system. When the sun lost its illuminating power by the action of the East India Company the planets lost their power and became invisible or almost so. The sun is being reinstated in his past status now and the planets are regaining their motion in exact proportion to the strength of the sun.

Now perhaps you will understand the meaning and the message of the charkha. I said in 1920 that if the Congress truly and successfully worked the programme laid down in 1920 including the fourfold constructive programme of khadi, communal unity, prohibition of intoxicants and removal by Hindus of untouchability, the attainment of swaraj within a year was a certainty. I am neither sorry for nor ashamed of having made that declaration. I would like to repeat



that declaration before you today. Whenever the fourfold programme is achieved in its fulness, you can have swaraj for the asking. For you will then have attained the power to take it. Just think for a moment where the charkha stands today in your faith or action. Is the mutual secret assassination of Bombay a sign of communal unity? Where is total prohibition? Have the Hindus rid themselves of untouchability root and branch? One swallow does not make a summer. Travancore's great proclamation may be the beginning of the end, but it is not the end. If we remove the untouchability of Harijans, but treat Mussalmans or others as such, we have not removed the blot. 'All land belongs to God' has a deeper meaning. Like earth we, of it, also belong to God, and hence we must all feel like one and not erect boundary walls and issue prohibition decrees against one another.

#### IF WE FULFIL THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

This is the non-violent way in action. If we could fulfil this programme, there would be no need to offer civil disobedience, there would certainly be no need to do violence. Thirty-five crores of people conscious of their numerical strength as one man would be ashamed of doing violence to 70,000 white men in India, no matter how capable they are of dealing destruction and administering poison gas to millions in a moment. The charkha understood intelligently can spin not only economic salvation but can also revolutionize our minds and hearts and demonstrate to us that the non-violent approach to swaraj is the safest and the easiest. Though the progress may seem slow, it will prove quickest in the long run.

Believe me if Jawaharlal is not in jail today, it is not

because he is afraid of it. He is quite capable of walking into prison doors as of mounting the gallows with a smile on his lips. I do not think I have lost the power or faith in the efficacy of such suffering. But there is no issue for it today as far as I can see. But what I feel is that all that suffering can be avoided if by united faith and will we achieve the constructive programme. If we can, I promise that we won't need to struggle with or against the British nation, but Lord Linlithgow will come to us and own that he was mistaken in his disbelief of our non-violence and truth and will undertake on behalf of his nation to abide by our decisions. Whether he does so or not, I am working towards that end and no other. "All belongs to God."

*Har ijan, 2-1-1937*



## A PURELY RELIGIOUS REVIVAL

I wish I were able to speak to you in your own mother tongue. I am sorry that I have not yet been able to learn the very musical language that you speak, and it is a matter of equal sorrow to me that you do not understand the national language of India—Hindi-Hindustani. Therefore we have to fall back on the cumbrous process of translation. But it is inevitable if I am at all to reach your hearts somewhat. I assure you I do not want to make here an idle speech, nor am I fond of hearing my own voice. I know that silence is often better than speech. But I know also from experience that there are occasions when speech becomes a necessity, and probably this is one of those occasions.

## THANKSGIVING

I thank you very much for having asked me to preside over this celebrations meeting. I thank you also for presenting me with this address. You have already tendered your hearty congratulations to His Highness the Maharajah and Maharani and Sachivottama Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer. I want to associate myself fully with the expression of your joy and congratulations. The joy is written on the numerous faces of this assembly over the restoration of a right which was taken away from you, no one knows how many years ago. You have done well also in tracing the historical sequence of the agitation for opening all the temples to the

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Speech at a public meeting, Trivandram, January 13, 1937

*avarna* Hindus in Travancore, and I again associate myself with you in the praise you have bestowed upon His Holiness the late Narayanaswami Guru and also upon that brave soul Madhavan. You will also let me recall in this connection two names—I mean the late Krishnaswami who at the time of the Vykam Satyagraha used to lead the prayer in his own inimitable manner with recitations of verses from the *Gita Govinda*. Though a staunch Brahmin and lover of his religion, he made common cause with all the *avarnas*. And I may not forget also one who is still in our midst—Sjt. Kelappan Nair. These brave men laid the foundation of the thing we see today in our midst.

But I think that we may not forget the orthodoxy which has come to our assistance at this hour, and in this connection I suppose I may not omit to mention the Namboodiri orthodox people whom I had found to my great regret very difficult to convert to the obvious truth. If they and the other orthodox people had not recognized the spirit of the times, it might be that they would have rendered the task of Their Highnesses well-nigh impossible or, at least, ineffective.

#### A HOPE

In this connection let me recall also a meeting I had with the Senior Maharani years ago. That meeting took place when the Vykam Satyagraha was going on, and I appealed to her, with all the earnestness at my command, to come to the assistance of all those who were fighting a forlorn battle, to issue a new *Smriti* and to declare all the temples open. She and her husband who was present at the interview expressed their sympathy with this movement. They both welcomed the movement that was going on in Travancore for the liberation of the *avarnas*. But they felt burdened



with the responsibility of a great State and told me that the time had not come for taking that great step. She then thought that it was still necessary to sound *savarna* opinion and to convert it to the reform. Several years have passed by since that interview. Thanks be to God that you did not remain idle during all these years, and but for the sustained efforts on your part to arouse both *avarna* and *savarna* public opinion, even the Maharajah with all the goodwill in the world would have found it impossible to issue the Proclamation. I hope that the Senior Maharani is today rejoicing over the great change that has come over Travancore and over the fact that the Proclamation is being welcomed by all and sundry—both *avarnas* and *savarnas*. I am hoping also that with the incoming of this great change over the State of Travancore, the *savarnas* Hindus are as enthusiastic in visiting temples as the *avarna* Hindus. I want to tell all *savarna* men and women, who have from day to day gone to these temples in search of blessing and in the hope that their prayers will be answered, I want to assure them that the temples have gained in efficacy and not lost one whit from the efficacy they enjoyed. Our shastras teach us—I am not giving you any new truth—that efficacy lies in our hearts, not in stone, however well carved it may be, and I do hope that your faith will not fail you because a large part of your co-religionists have had an ancient right restored to them of offering their prayers in the same manner and on the same conditions as you have offered them.

#### ONE SORROW

I would like to mention one sorrow that has oppressed me ever since I came here. I have wondered why you have called this celebration Ezhava Temple Entry Proclamation Celebrations. I wonder if presently we shall have all-Travan-

core Pulaya and Pariah Celebration! I know and I grant that Ezhavas are a great and growing and important community in Travancore, but have I not seen the Pulayas and Pariahs of Travancore? When I have met them I have not been able to stare them straight in their faces. I have felt deeply humiliated. I shall never forget the sight of an old Pulaya man shaking with fear, as he was brought to me, and as he tried to hand me a sheet of paper which had been put into his hands. He was brought to me in Cochin as I was passing through the crowds in the streets. I was told that he held in his hand an address to be given me on behalf of the Pulayas. His withered hands, as they were shaking, could not deliver that address into my hands. There was no lustre in his eyes. I do not know that I saw even a ray of hope in those deep sunken eyes. He did not know what he was being called upon to do. I do not know that he could understand the choice Malayalam which the Namboodiri volunteer was speaking. I seized the situation at a glance. I hung my head in shame and sorrow, and I felt it my duty to snatch that precious paper from his hands. Why is he not a member of today's Celebration Committee? I know that he is nameless. Most probably he is dead. If he is alive perhaps he does not know what is happening in Travancore today. And so I asked myself whether you members of this Celebration Committee, you members of this vast gathering do or do not represent such men. And I must tell you with all respect and humility that if this vast assembly does not represent these Pulayas, then I am certain that there is no place in your midst for me. If this is a purely religious movement, if this is a purely religious revival, if it has no taint of base 'self' in it, then you will be denying yourself and nullifying the effect of this great Proclamation if you do not represent the lowest and the least in our midst.



You heard with what force Sir C.P. Ramaswami Iyer spoke to this meeting. The Maharajah has given you a *Smriti*, but it is for you to carry it out and breathe life into it, and you will hopelessly fail to do that unless you rise to the occasion and see to it that this religious spirit pervades the whole of Travancore—both *avarnas* and *savarnas*. I tell you if you approach this great step, each with his own mental reservation, and not give effect to it whole-heartedly, you will find this Proclamation a nine days' wonder. Therefore I want you to understand, whilst you are properly rejoicing over this Proclamation and celebrating it with the joy and zeal that I see on your faces, that you will not be doing your duty if you do not realize your responsibility to the whole of the community that had been so far excluded.

I see that you are now getting restless. I do not propose to keep you longer than is absolutely necessary. I am speaking to you from the fulness of my heart, and when a heart is speaking to hearts, it expects to find a lodgment in those hearts. I do not want to keep you more than perhaps ten minutes now. I shall try to omit many of the things I wanted to say this evening, and shall seek another occasion for doing so.

#### APPROACH TEMPLES IN FAITH

I must mention what I saw at the great Padmanabha Temple. It will perhaps best illustrate what I am saying about the pure and spiritual revival. In the days of my youth, I went to many temples with the faith and devotion with which my parents had fired me. But of late years I have not been visiting temples, and ever since I have been engaged in anti-untouchability work, I have refrained from going to temples unless they were open to everyone called

untouchable. So what I saw this morning at the temple dawned upon me with the same newness with which it must have dawned upon so many *avarna* Hindus who must have gone to the temple after the Proclamation. In imagination my mind travelled back to the pre-historic centuries when they began to convey the message of God in stone and metal. I saw quite clearly that the priest who was interpreting each figure in his own choice Hindi did not want to tell me that each of those figures was God. But without giving me that particular interpretation, he made me realize that these temples were so many bridges between the Unseen, Invisible and Indefinable God and ourselves who are infinitesimal drops in the Infinite Ocean. We the human family are not all philosophers. We are of the earth, very earthy, and we are not satisfied with contemplating the Invisible God. Somehow or other, we want something which we can touch, something which we can see, something before which we can kneel down. It does not matter whether it is a book, or an empty stone building, or a stone building inhabited by numerous figures. A book will satisfy some, an empty building will satisfy some others, and many others will not be satisfied unless they see something inhabiting these empty buildings. Then I ask you to approach these temples not as if they represented a body of superstitions. If you will approach these temples with faith in them, you will know each time you visit them you will come away from them purified, and with your faith more and more in the living God.

Anyway, I have looked upon this Proclamation as a pure religious act. I have regarded this visit to Travancore in the spirit of a pilgrimage, and I am going to these temples as an untouchable suddenly made touchable. If all of you will approach this Proclamation in this spirit, you will abolish all distinctions between *savarnas* and *avarnas* as also all those



distinctions which unfortunately still exist between *savarnas* and *avarnas*. Finally, you will not be satisfied until you have lifted up your brothers and sisters who are supposed to be the least and the lowest to heights which you have attained yourselves. True spiritual regeneration must include economic uplift and the removal of ignorance and everything that goes to retard human progress.

May God enable you to realize to the full the possibilities that are embedded in this Proclamation of the Maharajah. I thank you for giving me this patient hearing.

*Harijan*, 23-1-1937

## MESSAGE OF HINDUISM

At this meeting I would love to detain you for a few minutes on the message of Hinduism. I venture to say that the whole of Hinduism can be summed up in the first verse of the *Ishopanishad*. If all other Hindu scriptures happened to be reduced to ashes and to go out of the memory of men and if only that one verse were to abide with us, the destruction would be no loss. Hinduism would even then remain with us. The original Sanskrit of the mantra is perhaps as easy as anybody learning Sanskrit could possibly wish. This *Upanishad* enjoys the reputation of being part of the original Vedas. It is the shortest *Upanishad* known to us. But as I have said if we had only the first verse of that *Upanishad* remaining with us, it would be enough to supply all our wants.

And its meaning is simply this : All that there is in this Universe, great or small, including the tiniest atom, is pervaded by God, known as Creator or Lord. Isha means the Ruler, and He who is the Creator naturally by very right becomes the Ruler too. And here in this verse the seer has chosen no other epithet for the Deity but that of the Ruler, and he has excepted nothing from His jurisdiction. He says everything that we see is pervaded by the Deity, and from that naturally the other parts of the mantra follow. Thus he says, 'Renounce everything,' i.e., everything that is in this Universe, the whole of the Universe, and not only this tiny



globe of ours, renounce it. He asks us to renounce it as we are such insignificant atoms that if we had any idea of possession, it would seem ludicrous. And then, says the Rishi, the reward of renunciation is 'enjoyment' of all you need. But there is a meaning about the word 'enjoy'—you might as well say use, eat, etc.,—but it means that you may not take more than is necessary for your growth. Therefore this enjoyment or use is limited by two conditions. One is the act of renunciation. And everyday in the morning everyone who believes in *Bhagawat Dharma* has to dedicate his thoughts, words and deeds to Krishna, and not until he has performed that daily act of renunciation or dedication has he the right of touching anything or drinking even a cup of water. And when a man has performed that act of renunciation and dedication, he derives from that act the right of eating, drinking, clothing and housing himself to the extent necessary for his daily life. Therefore take it as you like, either in the sense that the enjoyment or use is the reward of renunciation, or that the renunciation is the condition of enjoyment, renunciation is essential for our very existence, for our soul. And as if that condition given in the mantra was incomplete, the Rishi hastened to complete it by adding: 'Do not covet what belongs to another.' Now I suggest to you that the whole of the philosophy or religion found in any part of the world is contained in this mantra, and it excludes everything contrary to it. According to the canons of interpretation, anything that is inconsistent with *Shruti*—and the *Ishopanishad* is a *Shruti*—is to be rejected altogether.

#### TEMPLES PURIFIED

Now I should like to apply this mantra to our own condition in virtue of the Proclamation. Whilst I have unstintingly associated myself in your rejoicings over this great

Proclamation and in tendering my thanks and congratulations to His Highness, Her Highness and their Dewan, in terms of this mantra I am obliged also to say that this Proclamation is a tardy carrying out of the behest contained in this verse of the *Ishopanishad* that I have mentioned. Only yesterday we were unfit to call ourselves Hindus. For if all that there is in the Universe is pervaded by God, that is to say, if the Brahmin and the Bhangi, the learned man and the scavenger, the Ezhava and the Pariah, no matter what caste they belong to—if all these are pervaded by Lord God, in the light of this mantra, there is none that is high and none that is low, all are absolutely equal, equal because all are the creatures of that Creator. And this is not a philosophical thing to be dished out to Brahmins or Kshatriyas, but it enunciates an eternal truth which admits of no reduction, no palliation. Therefore the Maharajah himself and the Maharani are not one whit superior to the lowliest being in Travancore. We are all creatures and servants of one God. If the Maharajah is the first among equals, as he is, he is so not by right of overlordship, but by right of service. And, therefore, how nice, how noble it is that every Maharajah is called 'Padmanabhadas'! It is a proud title and I congratulate those who bestowed that title on the Maharajah of Travancore. Therefore when I told you that the Maharajah or the Maharani were not one whit superior to any one of us, I told you what was the actual truth accepted by Their Highnesses themselves. And if that is so, how can anyone here dare to arrogate superiority to himself or herself over any other human being? I tell you, therefore, that if this mantra holds good, if there is any man or woman here who believes that the temples are defiled by those who are called *avarnas*, that person I declare would be guilty of a grave sin. I tell you that the Proclamation has purified our temples of the taint that had attached to them.



I would like the mantra I have recited to be enshrined in the hearts of all our men and women and children, and if this contains, as I hold, the essence of Hinduism, it should be inscribed on the portals of every temple. Don't you then think that we should be belying that mantra at every step if we excluded anyone from those temples? Therefore if you will prove yourselves deserving of the gracious Proclamation and if you will be loyal to yourselves and to those who preside over your destinies, you will carry out the letter and spirit of this Proclamation. I regard it as such a great spiritual act that it ought to remove scepticism from the hearts of sceptics or doubts from the hearts of those who doubted the truth of Hinduism or Religion itself. Rightly understood, this Proclamation should dispel the ignorant atheism of so-called atheists. From the date of the Proclamation the Travancore temples, which as I once said were not abodes of God, have become abodes of God, since no one who used to be regarded as untouchable is any more to be excluded from them. I therefore hope and pray that throughout Travancore there may be no man or woman who will abstain from going to the temples for the reason that they have been opened to those who were regarded as Pariahs of society.

*Harijan, 30-1-1937*

## TO FIND OUT WHERE I WAS

Since I went out of the Congress at Bombay, there has been an understanding between me and the Working Committee that I should not be asked to speak at the A.I.C.C. or the Subjects Committee or the open session, and should be allowed to conserve the little strength that is left in me. I have usually been attending the meetings of the Working Committee. On this occasion, I myself suggested that I should address the Subjects Committee and also the delegates. The Working Committee agreed to this and, although I wanted to address you before the resolution was adopted, the Committee suggested that I do so after the resolution was disposed of.

It was my desire to see the faces of you all, and also to give you an opportunity of looking at me and finding out if there had been any change in me since my retirement in Bombay. Fifty years of public life have given me the capacity to read your faces. I have during these years created many institutions, met thousands and tens of thousands of people, and it should not therefore be difficult for me to get at the back of your minds. But my desire to see you was in order to find out where I was.

### DIFFICULTIES

You have, I see, made considerable progress in the art of

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Speech at the Subjects Committee meeting of the A.I.C.C., Ramgarh,  
March 18, 1940



debate and I congratulate you, for in a democratic organization, powers of persuasion and a high level of debate are essential. I have also seen that the number of amendments you move has also increased, and it is well that you should all be anxious to press new points of view, though I cannot congratulate you on some of the amendments which were either frivolous or absurd.

You have adopted the resolution practically unanimously as there were only seven or eight dissentients. That adds to my responsibility, for I have been witness to the debate. If I had so desired, I should have warned you before voting, but I accepted the suggestion of the Working Committee that I should not address the house before the resolution was passed.

I do not want to reply to what has been said by some of you in the course of the debate. But I do not want to say that, though there was a time in my life when I launched movements even if some of my conditions had not been fulfilled, I am now going to be hard, not for the sake of being hard, but because a General who has to lead the army must let the army know his conditions beforehand.

Let me then tell you that I do not see at the present moment conditions propitious for an immediate launching of the campaign. We are hemmed in with difficulties greater than those we had to face in the past. They are external and internal. The external difficulties are due to the fact that we have declared unmistakably what we want and the Government have also declared their intentions as clearly as possible. Then there is the fact that the British Government are engaged in a world war and naturally, if we engage them in a fight, we ask for enough trouble.

What, however, appeals to me is our internal difficulties. I have often said that external difficulties need never frighten a satyagrahi. On the contrary, he flourishes on external difficulties and faces them with redoubled zeal and vigour. Today the situation is almost the reverse. Our external difficulties do not find us stronger and more united. Our internal difficulties are increasing. Our Congress registers are full of bogus members who have swelled them because they know that getting into the Congress means getting into power. Those who therefore never before thought of entering the Congress have come into it and corrupted it. And how can we prevent people from coming into a democratic organization because they come from selfish motives? We have not that discipline, nor the strength and purity of public opinion which would compel such people to stay out.

And this strength and purity cannot come so long as we approach the primary members only once in a year for the vote. There is no discipline in our ranks, they have been divided up into groups which strive to gain more and more power. Non-violence as between ourselves does not seem to us to be necessary. There may be groups, but they should strengthen and not weaken and destroy the organization.

#### NO DEMOCRACY IN AN ARMY

Ours has been both a democratic organization and a fighting one, ever since we reorganized it in 1920. We have used even military language, though in a non-violent sense. Well, then, I want to repeat what I have said times without number that, if you will be soldiers in my army, understand that there is no room for democracy in that organization. The army may be a part of a democratic organization, but there can be no democracy in it, as there can be none in its



ranks, as there is none in our various organizations—A.I.S.A., A.I.V.I.A., and so on. In an army the General's word is law, and his conditions cannot be relaxed.

#### MY CONDITIONS INEXORABLE

I am supposed to be your General, but I do not know a more feeble General in history. My only sanction is the love and affection in which you hold me. But it has its weakness as it has its strength. I know that you love me. Does your love translate itself into action? If it does not, if it does not mean ever-increasing discipline and ever-increasing response to what I say, let me declare to you that I cannot launch civil disobedience, and you must select another General. You cannot make me your General on your terms. Know, therefore, that I will insist on my conditions. They are inexorable, and if you do not observe them, I will automatically withdraw.

The General of a military army insists on strict discipline. I go on arguing with you, because my only sanction is love. I say to you, therefore, that unless you accept my conditions, unless you have faith in them as you have in me, you should not think of going to jail. If you will go to jail, you have to pay the price. Ours is a civil fight, and imprisonment as a civil prisoner has got to be earned by strict observance of the programme. Otherwise even thieves and dacoits also fill the jails, but they do not carry the country to freedom.

Well, then I laid down the conditions in 1920 and have never ceased to repeat them. You may not believe in the programme, you may have grown wiser since then, but I have not. My faith in it has increased with the years. I see more

virtues in it than I saw before.

I turned a rebel against this Government in 1919, but before that I was as loyal to it as any Britisher. It is that unique loyalty that gave me the unique power of civil disobedience, and the unquenchable spirit of search. I, therefore, go on making my experiments and also go on declaring my mistakes whenever I discover them. I am an erring mortal like you. I have never even in my dream thought that I was a Maha-atma (great soul) and that others were Alpa-atmas (little souls). We are all equal before our Maker—Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis, Christians, worshippers of one God. Why then do we fight among ourselves?

We are all brothers—even the Quaid-e-Azam is my brother. I have meant all that I have said about him, never has a frivolous word escaped my lips, and I say that I want to win him over. A speaker said that I would not fight until I had won him over, and he was right. There was a time when there was not a Muslim whose confidence I did not enjoy. Today I have forfeited that confidence and most of the Urdu press pours abuse on me. But I am not sorry for it. It only confirms me in my belief that there is no swaraj without a settlement with the Mussalmans.

You will perhaps ask, in that case, why I am talking of a fight. I do so in order to have a Constituent Assembly which means agreement and settlement. But if the Mussalmans will have nothing to do with it, I will understand that there is no settlement. I am also a reader of the Koran like them, and I will tell them that the Koran makes no distinction between the Hindus and the Mussalmans. But if they feel that they should have the Heaven without the Hindus, I will not grudge it to them.



## EVER FOR COMPROMISE

I have no ill-will towards Englishmen. When I heard that Lord Zetland was wounded, my heart was wounded. That is my temperament. I therefore always work with and for goodwill for them. That I want to destroy British Imperialism is another matter, but I want to do so by converting those who are associated with it. If non-violence has the power that I attribute to it, it is sure to react on the opponent. If it does not, the fault will be mine, not that of non-violence.

You must therefore understand that you have to deal with a dangerous man who will land you in unexpected situations. Compromise is a part and parcel of my nature. I will go to the Viceroy fifty times, if I feel like it. I went to Lord Reading whilst non-co-operation was going on. I would not only go to the Viceroy when invited, but I would even seek opportunities to go to him, if necessary. You must know that, if I do so, I do it in order to strengthen our cause and not weaken it. It happened so with General Smuts. At the last moment I telephoned to him he put the receiver down in anger, but I thrust myself on him. As a result he relented and I was in a stronger position. Today we are friends. I could not have fought the Dutch and the English without love in my heart for them, and without a readiness for compromise. But my compromises will never be at the cost of their cause or of the country.

One of the amendments was to the effect that the word 'mass' be inserted before 'civil disobedience'. Well, if it is not mass civil disobedience, is it to be the civil disobedience of a handful? In that case I should not have come to you. It is the thought of mass civil disobedience that keeps my mind awake all the twenty-four hours. Why should a man

of 70 trifle with a thing of this kind ?

Therefore let me tell you that there is no civil disobedience until I feel that you are ready. You have therefore to purify every Congress Committee and make it a satyagrahi unit. To that extent it will have to cease to be a democracy, because my word will be law. But if it does not become such a unit, millions of our dumb countrymen will be sacrificed. None of my campaigns has crushed or ruined the masses. They have increased their stature, and it is in order to take it still higher that I want to live. There was in the earlier campaigns enough of violence of thought and word, but there was non-violence in act, and therefore the masses were saved. I would not light-heartedly imperil those masses today, and that is why I insist on strictest non-violence and the fulfilment of my conditions. For that is the only link that binds them and me.

If I am your General, your pulse should be in my hands, otherwise I cannot fight through you. I can fight single-handed, but for that fight I need not come and argue with you.

One last word before I close. I do not want to stand in the way of those who want to fight at once. But if they have any sense of honour, I should advise them to do so after getting out of the Congress. Let me assure them that, if they put up a non-violent fight and carry it through, I shall follow their lead.

Of course, it is open to them to remain in the Congress and to defy it, but it will not be satyagraha. Those who are impatient today do not know the power of satyagraha.



The resolution does not bind you. If you do not accept the conditions, you can still say you do not accept them, and you can have the resolution reversed. That will free you and me both. But if you accept the conditions and will all observe them, you may be sure that it need not take me a month to launch the struggle.

*Harijan, 30-3-1940*

## WE ARE NOT READY

I was glad to have the opportunity of listening to the speakers who moved the amendments. The name of satyagraha was on their lips, and reminded me of the Biblical phrase "Not those who say 'Lord' 'Lord' but those who do the will of God will find Him." (Cheers) I do not need your cheers. I want to win your hearts and your intellect, and cheers and acclamations stand in the way of winning them. Let me therefore warn you that not those who shout 'satyagraha' 'satyagraha' will do satyagraha but those who will work for it. And the essence of satyagraha is to carry out in letter and spirit the word of him whom you have chosen as your general, and to eschew the things he asks you to avoid. For without satyagraha carried out in the proper spirit, there is no victory and no swaraj.

I believe with some of you who said that it is our duty to shake ourselves free from slavery. But how are we to do it? Supposing a few dacoits come and take possession of our house and drive us out, it is of course our duty to fight the dacoits and get our house back from them. But how can we do it? We have to plan and prepare for it. Therefore when I saw you acclaiming the speaker who said that we were ready, I was shocked. For I know that we are not ready. And knowing this, how can I ask you to fight? I know that with such as you I can only have defeat. And defeat I do not want, and defeat I have never known, not even in Rajkot,

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Speech in the open session of A.I.C.C., Ramgarh, March 20, 1940



whatever you may say to the contrary. The word 'defeat' is not to be found in my dictionary, and everyone who is selected as a recruit in my army may be sure that there is no defeat for a satyagrahi.

One of the speakers said that he had no quarrel with the charkha, but he wanted the charkha to be divorced from satyagraha. Well I tell you, as I have been telling you these twenty years, that there is a vital connection between satyagraha and charkha, and the more I find that belief challenged, the more I am confirmed in it. Otherwise I am no fool to persist in turning the charkha day in and day out, at home and even on trains, in the teeth of medical advice. I want you, too, to be turning the charkha with the same faith. And unless you do it and unless you habitually use khadi, you will deceive me and deceive the world.

#### FINAL WARNING

I shall of course die with non-violence on my lips, but you are not wedded to it in the sense I am, and so it is open to you to have another programme and to make our country free. But if you will not do this, nor turn the charkha, and want me to fight, it will be an impossible situation.

I know that you will not fight unless you have me with you, but then you must know that I am here and I would fight only as a representative of those dumb millions for whom I live and for whom I want to die. My loyalty to them is greater than any other loyalty, and it is for them that I would not give up the charkha even if you were to forsake me or kill me. For I know that, if I were to relax the conditions of the charkha, I should bring ruin upon those dumb millions for whom I have to answer before God. If, therefore, you do

not believe in the charkha in the sense I believe in it, I implore you to leave me. The charkha is an outward symbol of truth and non-violence, and unless you have them in your hearts you will not take to the charkha either. Remember, therefore, that you have to fulfil both the internal and external conditions. If you fulfil the internal conditions, you will cease to hate your opponent, you will not seek or work for his destruction, but pray to God to have mercy on him. Do not, therefore, concentrate on showing the misdeeds of the Government, for we have to convert and befriend those who run it. And after all no one is wicked by nature. And if others are wicked, are we the less so? That attitude is inherent in satyagraha, and if you do not subscribe to it, even then I would ask you to leave me. For without a belief in my programme and without an acceptance of my condition, you will ruin me, ruin yourselves and ruin the cause.

*Harijan, 30-3-1940*



## PLAN OF ACTION

Before you discuss the resolution, let me place before you one or two things. I want you to understand two things very clearly and to consider them from the same point of view from which I am placing them before you. I ask you to consider it from my point of view, because if you approve of it, you will be enjoined to carry out all I say. It will be a great responsibility. There are people who ask me whether I am the same man that I was in 1920, or whether there has been any change in me. You are right in asking that question.

Let me, however, hasten to assure that I am the same Gandhi as I was in 1920. I have not changed in any fundamental respect. I attach the same importance to non-violence that I then did. If at all, my emphasis on it has grown stronger. There is no real contradiction between the present resolution and my previous writings and utterances.

Occasions like the present do not occur in everybody's life and but rarely in anybody's life. I want you to know and feel that there is nothing but purest ahimsa in all that I am saying and doing today. The draft resolution of the Working Committee is based on ahimsa; the contemplated struggle similarly has its roots in ahimsa. If, therefore, there is any among you who has lost faith in ahimsa or is wearied of it, let him not vote for this resolution.

Let me explain my position clearly. God has vouchsafed to me a priceless gift in the weapon of ahimsa. I and my ahimsa are on our trial today. If in the present crisis, when the earth is being scorched by the flames of *himsa* and crying for deliverance, I fail to make use of the God-given talent, God will not forgive me and I shall be judged unworthy of the great gift. I must act now. I may not hesitate and merely look on, when Russia and China are threatened.

Ours is not a drive for power, but purely a non-violent fight for India's independence. In a violent struggle, a successful general has been often known to effect a military coup and to set up a dictatorship. But under the Congress scheme of things, essentially non-violent as it is, there can be no room for dictatorship. A non-violent soldier of freedom will covet nothing for himself, he fights only for the freedom of his country. The Congress is unconcerned as to who will rule, when freedom is attained. The power, when it comes, will belong to the people of India, and it will be for them to decide to whom it should be entrusted. Maybe that the reins will be placed in the hands of the Parsis, for instance—as I would love to see happen—or they may be handed to some others whose names are not heard in the Congress today. It will not be for you then to object saying, "This community is microscopic. That party did not play its due part in the freedom's struggle; why should it have all the power?" Ever since its inception the Congress has kept itself meticulously free of the communal taint. It has thought always in terms of the whole nation and has acted accordingly. . .

I know how imperfect our ahimsa is and how far away we still are from the ideal, but in ahimsa there is no final failure or defeat. I have faith, therefore, that if, in



spite of our shortcomings, the big thing does happen, it will be because God wanted to help us by crowning with success our silent, unremitting *sadhana* for the last twenty-two years.

I believe that in the history of the world, there has not been a more genuinely democratic struggle for freedom than ours. I read Carlyle's *French Revolution* while I was in prison, and Pandit Jawaharlal has told me something about the Russian revolution. But it is my conviction that inasmuch as these struggles were fought with the weapon of violence they failed to realize the democratic ideal. In the democracy which I have envisaged, a democracy established by non-violence, there will be equal freedom for all. Everybody will be his own master. It is to join a struggle for such democracy that I invite you today. Once you realize this you will forget the differences between the Hindus and Muslims, and think of yourself as Indians only engaged in the common struggle for independence.

Then, there is the question of your attitude towards the British. I have noticed that there is hatred towards the British among the people. The people say they are disgusted with their behaviour. The people make no distinction between British imperialism and the British people. To them the two are one. This hatred would even make them welcome the Japanese. It is most dangerous. It means that they will exchange one slavery for another. We must get rid of this feeling. Our quarrel is not with the British people, we fight their imperialism. The proposal for the withdrawal of British power did not come out of anger. It came to enable India to play its due part at the present critical juncture. It is not a happy position for a big country like India to be merely helping with money and material obtained willy-nilly

from her while the United Nations are conducting the war. We cannot evoke the true spirit of sacrifice and valour so long as we do not feel that it is our war, so long as we are not free. I know the British Government will not be able to withhold freedom from us, when we have made enough self-sacrifice. We must, therefore, purge ourselves of hatred. Speaking for myself, I can say that I have never felt any hatred. As a matter of fact, I feel myself to be a greater friend of the British now than ever before. One reason is that they are today in distress. My very friendship, therefore, demands that I should try to save them from their mistakes. As I view the situation, they are on the brink of an abyss. It, therefore, becomes my duty to warn them of their danger even though it may, for the time being, anger them to the point of cutting off the friendly hand that is stretched out to help them. People may laugh, nevertheless that is my claim. At a time when I may have to launch the biggest struggle of my life, I may not harbour hatred against anybody.

#### *My Non-violence*



## FREEDOM HERE AND NOW

I congratulate you on the resolution that you have just passed. I also congratulate the three comrades on the courage they have shown in pressing their amendments to a division, even though they knew that there was an overwhelming majority in favour of the resolution, and I congratulate the thirteen friends who voted against the resolution. In doing so, they had nothing to be ashamed of. For the last twenty years we have tried to learn not to lose courage even when we are in a hopeless minority and are laughed at. We have learned to hold on to our beliefs in the confidence that we are in the right. It behoves us to cultivate this courage of conviction, for it ennobles man and raises his moral stature. I was, therefore, glad to see that these friends had imbibed the principle which I have tried to follow for the last fifty years and more.

Having congratulated them on their courage, let me say that what they asked this Committee to accept through their amendments was not the correct representation of the situation. These friends ought to have pondered over the appeal made to them by the Maulana to withdraw their amendments; they should have carefully followed the explanations given by Jawaharlal. Had they done so, it would have been clear to them that the right which they now want the Congress to concede has already been conceded by the Congress.

Time was when every Mussalman claimed the whole of India as his motherland. During the years that the Ali brothers were with me, the assumption underlying all their talks and discussions was that India belonged as much to the Mussalmans as to the Hindus. I can testify to the fact that this was their innermost conviction and not a mask ; I lived with them for years. I spent days and nights in their company. And I make bold to say that their utterances were the honest expression of their beliefs. I know there are some who say that I take things too readily at their face value, that I am gullible. I do not think I am such a simpleton, nor am I so gullible as these friends take me to be. But their criticism does not hurt me. I should prefer to be considered gullible rather than deceitful.

What these Communist friends proposed through their amendments is nothing new. It has been repeated from thousands of platforms. Thousands of Mussalmans have told me that if the Hindu-Muslim question was to be solved satisfactorily, it must be done in my lifetime. I should feel flattered at this ; but how can I agree to a proposal which does not appeal to my reason ? Hindu-Muslim unity is not a new thing. Millions of Hindus and Mussalmans have sought after it. I consciously strove for its achievement from my boyhood. While at school, I made it a point to cultivate the friendship of Muslim and Parsi co-students. I believed even at that tender age that the Hindus in India, if they wished to live in peace and amity with the other communities, should assiduously cultivate the virtue of neighbourliness. It did not matter, I felt, if I made no special effort to cultivate friendship with Hindus, but I must make friends with at least a few Mussalmans. It was as counsel for a Mussalman merchant that I went to South Africa. I made friends with other Mussalmans there, even with the opponents of my client, and



gained a reputation for integrity and good faith. I had among my friends and co-workers Muslims as well as Parsis. I captured their hearts and when I left finally for India, I left them sad and shedding tears of grief at the separation.

In India too I continued my efforts and left no stone unturned to achieve that unity. It was my life-long aspiration for it that made me offer my fullest co-operation to the Mussalmans in the Khilafat movement. Muslims throughout the country accepted me as their true friend.

How then is it that I have now come to be regarded as so evil and detestable? Had I any axe to grind in supporting the Khilafat movement? True, I did in my heart of hearts cherish a hope that it might enable me to save the cow. I am a worshipper of the cow. I believe the cow and myself to be the creation of the same God, and I am prepared to sacrifice my life in order to save the cow. But, whatever my philosophy of life and my ultimate hopes, I joined the movement in no spirit of bargain. I co-operated in the struggle for the Khilafat solely in order to discharge my obligation to my neighbour who, I saw, was in distress. The Ali brothers, had they been alive today, would have testified to the truth of this assertion. And so would many others bear me out in that it was not a bargain on my part for saving the cow. The cow, like the Khilafat, stood on her own merits. As an honest man, a true neighbour and a faithful friend, it was incumbent on me to stand by the Mussalmans in the hour of their trial.

In those days, I shocked the Hindus by dining with the Mussalmans, though with the passage of time they have got used to it. Maulana Bari told me, however, that though he would insist on having me as his guest, he would not allow

me to dine with him, lest some day he should be accused of a sinister motive. And so whenever I had occasion to stay with him, he called a Brahmin cook and made special arrangements for separate cooking. Firangi Mahal, his residence, was an old-style structure with limited accommodation; yet he cheerfully bore all hardships and carried out his resolve from which I could not dislodge him. It was the spirit of courtesy, dignity and nobility that inspired us in those days. The members of each community vied with one another in accommodating members of sister communities. They respected one another's religious feelings, and considered it a privilege to do so. Not a trace of suspicion lurked in anybody's heart. Where has all that dignity, that nobility of spirit, disappeared now? I should ask all Mussalmans, including Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah, to recall those glorious days and to find out what has brought us to the present impasse. Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah himself was at one time a Congressman. If today the Congress has incurred his wrath, it is because the canker of suspicion has entered his heart. May God bless him with long life, but when I am gone, he will realize and admit that I had no designs on Mussalmans and that I had never betrayed their interests. Where is the escape for me, if I injure their cause or betray their interests? My life is entirely at their disposal. They are free to put an end to it, whenever they wish to do so. Assaults have been made on my life in the past, but God has spared me till now, and the assailants have repented for their action. But if someone were to shoot me in the belief that he was getting rid of a rascal, he would kill not the real Gandhi, but the one that appeared to him a rascal.

To those who have been indulging in a campaign of abuse and vilification, I would say, "Islam enjoins you not to revile even an enemy. The Prophet treated even enemies



with kindness and tried to win them over by his fairness and generosity ; are you followers of that Islam or of any other ? If you are followers of the true Islam, does it behove you to distrust the words of one who makes a public declaration of his faith? You may take it from me that one day you will regret the fact that you distrusted and killed one who was a true and devoted friend of yours." It cuts me to the quick to see that the more I appeal and the more the Maulana importunes, the more intense does the campaign of vilification grow. To me, these abuses are like bullets. They can kill me, even as a bullet can put an end to my life. You may kill me. That will not hurt me. But what of those who indulge in abusing? They bring discredit to Islam. For the fair name of Islam, I appeal to you to resist this unceasing campaign of abuse and vilification.

Maulana Saheb is being made a target for the filthiest abuse. Why? Because he refuses to exert on me the pressure of his friendship. He realizes that it is a misuse of friendship to seek to compel a friend to accept as truth what he knows is an untruth.

To the Quaid-e-Azam I would say: "Whatever is true and valid in the claim for Pakistan is already in your hands. What is wrong and untenable is in nobody's gift so that it can be made over to you. Even if someone were to succeed in imposing an untruth on others, he would not be able to enjoy for long the fruits of such a coercion. God dislikes pride and keeps away from it. God would not tolerate a forcible imposition of an untruth."

The Quaid-e-Azam says that he is compelled to say bitter things but that he cannot help giving expression to his thoughts and his feelings. Similarly I would say: "I consider

myself a friend of Mussalmans. Why should I then not give expression to the things nearest to my heart, even at the cost of displeasing them? How can I conceal my innermost thoughts from them? I should congratulate the Quaid-e-Azam on his frankness in giving expression to his thoughts and feelings, even if they sound bitter to his hearers. But even so why should the Mussalmans sitting here be reviled, if they do not see eye to eye with him? If millions of Mussalmans are with you, can you not afford to ignore the handful of Mussalmans who may appear to you to be misguided? Why should one with the following of several millions be afraid of a majority community, or of the minority being swamped by the majority? How did the Prophet work among the Arabs and the Mussalmans? How did he propagate Islam? Did he say he would propagate Islam only when he commanded a majority? I appeal to you for the sake of Islam to ponder over what I say. There is neither fairplay nor justice in saying that the Congress must accept a thing even if it does not believe in it and even if it goes counter to principles it holds dear.

Rajaji said: "I do not believe in Pakistan. But Mussalmans ask for it, Mr. Jinnah asks for it, and it has become an obsession with them. Why not then say "yes" to them just now? The same Mr. Jinnah will later on realize the disadvantages of Pakistan and will forgo the demand." I said: "It is not fair to accept as true a thing which I hold to be untrue, and ask others to do so in the belief that the demand will not be pressed when the time comes for getting it finally. If I hold the demand to be just, I should concede it this very day. I should not agree to it merely in order to placate Jinnah Saheb. Many friends have come and asked me to agree to it. But I cannot be party to a course of action with a false promise. At any rate, it is not my method."



The Congress has no sanction but the moral one for enforcing its decisions. It believes that true democracy can only be the outcome of non-violence. The structure of a world federation can be raised only on a foundation of non-violence, and violence will have to be totally abjured from world affairs. If this is true, the solution of Hindu-Muslim question, too, cannot be achieved by a resort to violence. If the Hindus tyrannize over the Mussalmans, with what face will they talk of a world federation? It is for the same reason that I do not believe in the possibility of establishing world peace through violence as the English and American statesmen propose to do. The Congress has agreed to submit all the differences to an impartial international tribunal and to abide by its decisions. If even this fairest of proposals is unacceptable, the only course that remains open is that of the sword, of violence. How can I persuade myself to agree to an impossibility? To demand the vivisection of a living organism is to ask for its very life. It is a call to war. The Congress cannot be party to such a fratricidal war. Those Hindus who, like Dr. Moonje and Shri Savarkar, believe in the doctrine of the sword may seek to keep the Mussalmans under Hindu domination. I do not represent that section. I represent the Congress. You want to kill the Congress which is the goose that lays the golden egg. If you distrust the Congress, you may rest assured that there is to be perpetual war between the Hindus and the Mussalmans, and the country will be doomed to continued warfare and bloodshed. If such warfare is to be our lot, I shall not live to witness it.

It is for that reason that I say to Jinnah Saheb, "You may take it from me that whatever in your demand for Pakistan accords with considerations of justice and equality is lying in your pocket; whatever in the demand is contrary to justice

and equity, you can take only by the sword and in no other manner."

There is much in my heart that I would like to pour out before this assembly. One thing which was uppermost in my heart I have already dealt with. You may take it from me that it is with me a matter of life and death. If we Hindus and Mussalmans mean to achieve a heart unity, without the slightest mental reservation on the part of either, we must first unite in the efforts to be free from the shackles of this empire. If Pakistan after all is to be a portion of India, what objection can there be for Mussalmans against joining this struggle for India's freedom? The Hindus and Mussalmans must, therefore, unite in the first instance on the issue of fighting for freedom. Jinnah Saheb thinks the war will last long. I do not agree with him. If the war goes on for six months more, how shall we be able to save China?

I, therefore, want freedom immediately, this very night, before dawn, if it can be had. Freedom cannot now wait for the realization of communal unity. If that unity is not achieved, sacrifices necessary for it will have to be much greater than would have otherwise sufficed. But the Congress must win freedom or be wiped out in the effort. And forget not that the freedom which the Congress is struggling to achieve will not be for Congressmen alone but for all the forty crores of the Indian people.

The Quaid-e-Azam has said that the Muslim League is prepared to take over the rule from the Britishers if they are prepared to hand it over to the Muslim League, for the British took over the empire from the hands of the Muslims. This, however, will be Muslim Raj. The offer made by Maulana Saheb and by me does not imply establishment of Muslim



Raj or Muslim domination. The Congress does not believe in the domination of any group or any community. It believes in democracy which includes in its orbit Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Parsis, Jews—every one of the communities inhabiting this vast country. If Muslim Raj is inevitable, then let it be; but how can we give it the stamp of our assent? How can we agree to the domination of one community over the others?

Millions of Mussalmans in this country come from Hindu stock. How can their homeland be any other than India? My eldest son embraced Islam some years back. What would his homeland be—Porbandar or the Punjab? I ask the Mussalmans: "If India is not your homeland, what other country do you belong to? In what separate homeland would you put my son who embraced Islam?" His mother wrote him a letter after his conversion, asking him if he had on embracing Islam given up drinking which Islam forbids to its followers. To those who gloated over the conversion, she wrote to say: "I do not mind his becoming a Mussalman, so much as his drinking. Will you, as pious Mussalmans, tolerate his drinking even after his conversion? He has reduced himself to the state of a rake by drinking. If you are going to make a man of him again, his conversion will have been turned to good account. You will, therefore, please see that he as Mussalman abjures wine and woman. If that change does not come about, his conversion goes in vain and our non-co-operation with him will have to continue."

India is without doubt the homeland of all the Mussalmans inhabiting this country. Every Mussalman should therefore co-operate in the fight for India's freedom. The Congress does not belong to any one class or community; it belongs to the whole nation. It is open to Mussalmans to take posses-

sion of the Congress. They can, if they like, swamp the Congress by their numbers, and can steer it along the course which appeals to them. The Congress is fighting not on behalf of the Hindus but on behalf of the whole nation, including the minorities. It would hurt me to hear of a single instance of a Mussalman being killed by a Congressman. In the coming revolution, Congressmen will sacrifice their lives in order to protect the Mussalman against a Hindu's attack and *vice versa*. It is a part of their creed, and is one of the essentials of non-violence. You will be expected on occasions like these not to lose your heads. Every Congressman, whether a Hindu or a Mussalman, owes this duty to the organization to which he belongs. The Mussalman who will act in this manner will render a service to Islam. Mutual trust is essential for success in the final nationwide struggle that is to come.

I have said that much greater sacrifices will have to be made this time in the wake of our struggle because of the opposition from the Muslim League and from Englishmen. You have seen the secret circular issued by Sir Frederick Puckle. It is a suicidal course that he has taken. It contains an open incitement to organizations which crop up like mushrooms to combine to fight the Congress. We have thus to deal with an empire whose ways are crooked. Ours is a straight path which we can tread even with our eyes closed. That is the beauty of satyagraha.

In satyagraha, there is no place for fraud or falsehood, or any kind of untruth. Fraud and untruth today are stalking the world. I cannot be a helpless witness to such a situation. I have travelled all over India as perhaps nobody in the present age has. The voiceless millions of the land saw in me their friend and representative, and I identified myself with



them to an extent it was possible for a human being to do. I saw trust in their eyes, which I now want to turn to good account in fighting this empire upheld on untruth and violence. However gigantic the preparations that the empire has made, we must get out of its clutches. How can I remain silent at this supreme hour and hide my light under the bushel? Shall I ask the Japanese to carry a while? If today I sit quiet and inactive, God will take me to task for not using up the treasure He had given me, in the midst of the conflagration that is enveloping the whole world. Had the condition been different, I should have asked you to wait yet awhile. But the situation now has become intolerable, and the Congress has no other course left for it.

Nevertheless, the actual struggle does not commence this moment. You have only placed all your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the Viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of the Congress demand. That process is likely to take two or three weeks. What would you do in the meanwhile? What is the programme, for the interval, in which all can participate? As you know, the spinning-wheel is the first thing that occurs to me. I made the same answer to the Maulana. He would have none of it, though he understood its import later. The fourteenfold constructive programme is, of course, there for you to carry out. What more should you do? I will tell you. Everyone of you should, from this moment onwards, consider yourself a free man or woman, and act as if you are free and are no longer under the heel of this imperialism.

It is not a make-believe that I am suggesting to you. It is the very essence of freedom. The bond of the slave is snapped the moment he considers himself to be a free being. He will plainly tell the master: "I was your bondsman till

this moment, but I am a slave no longer. You may kill me if you like, but if you keep me alive, I wish to tell you that if you release me from the bondage of your own accord, I will ask nothing more from you. You used to feed and clothe me, though I could have provided food and clothing for myself by my labour. I hitherto depended on you instead of on God for food and raiment. But God has now inspired me with an urge for freedom and I am today a freeman, and will no longer depend on you."

You may take it from me that I am not going to strike a bargain with the Viceroy for ministries and the like. I am not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete freedom. Maybe, he will propose the abolition of salt tax, the drink evil, etc. But I will say, "Nothing less than freedom."

Here is a mantra, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The mantra is: 'Do or die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. Every true Congressman or woman will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. Let that be your pledge. Keep jails out of your consideration. If the Government keep me free, I will spare you the trouble of filling the jails. I will not put on the Government the strain of maintaining a large number of prisoners at a time when it is in trouble. Let every man and woman live every moment of his or her life hereafter in the consciousness that he or she eats or lives for achieving freedom and will die, if need be, to attain that goal. Take a pledge, with God and your own conscience as witness, that you will no longer rest till freedom is achieved and will be prepared to lay down your lives in the attempt to achieve it. He who loses his life



will gain it ; he who will seek to save it shall lose it. Freedom is not for the coward or the faint-hearted.

A word to the journalists. I congratulate you on the support you have hitherto given to the national demand. I know the restrictions and handicaps under which you have to labour. But I would now ask you to snap the chains that bind you. It should be the proud privilege of the newspapers to lead and set an example in laying down one's life for freedom. You have the pen which the Government can't suppress. I know you have large properties in the form of printing presses, etc., and you would be afraid lest the Government should attach them. I do not ask you to invite an attachment of the printing presses voluntarily. For myself, I would not suppress my pen, even if the press was to be attached. As you know, my press was attached in the past and returned later on. But I do not ask from you that final sacrifice. I suggest a middle way. You should now wind up your standing committee, and you may declare that you will give up writing under the present restrictions and take up the pen only when India has won her freedom. You may tell Sir Frederick Puckle that he can't expect from you a command performance, that his press notes are full of untruth, and that you will refuse to publish them. You will openly declare that you are wholeheartedly with the Congress. If you do this, you will have changed the atmosphere before the fight actually begins.

From the Princes I ask with all respect due to them a very small thing. I am a well-wisher of the Princes. I was born in a State. My grandfather refused to salute with his right hand any Prince other than his own. But he did not say to the Prince, as I feel he ought to have said, that even his own master could not compel him, his minister, to act against his conscience. I have eaten the Prince's salt and I would not

be false to it. As a faithful servant, it is my duty to warn the Princes that if they will act while I am still alive, the Princes may come to occupy an honourable place in free India. In Jawaharlal's scheme of free India, no privileges or the privileged classes have a place. Jawaharlal considers all property to be State-owned. He wants planned economy. He wants to reconstruct India according to plan. He likes to fly; I do not. I have kept a place for the Princes and the Zamindars in India that I envisage. I would ask the Princes in all humility to enjoy through renunciation. The Princes may renounce ownership over their properties and become their trustees in the true sense of the term. I visualize God in the assemblage of people. The Princes may say to their people: "You are the owners and masters of the State and we are your servants." I would ask the Princes to become servants of the people and render to them an account of their own services. The empire too bestows power on the Princes, but they should prefer to derive power from their own people; and if they want to indulge in some innocent pleasures, they may seek to do so as servants of the people. I do not want the Princes to live as paupers. But I would ask them: "Do you want to remain slaves for all time? Why should you, instead of paying homage to a foreign power, not accept the sovereignty of your own people?" You may write to the Political Department: "The people are now awake. How are we to withstand an avalanche before which even the large empires are crumbling? We, therefore, shall belong to the people from today onwards. We shall sink or swim with them." Believe me, there is nothing unconstitutional in the course I am suggesting. There are, so far as I know, no treaties enabling the empire to coerce the Princes. The people of the States will also declare that though they are the Princes' subjects, they are part of the Indian nation and that they will accept the leadership of the Princes, if the latter cast their lot with the people but not



otherwise. If this declaration enrages the Princes and they choose to kill the people, the latter will meet death bravely and unflinchingly, but will not go back on their word.

Nothing, however, should be done secretly. This is an open rebellion. In this struggle secrecy is a sin. A free man would not engage in a secret movement. It is likely that when you gain freedom you will have a C.I.D. of your own, in spite of my advice to the contrary. But in the present struggle, we have to work openly and to receive bullets on our chest, without taking to our heels.

I have a word to say to Government servants also. They may not, if they like, resign their posts yet. The late Justice Ranade did not resign his post, but he openly declared that he belonged to the Congress. He said to the Government that though he was a judge, he was a Congressman and would openly attend the sessions of the Congress, but that at the same time he would not let his political views warp his impartiality on the bench. He held the Social Reform Conference in the very *pandal* of the Congress. I would ask all the Government servants to follow in the footsteps of Ranade and to declare their allegiance to the Congress as an answer to the secret circular issued by Sir Frederick Puckle.

This is all that I ask of you just now. I will now write to the Viceroy. You will be able to read the correspondence not just now but when I publish it with the Viceroy's consent. But you are free to aver that you support the demand to be put forth in my letter. A judge came to me and said: "We get secret circulars from high quarters. What are we to do?" I replied, "If I were in your place, I would ignore the circulars. You may openly say to the Government: 'I have received your secret circular. I am, however, with the

Congress. Though I serve the Government for my livelihood. I am not going to obey these secret circulars or to employ underhand methods.' "

Soldiers too are covered by the present programme. I do not ask them just now to resign their posts and to leave the army. The soldiers come to me, Jawaharlal and the Maulana and say ; "We are wholly with you. We are tired of the Governmental tyranny." To the soldiers I would say : "You may say to the Government : 'Our hearts are with the Congress. We are not going to leave our posts. We will serve you so long as we receive your salaries. We will obey your just orders, but will refuse to fire on our own people.' "

To those who lack the courage to do this much, I have nothing to say. They will go their own way. But if you can do this much, you may take it from me that the whole atmosphere will be electrified. Let the Government then shower bombs, if they like. But no power on earth will then be able to keep you in bondage any longer.

If the students want to join the struggle only to go back to their studies after a while, I would not invite them to it. For the present, however, till the time that I frame a programme for the struggle, I would ask the students to say to their professors : "We belong to the Congress. Do you belong to the Congress, or to the Government ? If you belong to the Congress, you need not vacate your posts. You will remain at your post but teach us and lead us unto freedom." In all fights for freedom, the world over, the students have made very large contributions.

If in the interval that is left to us before the actual fight begins, you do even the little I have suggested to you, you



will have changed the atmosphere and will have prepared the ground for the next step.

There is much I should yet like to say. But my heart is heavy. I have already taken up much of your time. I have yet to say a few words in English also. I thank you for the patience and attention with which you have listened to me even at this late hour. It is just what true soldiers would do. For the last twenty-two years, I have controlled my speech and pen and have stored up my energy. He is a true *brahmachari* who does not fritter away his energy. He will, therefore, always control his speech. That has been my conscious effort all these years. But today the occasion has come when I had to unburden my heart before you. I have done so, even though it meant putting a strain on your patience ; and I do not regret having done it. I have given you my message and through you I have delivered it to the whole of India.

#### *My Non-violence*

## DO OR DIE

I have taken such an inordinately long time over pouring out what was agitating my soul to those whom I had just now the privilege of serving. I have been called their leader or, in military language, their commander. But I do not look at my position in that light. I have no weapon but love to wield my authority over anyone. I do sport a stick which you can break into bits without the slightest exertion. It is simply my staff with the help of which I walk. Such a cripple is not elated when he is called upon to bear the greatest burden. You can share that burden only when I appear before you not as your commander but as a humble servant. And he who serves best is the chief among equals.

Therefore, I was found to share with you such thoughts as were welling up in my breast and tell you, in as summary a manner as I can, what I expect you to do as the first step.

Let me tell you at the outset that the real struggle does not commence today. I have yet to go through much ceremonial as always do. The burden, I confess, would be almost unbearable. I have to continue to reason in those circles with whom I have lost my credit and who have no trust left in me. I know that in the course of the last few weeks I have forfeited my credit with a large number of friends, so much so, that they have begun to doubt not only my wisdom but even my honesty. Now I hold my wisdom



is not such a treasure which I cannot afford to lose ; but my honesty is a precious treasure to me and I can ill-afford to lose it. I seem however to have lost it for the time being.

#### FRIEND OF THE EMPIRE

Such occasions arise in the life of the man who is a pure seeker after truth and who would seek to serve humanity and his country to the best of his lights without fear or hypocrisy. For the last fifty years I have known no other way. I have been a humble servant of humanity and have rendered on more than one occasion such service as I could to the Empire, and here let me say without fear of challenge that throughout my career never have I asked for any personal favour. I have enjoyed the privilege of friendship as I enjoy it today with Lord Linlithgow. It is a friendship which has outgrown official relationship. Whether Lord Linlithgow will bear me out, I do not know, but there is a personal bond between him and myself. He once introduced me to his daughter. His son-in-law, the A.D.C., was drawn towards me. He fell in love with Mahadev more than with me and Lady Anna and he came to me. She is an obedient and favourite daughter. I take interest in their welfare. I take the liberty to give out these personal and sacred titbits only to give you an earnest of the personal bond which exists between us ; and yet let me declare here that the personal bond will never interfere with the stubborn struggle on which, if it falls to my lot, I may have to launch against Lord Linlithgow, as the representative of the Empire. I will have to resist the might of that Empire with the might of the dumb millions with no limit but of non-violence as policy confined to this struggle. It is a terrible job to have to offer resistance to a Viceroy with whom I enjoy such relations. He has more than once trusted my word, often about my people. I would

love to repeat that experiment, as it stands to his credit. I mention this with great pride and pleasure. I mention it as an earnest of my desire to be true to the Empire when that Empire forfeited my trust and the Englishman who was its Viceroy came to know it.

#### CHARLIE ANDREWS

Then there is the sacred memory of Charlie Andrews which wells up within me. At this moment the spirit of Andrews hovers about me. For me he sums up the brightest traditions of English culture. I enjoyed closer relations with him than with most Indians. I enjoyed his confidence. There were no secrets between us. We exchanged our hearts every day. Whatever was in his heart he would blurt out without the slightest hesitation or reservation. It is true he was a friend of Gurudev but he looked upon Gurudev with awe. He had that peculiar humility. But with me he became the closest friend. Years ago he came to me with a note of introduction from Gokhale. Pearson and he were the firstrank specimens of Englishmen. I know that his spirit is listening to me.

Then I have got a warm letter of congratulations from the Metropolitan of Calcutta. I hold him to be a man of God. Today he is opposed to me.

#### VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

With all this background, I want to declare to the world, although I may have forfeited the regard of many friends in the West, and I must bow my head low; but even for their friendship or love I must not suppress the voice of conscience—the promptings of my inner basic nature today. There is something within me impelling me to cry out my agony.



I have known humanity. I have studied something of psychology. Such a man knows exactly what it is. I do not mind how you describe it. That voice within calls to me: "You have to stand against the whole world although you may have to stand alone. You have to stare in the face of the whole world although the world may look at you with blood-shot eyes. Do not fear. Trust the little voice residing within your heart." It says: "Forsake friends, wife and all; but testify to that for which you have lived and for which you have to die." Believe me, friends I am not anxious to die. I want to live my full span of life. And for me I put my span of life at 120 years. By that time India will be free, the world will be free.

Let me tell you too that I do not regard England or for that matter America as free countries. They are free after their own fashion, free to hold in bondage coloured races of the earth. Are England and America fighting for the liberty of these races today? If not, do not ask me to wait until after the war. You shall not limit my concept of freedom. The English and American teachers, their history, their magnificent poetry have not said that you shall not broaden the interpretation of freedom. And according to my interpretation of that freedom I am constrained to say they are strangers to that freedom which their teachers and poets have described. If they will know the real freedom they should come to India. They have to come not with pride or arrogance but in the spirit of real earnest seekers of truth. It is a fundamental truth which India has been experimenting with for 22 years.

#### CONGRESS AND NON-VIOLENCE

Unconsciously from its very foundations long ago, the

Congress has been building on non-violence known as constitutional methods. Dadabhai and Pherozeshah who had held Congress India in the palms of their hands became rebels. They were lovers of the Congress. They were its masters. But above all they were real servants. They never countenanced murder, secrecy and the like. I confess there are many black sheep amongst us Congressmen. But I trust the whole of India today to launch upon a non-violent struggle. I trust because of my nature to rely upon the innate goodness of human nature which perceives the truth and prevails during the crisis as if by instinct. But even if I am deceived in this I shall not swerve. I shall not flinch. From its very inception, the Congress based its policy on peaceful methods, included swaraj and the subsequent generations added non-violence. When Dadabhai entered the British Parliament, Salisbury dubbed him as a black man ; but the English people defeated Salisbury and Dadabhai went to the Parliament by their vote. India was delirious with joy. These things however India has outgrown.

### I WILL GO AHEAD

It is, however, with all these things as the background that I want Englishmen, Europeans and all the United Nations to examine in their hearts what crime had India committed in demanding Independence. I ask, is it right for you to distrust such an organization with all its background, tradition and record of over half a century and misrepresent its endeavours before all the world by every means at your command ? Is it right that by hook or by crook, aided by the foreign press, aided by the President of the U.S.A., or even by the Generalissimo of China who has yet to win his laurels, you should present India's struggle in shocking caricature ? I have met the Generalissimo. I have known him through



Madame Shek who was my interpreter; and though he seemed inscrutable to me, not so Madame Shek ; and he allowed me to read his mind through her. There is a chorus of disapproval and righteous protest all over the world against us. They say we are erring, the move is inopportune. I had great regard for British diplomacy which has enabled them to hold the Empire so long. Now it stinks in my nostrils, and others have studied that diplomacy and are putting it into practice. They may succeed in getting, through these methods, world opinion on their side for a time ; but India will speak against that world opinion. She will raise her voice against it. Even if all the United Nations opposed me, even if the whole of India forsakes me, I will say, "You are wrong. India will wrench with non-violence her liberty from unwilling hands." I will go ahead not for India's sake alone, but for the sake of the world. Even if my eyes close before there is freedom, non-violence will not end. They will be dealing a mortal blow to China and to Russia if they oppose the freedom of non-violent India which is pleading with bended knees for the fulfilment of a debt long overdue. Does a creditor ever go to the debtor like that ? And even when India is met with such angry opposition, she says, "We won't hit below the belt, we have learnt sufficient gentlemanliness. We are pledged to non-violence." I have been the author of non-embarrassment policy of the Congress and yet today you find me talking this strong language. I say it is consistent with our honour. If a man holds me by the neck and wants to drown me, may I not struggle to free myself directly ? There is no inconsistency in our position today.

#### APPEAL TO UNITED NATIONS

There are representatives of the foreign press assembled here today. Through them I wish to say to the world that

the United Powers who somehow or other say that they have need for India, have the opportunity now to declare India free and prove their *bona fides*. If they miss it, they will be missing the opportunity of their lifetime, and history will record that they did not discharge their obligations to India in time, and lost the battle. I want the blessing of the whole world so that I may succeed with them. I do not want the United Powers to go beyond their obvious limitations. I do not want them to accept non-violence and disarm today. There is a fundamental difference between fascism and this imperialism which I am fighting. Do they get from India all they want? What they get today is from India which they hold in bondage. Think what difference it would make if India was to participate as a free ally. That freedom, if it is to come, must come today. It will have no taste left in it if today you who have the power to help cannot exercise it. If you can exercise it, under the glow of freedom, what seems impossible today will become possible tomorrow. If India feels that freedom, she will command that freedom for China. The road for running to Russia's help will be open. The Englishmen did not die in Malaya or on Burma soil. What shall enable us to retrieve the situation? Where shall I go, and where shall I take the forty crores of India? How is this vast mass of humanity to be aglow in the cause of world deliverance, unless and until it has touched and felt freedom? Today they have not a touch of life left. It has been crushed out of them. If lustre is to be put into their eyes, freedom has to come not tomorrow, but today.

### DO OR DIE

I have pledged the Congress and the Congress will do or die.

*My Non-violence*



## ON CABINET MISSION'S PROPOSAL

I have often said that man plans but the success of his plans depends not on him but on the will of Providence which is the supreme arbiter of our destinies. Unlike you, I am not in my own right but on sufferance. I have been told that some of my previous remarks about the Cabinet Mission's proposals have caused a good deal of confusion in the public mind. As a satyagrahi it is always my endeavour to speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I never have a wish to hide anything from you. I have mental reservations. But language is at best an imperfect medium of expression. No man can fully express in words what he feels or thinks. Even seers and prophets of old have suffered under that disability.

## NO INCONSISTENCY

I have not seen what has appeared in the papers about what I am supposed to have said regarding the Cabinet Mission's proposals. I cannot read all the newspapers myself. I content myself with perusing only what my co-workers and assistants may place before me. I hold that I have lost nothing thereby. Because of what has appeared in the Press, an impression seems to have been created that I said one thing at Delhi and am saying something different now. I did say in one of my speeches at Delhi in regard to the Cabinet Mission's proposals that I saw darkness where I saw light

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Speech at the A.I.C.C. meeting, Bombay, July 7, 1946

before. That darkness has not yet lifted. If possible it has deepened. I could have asked the Working Committee to turn down the proposal about the Constituent Assembly if I could see my way clearly. You know my relations with the members of the Working Committee. Babu Rajendra Prasad might have been a High Court Judge, but he chose instead to act as my interpreter and clerk in Champaran. Then there is the Sardar. He has earned the nickname of being my yes-man. He does not mind. He even flaunts it as a compliment. He is a stormy petrel. Once he used to dress and dine in the Western style. But ever since he decided to cast his lot with me, my word has been law to him. But even he cannot see eye to eye with me in this matter. They both tell me that whereas on all previous occasions I was able to support my instinct with reason and satisfy their head as well as heart, this time I have failed to do so. I told them in reply that whilst my own heart was filled with misgivings, I could not adduce any reason for it or else I would have asked them to reject the proposals straightway. It was my duty to place my misgivings before them to put them on their guard. But they should examine what I had said in the cold light of reason and accept my viewpoint only if they were convinced of its correctness. Their decision, which they have arrived at after prolonged deliberations and which is almost unanimous, is before you. The members of the Working Committee are your faithful and tried servants. You should not lightly reject their resolution.

#### DEFEATIST LOGIC

I am willing to admit that the proposed Constituent Assembly is not the Parliament of the people. It has many defects. But you are all seasoned and veteran fighters. A soldier is never afraid of danger. He revels in it. If there



are shortcomings in the proposed Constituent Assembly, it is for you to get them removed. It should be a challenge to combat, not a ground for rejection. I am surprised that Shree Jayaprakash Narayan said yesterday that it would be dangerous to participate in the proposed Constituent Assembly and therefore they should reject the Working Committee's resolution. I was not prepared to hear such defeatist language from the lips of a tried fighter like Jayaprakash. One line from a song composed by the late Choudhary Rambhaji Dutt has always made a very deep appeal to me. It means : 'We will never be defeated – nay, not even in death.' That is the spirit in which I expect you to approach this resolution. A satyagrahi knows no defeat.

Nor would I expect a satyagrahi to say that whatever Englishmen do must be bad. The English are not necessarily bad. There are good men and bad men among the English people as among any other people. We ourselves are not free from defects. The English could not have risen to their present strength if they had not some good in them. They have come and exploited India, because we quarrelled amongst ourselves and allowed ourselves to be exploited. In God's world unmixed evil never prospers. God rules even where Satan seems to hold sway, because the latter exists only on His sufferance. Some people say that satyagraha is of no avail against a person who has no moral sense. I join issue with that. The stoniest heart must melt if we are true and have enough patience. A satyagrahi lays down his life, but never gives up. That is the meaning of the 'Do or Die' slogan. That slogan does not mean 'Kill or be killed'. That would be wilful distortion and a travesty of its true meaning. The true meaning is that we must do our duty and die in the course of performing it, if necessary. To die without killing is the badge of a satyagrahi. If we had lived up to that ideal we

would have won swaraj by now. But our ahimsa was lame. It walked on crutches. Even so it has brought us to our present strength. I know what happened in 1942. You will perhaps say that it was sabotage and underground activity that had brought the country to its present strength. It cannot be denied that sabotage activity was carried on in the name of the Congress during the 1942 struggle but I deny in toto that the strength of the masses is due to that. Whatever strength the masses have is due entirely to ahimsa—however imperfect or defective its practice might have been. Our ahimsa was imperfect because we were imperfect, because it was presented to you by an imperfect being like myself. If then, even in the hands of imperfect instruments it could produce such brilliant results, what could it not achieve in the hands of a perfect satyagrahi?

In 1942 our people showed great valour. But greater valour will be required of us before our goal is reached. We have done much, but more remains to be done. For that we must have patience and humility and detachment. You should try to understand what happened in 1942, the inner meaning of that struggle and the reason why it stopped short where it did.

#### NO BED OF ROSES

This is no time for dalliance or ease. I told Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that he must wear the crown of thorns for the sake of the nation and he has agreed. The Constituent Assembly is going to be no bed of roses for you but only a bed of thorns. You may not shirk it.

That does not mean that everybody should want to go into it. Only those should go there who are specially fitted



for the task by virtue of their legal training or special talent. It is not a prize to be sought as a reward for sacrifices, but a duty to be faced even like mounting the gallows or sacrifice of one's all at the altar of service.

There is another reason why you should join the Constituent Assembly. If you asked me whether in the event of your rejecting the proposed Constituent Assembly or the Constituent Assembly failing to materialize, I would advise the people to launch civil disobedience, individual or mass, or undertake a fast myself, my reply is 'NO'. I believe in walking alone. I came alone in this world, I have walked alone when the time came. I know I am quite capable of launching satyagraha even if I am all alone. I have done so before. But this is no occasion for a fast or civil disobedience. I regard the Constituent Assembly as the substitute of satyagraha. It is constructive satyagraha.

#### DUTY OF A SATYAGRAHI

The alternative is constructive work which you have never done justice to. If you had, you would have today got the Constituent Assembly of Jayaprakash's dream instead of the present one. But a satyagrahi cannot wait or delay action till perfect conditions are forthcoming. He will act with whatever material is at hand, purge it of dross and convert it into pure gold. Whatever may be the defects in the State Document of May 16th, I have no doubt as to the honesty of those who have framed it. They know they have got to quit. They want to quit in an orderly manner. And to that end they have produced the Document they could under the circumstances. I refuse to believe that they came all the way from England to deceive us.

A polish lady has sent me a note just today saying that all Europeans had received secret instructions to leave India as the British army would no longer be able to give them adequate protection. If it is so, it is a sad reflection on us. We would be unworthy of the name of satyagrahi if even an English child did not feel secure in our midst. Even if we succeed in driving out the Europeans by these tactics, something worse will take their place. Our "Quit India" resolution has no malice about it. It only means that we will no longer be exploited.

Let us not be cowardly, but approach our task with confidence and courage. Let not the fear of being deceived dismay us. No one can deceive a satyagrahi. Never mind the darkness that fills my mind. He will turn it into light.

*Harijan, 21-7-1946*



## THE MESSAGE OF ASIA

I do not think that I should apologize to you for having to speak in a foreign tongue. I wonder if this loudspeaker carries my voice to the farthest end of this vast audience. If some of those who are far away are unable to listen to what I may say, it will be the fault of the loudspeaker.

I was going to tell you that I do not wish to apologize. I dare not. You cannot understand the provincial language, which is my mother tongue. I do not want to insult you by speaking in my own language (Gujarati). Our national speech is Hindustani. I know that it will be a long time before it can be made into an international speech. For international commerce, undoubtedly, English occupies the first place. I used to hear that French was the language of diplomacy. I was told, when I was young, that if I wanted to go from one end of Europe to the other, I must try to pick up French. I tried to learn French, in order that I may be able to make myself understood. There is a rivalry between the French and the English. Having been taught English, I have naturally to resort to it.

I was wondering, as to what I was to speak to you. I wanted to collect my thoughts, but let me confess to you that I had no time. Yet I had promised yesterday that I would try to say a few words. While I was coming with Badshah Khan, I asked for a little piece of paper and pencil. I got a

pen, instead of a pencil. I tried to scribble a few words. You will be sorry to hear that piece of paper is not by my side, though I remember what I wanted to say.

You, friends, have not seen the real India and you are not meeting in conference in the midst of real India. Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Lahore—all these are big cities and are, therefore, influenced by the West.

I then thought of a story. It was in French and was translated for me by an Anglo-French philosopher. He was an unselfish man. He befriended me without having known me, because he always sided with the minorities. I was not then in my own country. I was not only in a hopeless minority, but in a despised minority, if the Europeans in South Africa will forgive me for saying so. I was a coolie lawyer. At the time, we had no coolie doctors, and we had no coolie lawyers. I was the first in the field. You know, perhaps, what is meant by the word 'coolie'.

This friend—his mother was a Frenchwoman and his father was an Englishman—said: "I want to translate for you a French story. There were three scientists who went out from France in search of truth. They went to different parts of Asia. One of them found his way to India. He began to search. He went to the so-called cities of those times—naturally this was before British occupation, before even the Mogul period. He saw the so-called high caste people, men and women, till he felt at a loss. Finally he went to one humble cottage in a humble village. That cottage was a *bhangi* cottage and there he found the truth that he was in search of."

If you really want to see India at its best, you have to



find it in the humble *bhangis* homes of such villages. There are seven lakhs of such villages, and thirty eight crores of people inhabit them.

If some of you see the Indian villages, you will not be fascinated by the sight. You will have to scratch below the dung heap. I do not pretend to say that they were places of paradise. Today, they are really dung heaps. They were not like that before. What I say is not from history, but from what I have seen myself. I have travelled from one end of India to the other; and I have seen the miserable specimens of humanity with the lustreless eyes. They are India. In these humble cottages, in the midst of these dung heaps, are to be found humble *bhangis* in whom you find the concentrated essence of wisdom.

Again, I have learnt from books—books written by English historians. We read books written in English by English historians, but we do not write in our own mother tongue, or in the national language Hindustani. We study our history through English books, rather than through originals. That is the cultural conquest which India has undergone.

The first of these wise men was Zoroaster. He belonged to the East. He was followed by Buddha who belonged to East—India. Who followed Buddha? Jesus, who came from the East. Before Jesus was Moses who belonged to Palestine, though he was born in Egypt. And after Jesus came Mahomed, I omit my reference to Krishna and Rama and other lights. I do not call them lesser lights but they are less known to the literary world. All the same, I do not know a single person in the world to match these men of Asia. And then what happened? Christianity became disfi-

gured, when it went to the West. I am sorry to have to say that—I would not talk any further.

I have told you the story, in order to make you understand that what you see in the big cities is not the real India. Certainly, the carnage that is going on before our very eyes is a shameful thing. As I said yesterday, do not carry the memory of that carnage beyond the confines of India.

What I want you to understand is the message of Asia. It is not to be learnt through western spectacles or by imitating the atom bomb. If you want to give a message to the West, it must be the message of love and the message of truth. I do not want merely to appeal to your head. I want to capture your heart.

In this age of democracy in this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor, you can redeliver this message with greatest emphasis. You will complete the conquest of the West, not through vengeance, because you have been exploited, but with real understanding, I am sanguine, if all of you put your hearts together—not merely heads—to understand the secret of the message these wise men of the East have left to us, and if we really become worthy of that great message, the conquest of the West will be completed. This conquest will be loved by the West itself.

The West is today pining for wisdom. It is despairing of a multiplication of the atom bombs, because the atom bombs mean utter destruction, not merely of the West, but also of the whole world, as if the prophecy of the Bible is going to be fulfilled and there is to be a perfect deluge. It is



up to you to tell the world of its wickedness and sin—that is the heritage your teachers and my teachers have taught Asia.

*Harijan, 20-4-1947*

## RELIGION ADMITS OF NO COERCION

Freedom without equality for all, irrespective of race or religion, was not worth having for the Congress. In other words, the Congress and any government representative of the Congress must remain a purely democratic, popular body leaving every individual to follow that form of religion which best appealed to him without any interference from the State. There was so much in common between people living in the same State under the same flag owing undivided allegiance to it. There was so much in common between man and man that it was a marvel that there could be any quarrel on the ground of religion. Any creed or dogma which coerced others into following one uniform practice was a religion only in name, for, a religion worth the name did not admit of any coercion. Anything that was done under coercion had only a short lease of life. It was bound to die. It must be a matter of pride to them whether they were four anna Congress members or not that they had in their midst an institution without a rival which disdained to become a theocratic State and which always believe and lived up to the belief that the State of their conception must be a secular, democratic State having perfect harmony between the different units composing the state. When he, the speaker, thought of the plight of the Muslims in the Union, how in many places ordinary life had become difficult for them and how there was a continuing exodus of Muslims from the Union, he wondered whether



the people who were responsible for creating such a state of things could ever become a credit to the Congress. He, therefore, hoped that during the year that had just commenced, the Hindus and Sikhs would so behave as to enable every Muslim, whether a boy or a girl, to feel that he or she was as safe and free as the tallest Hindu and Sikh.

### *Delhi Diary*

## PRAY WITH ME AND FOR ME

### MY FAST AS A PROTEST

One fasts for health's sake under laws governing health, fasts as a penance for a wrong done and felt as such. In these fasts, the fasting one need not believe in ahimsa. There is, however, a fast which a votary of non-violence sometimes feels impelled to undertake by way of protest against some wrong done by society, and this he does when he as a votary of ahimsa has no other remedy left. Such an occasion has come my way.

When on September 9th, I returned to Delhi from Calcutta, it was to proceed to the West Punjab. But that was not to be. Gay Delhi looked a city of the dead. As I alighted from the train I observed gloom on every face I saw. Even the Sardar, whom humour and joy that humour gives never desert, was no exception this time. The cause of it I did not know. He was on the platform to receive me. He lost no time giving me the sad news of the disturbances that had taken place in the metropolis of the Union. At once I saw that I had to be in Delhi and 'do or die'. There is apparent calm brought about by prompt military and police action. But there is a storm within the breast. It may burst forth any day. This I count as no fulfilment of the vow to 'do' which alone can keep me from death, the incomparable

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Speech at the prayer meeting, Birla House, New Delhi, January 12, 1948



friend. I yearn for heart friendship between the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. It subsisted between them the other day. Today it is non-existent. It is a state that no Indian patriot worthy of the name can contemplate with equanimity. Though the voice within has been beckoning for a long time, I have been shutting my ears to it, lest it be the voice of Satan otherwise called my weakness. I never like to feel resourceless, a satyagrahi never should. Fasting is his last resort in the place of the sword—his or other's. I have no answer to return to the Muslim friends who see me from day to day as to what they should do. My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately the fast is undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three days. The final conclusion has flashed upon me and it makes me happy. No man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than is life. I hope and pray that I have that purity in me to justify the step.

#### WORTHY OF BLESSINGS

I ask you all to bless the effort and to pray for me and with me. The fast begins from the first meal tomorrow. The period is indefinite and I may drink water with or without salts and sour limes. It will end when and if I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all the communities brought about without any outside pressure, but from an awakened sense of duty. The reward will be the regaining of India's dwindling prestige and her fast fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia and there through the world. I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of her soul by India will mean the loss of the hope of the aching, storm-tossed and hungry world. Let no friend, or foe if there be one, be angry with me. There are friends who do not believe in the method of the fast for the reclamation of the human mind. They will

bear with me and extend to me the same liberty of action that they claim for themselves. With God as my supreme and sole counsellor, I felt that I must take the decision without any other adviser. If I have made a mistake and discover it, I shall have no hesitation in proclaiming it from the housetop and retracing my faulty step. There is little chance of making such a discovery. If there is clear indication, as I claim there is of the Inner Voice, it will not be gainsaid. I plead for all absence of argument and inevitable endorsement of the step. If the whole of India responds or at least Delhi does, the fast might be soon ended.

### NO SOFTNESS

But whether it ends soon or late or never, let there be no softness in dealing with what may be termed as a crisis. Critics have regarded some of my previous fasts as coercive and held that on merits the verdict would have gone against my stand but for the pressure exercised by the fasts. What value can an adverse verdict have when the purpose is demonstrably sound? A pure fast, like duty, is its own reward. I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must. Hence, I urge everybody dispassionately to examine the purpose and let me die, if I must, in peace which I hope is ensured. Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. That destruction is certain if Pakistan ensures no equality of status and security of life and property for all professing the various faiths of the world, and if India copies her. Only then Islam dies in the two Indias, not in the world. But Hinduism and Sikhism have no world outside India. Those who differ from me will be honoured by me for their resistance, however implacable. Let my fast quicken cons-



ciences, not deaden it. Just contemplate the rot that has set in beloved India and you will rejoice to think that there is an humble son of hers who is strong enough and possibly pure enough to take the happy step. If he is neither, he is a burden on earth. The sooner he disappears and clears the Indian atmosphere of the burden, the better for him and all concerned.

I would beg of all friends not to rush to Birla House nor try to dissuade me nor be anxious for me. I am in God's hands. Rather, they should turn the searchlight inwards, for this is essentially a testing time for all of us. Those who remain at their post of duty and perform it diligently and well, now more so than hitherto, will help me and the cause in every way. The fast is a process of self-purification.

*Harijan*, 18-1-1948

## MY DREAM

Before I ever knew anything of politics in my early youth, I dreamt the dream of communal unity of the heart. I shall jump in the evening of my life, like a child, to feel that the dream has been realized in this life. The wish for living the full span of life, portrayed by the seers of old and which they permit us to set down at 125 years, will then revive. Who would not risk sacrificing his life for the realization of such a dream ? Then we shall have real swaraj. Then, though legally and geographically we may still be two States, in daily life no one will think that we were separate States. The vista before me seems to me to be, as it must be to you, too glorious to be true. But like a child in a famous picture drawn by a famous painter, I shall not be happy till I have got it. I live and want to live for no lesser goal. Let the seekers from Pakistan help me to come as near the goal as it is humanly possible. A goal ceases to be one, when it is reached. The nearest approach is always possible. What I have said holds good irrespective of whether others do it or not. It is open to every individual to purify himself or herself so as to render him or her fit for that land of promise. I remember to have read, I forget whether in the Delhi Fort or the Agra Fort, when I visited them in 1896, a verse on one of the gates, which when translated reads : "If there is a paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here." That Fort with all its magnificence at its best was no paradise in my estimation. But I should love to see that verse with justice



inscribed on the gates of Pakistan at all the entrances. In such paradise, whether it is in the Union or in Pakistan, there will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drinks nor drugs. There will be the same respect for women as vouchsafed to men and the chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded. Where every woman except one's wife will be treated by men of all religions as mother, sister or daughter, according to her age. Where there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths. They will be all proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread labourers. I hope everyone who listens to me or reads these lines will forgive me if stretched on my bed and basking in the sun, inhaling life-giving sunshine, I allow myself to indulge in the ecstasy. Let this assure the doubters and sceptics that I have not the slightest desire that the fast should be ended as quickly as possible. It matters little if the ecstatic wishes of a fool like me are never realized and the fast is never broken. I am content to wait as long as it may be necessary, but it will hurt me to think that people have acted merely in order to save me. I claim that God has inspired this fast and it will be broken only when and if He wishes it. No human agency has ever been known to thwart, nor will it thwart, the Divine Will.

*Delhi Diary*

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## GLOSSARY

*abkari* : excise

*acharya* : preceptor ; teacher

*adharmā* : opposite of dharma or duty

*ahimsa* : non-violence, love

*alpatma* : little soul

*ashram* : a retreat or place for community living

*atishudra* : lower in caste than Shudra —the untouchable

*atman* : spirit, soul

*avarṇa* : one belonging to the low caste ; an untouchable

*behn* : sister

*Bhagawat Dharma* : the way of God ; Vaishnav attitude

*bhagini* : sister

*bhai* : brother

*bhangi* : scavenger ; sweeper



*bhoga* : enjoyment

*bidis* : a country cigarette

*Brahma* : the divine reality, universal spirit

*Brahma-nirvana* : state of oneness with the divine reality

*brahmacharya* : celibate

*brahmacharya* : celibacy, code of conduct involving strict observance of chastity and continuance in the pursuit of learning, philosophy and God

*chothai* : literally one fourth ; popularly used for land revenue

*gayatri* : an invocation of Sun god

*Gopal* : shepherd ; also a name of Krishna

*Harijan* : literally a man of God ; used by Gandhiji for untouchables

*himsa* : violence

*kaliyuga* : the dark age

*kalema* : basic Muslim prayer

*kamadhenu* : the mythical cow of plenty supposed to fulfil all desires

*khadi* : hand-spun and hand-woven cloth

*laddu* : a sweet ball

*Maharaj* : literally king, ruler ; suffixed to person's name as a mark of respect

*mahatma* : great soul, title given to Gandhiji

*mantra* : a sacred formula, a sacred text used for repetition and meditation, a sacred incantation

*moulvi* : Muslim priest

*moksha* : salvation ; freedom from birth and death

*naishthik brahmachari* : a celibate from the beginning

*Padmanabhadras* : servant of Padmanabha or Vishnu, i.e., God

*nirvan* : state of salvation, i. e., of absolute bliss and calm according to Buddhist thought

*pandal* : canopy

*pol* : a narrow lane formed by lines of houses

*purna swaraj* : complete independence

*Quid-e-Azam* : great leader, title used for Mr. M.A. Jinnah

*raj* : kingdom, rule, regime

*Ramaraj* : kingdom of righteousness

*Ramanama* : name of Rama—incarnation of God in Hindu religion, recitation of God's name.



*rishi* : seer

*sadhana* : striving, practice, persistent effort

*sandhyavandana* : puja ritual

*sangh* : organization

*sat* : truth, that which exists

*satyagraha* : literally holding on to truth ; truth force or soul-force

*savarnas* : one belonging to the high caste

*shikha* : tuft of hair left in the middle of the head among Hindus

*shruti* : that which has been heard—a term applied to the Vedas

*smriti* : that which is remembered—a term applied to various works laying down Hindu codes

*smritikar* : author of smriti

*takli* : spindle-like spinning instrument

*tapasaya, tapascharya* : austerity, penance or asceticism

*vaidyas* : practioners of Ayurveda system of indigenous medicine

*videshi* : belonging to or made in a foreign country

*yajna* : ritual or religious sacrifice

*yamas* : major vows

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DISCOURSES ON THE GITA

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