



**M. K. GANDHI**

**POLITICAL  
AND  
NATIONAL  
LIFE  
AND  
AFFAIRS**

**Volume III**

# Political and National Life and Affairs – Part III

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*A popular State can never act in advance of public opinion. If it goes against it, it will be destroyed. Democracy disciplined and enlightened is the finest thing in the world. A democracy prejudiced, ignorant, superstitious will land itself in chaos and may be self-destroyed.*

– M. K. Gandhi

Young India, 30-7-'31, p. 199

## TO THE READER

I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

*Harijan*, 29-4-1933, p. 2

M. K. GANDHI

## SECTION ONE: THE CULT OF VIOLENCE

### 1. CURZON WYLLIE'S ASSASSINATION

(From *Indian Opinion* dated 14-8-1909; translated from Gujarati)

The assassination of Sir Curzon Wyllie and Dr. Lalkaka was a terrible thing. Sir Curzon Wyllie served as an officer at several places in India. Here he was Lord Morley's aide-de-camp. Dr. Lalkaka was a Parsi physician and carried on business at Shanghai in China. He was here on a short visit only.

On July 2, there was a tea-meeting of the National Indian Association in the Jehangir Hall of the Imperial Institute. Such meetings are arranged with the object of bringing Indian students into contact with Englishmen, who therefore attend as guests of Indians. Sir Curzon Wyllie was [thus] a guest of the assassin. From this point of view, Mr. Mohanlal Dhingra murdered his guest in his own house, and also killed Dr. Lalkaka who tried to interpose himself between them.

It is being said in defence of Sir Curzon Wyllie's assassination that it is the British who are responsible for India's ruin, and that, just as the British would kill every German if Germany invaded Britain, so too it is the right of any Indian to kill any Englishman.

Every Indian should reflect thoughtfully on this murder. It has done India much harm; . . . Mr. Dhingra's defence is inadmissible. In my view, he has acted like a coward. All the same, one can only pity the man. He was egged on to do this act by ill-digested reading of worthless writings. His defence of himself, too, appears to have been learnt by rote. It is those who incited him to do this that deserve to be punished. In my view, Mr. Dhingra himself is innocent. The murder was committed in a state of intoxication. It is not merely wine or *bhang* that makes one drunk; a mad idea also can do so. That was the case with Mr. Dhingra. The analogy of Germans and Englishmen is fallacious. If the Germans were to invade [Britain], the British would kill only the invaders. They would

not kill every German whom they meet. Moreover, they would not kill an unsuspecting German, or Germans who are guests. If I kill someone in my own house without a warning—someone who has done me no harm—I cannot but be called a coward. There is an ancient custom among the Arabs that they would not kill anyone in their own house, even if the person be their enemy. They would kill him after he had left the house and after he had been given time to arm himself. Those who believe in violence would be brave men if they observe these rules when killing anyone. Otherwise, they must be looked upon as cowards. It may be said that what Mr. Dhingra did, publicly and knowing full well that he himself would have to die, argues courage of no mean order on his part. But as I have said above, men can do these things in a state of intoxication, and can also banish the fear of death. Whatever courage there is in this is the result of intoxication, not a quality of the man himself. A man's own courage consists in suffering deeply and over a long period. That alone is a brave act which is preceded by careful reflection.

I must say that those who believe and argue that such murders may do good to India are ignorant men indeed. No act of treachery can ever profit a nation. Even should the British leave in consequence of such murderous acts, who will rule in their place? The only answer is: the murderers. Who will then be happy? Is the Englishman bad because he is an Englishman? Is it that everyone with Indian skin is good? If that is so, we can claim no rights in South Africa, nor should there be any angry protest against oppression by Indian princes. India can gain nothing from the rule of murderers—no matter whether they are black or white. Under such a rule, India will be utterly ruined and laid waste. This train of thought leads to a host of reflections, but I have no time to set them down here. I am afraid some Indians will commend this murder. I believe they will be guilty of a heinous sin. We ought to abandon such fanciful ideas.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. IX, p. 302*

## 2. COLLECTOR'S ASSASSINATION

(From *Indian Opinion*, dated 1-10--1910; translated from Gujarati)

There was a cable-report in last week's papers about a Collector named Jackson<sup>1</sup> having been assassinated near Nasik. There are some Indians who hope to terrorize the British by such acts. What they are doing is a grave matter. The assassin is quite convinced in his mind that he is acting in the interest of the country, but it is difficult to see what good assassination can do. Wherever assassinations have taken place, they have done more harm than good. President Mackinley<sup>2</sup> of America was assassinated by someone who imagined that that was the way to eradicate corruption from America. No such result followed. Similarly, President Carnot<sup>3</sup> of France was killed a few years ago. That certainly did not lead to any reforms in France. What followed both in America and France was increased repression by, and expenditure on, the police.

Unless, a particular form of tyranny is directly attacked, it can never be got rid of: If at any time it does seem to have been eradicated, other undesirable consequences will follow. If B, being oppressed by A, does not himself offer resistance but gets relief through C, that will not end his subjection. He will have C, instead of A, on top of him. If C is a good man, he may put B in shackles of gold instead of iron, but the shackles—the slavery will remain. What is necessary is to open B's eyes to his state of slavery and teach him to be free. It is not by murdering others that he can be taught this.

It is our particular request to readers of this journal that they give the utmost thought to this matter. We know it is becoming fashionable among the Indian people to admire assassinations. The fashion, we suppose, will not last long. Let every reader of *Indian Opinion* work to bring it to an early end.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. X, p. 112

1. A.M.T. Jackson, I.C.S., District Magistrate of Nasik, was shot dead on 21-12-1909 by a young man from Aurangabad.
2. William Mackinley (1843-1901) twenty-fifth President of the United States in 1896, re-elected in 1900, was shot on 6-9-1901 by a Pole, Leon Czolgosz, and died on 14-9-1901.
3. Marie Francois Sadi Carnot, (1837-1894); in 1887 became the fourth President of the Third Republic of France. His presidency was marked by the Boulangist agitation (1889) and the Panama Scandals (1892). On 24-6-1894, he was stabbed by an Italian anarchist named Caserio at Lyons, and expired almost immediately.

### 3. A CATASTROPHE

(From *Indian Opinion* dated 28-12-1912)

We have to thank our stars that the dastardly act of the bomb-thrower at Delhi did not prove fatal to Lord Hardinge's life and that Lady Hardinge had a miraculous escape. That in this century, which is considered an enlightened period in the history of mankind, there are people who believe that assassination can lead to political or other reform is a fact which should make people think and ask whether what passes under the name of progress is real progress. We as Indians deplore that this nefarious institution of cold-blooded Satanic murder should find its votaries in India. We cannot recall instances of the kind in Indian history. Assassination for selfish ends is as old as the hills. It had its sway in India also long before the introduction, in that land, of Western influence. But political assassination is a recent excrescence in the life of India. The mad youth who perpetrated the crime no doubt thought that by striking murders of distinguished men, rulers could be terrorized and an independent India could be thereby secured. We should decline to share any such independence even if it were attainable, which we doubt. We do not believe that good can be brought about by evil.

The fact is that the idea of securing independence by assassination is chimerical. The result can only be greater repression, greater suspicion on the part of the rulers, greater taxation on the people, and consequent increase in the hardships of the poorest in the land. In the midst of this darkness we can but pray for India's deliverance from the curse of assassination and the return of the few misguided youths to the same teaching of their forefathers that freedom comes only from self-suffering and purification—never by inflicting suffering on others. We pray, too, for Lord Hardinge's quick recovery from the effect of the wound received by him.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. XI, p. 361

#### 4. ASSASSINATION OF A DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

The assassination of Mr. Willoughby is a most unfortunate event which has naturally evoked public sympathy and indignation. The murder was a cruel, thoughtless and fanatical act. It has not advanced but retarded the cause of Khilafat. Mr. Willoughby had no hand in the Turkish terms. As is quite probable, he was himself a popular officer. It can only be counted as madness to kill an innocent man for a crime committed by a member of his race. And yet the fact must not be disguised that the murder will be regarded by many Mahomedans as a pious act worthy of a martyr. I have heard Mahomedans calmly arguing that such murders are not only justifiable but meritorious. I have known many Hindus who have argued that it was the throwing of bombs which brought about the removal of the partition of Bengal. I know that many consider Dhingra to have been a martyr. The Sinn Feiners openly practise murder and other forms of violence for the purpose of freeing their country from the English connection. Every assassin or incendiary is considered by them a hero. It is because I feared such a result in our midst, that I advised non-violent non-cooperation regarding the Khilafat. In my opinion; it is the active and open preaching of non-cooperation which has prevented murders and assassinations in the land. The murder of Mr. Willoughby proves that the propaganda of non-violence and non-co-operation has not proved sufficient to control individual fanatics and that it is not an easy thing to do so. It proves further that the Khilafat wrong is a deep-seated grievance which with the passage of time will sink deeper still instead of being forgotten.

I observe that *The Times of India* credits the Khilafat propaganda with the murder and calls it the 'first fruits'. I realize that the language used is cautious. It connects 'certain aspects of the agitation' with the crime. But I venture to suggest that no aspect of the agitation is responsible for the unfortunate murder. It is the grievous wrong, done by the British ministers, which has evoked the cruel deed.

*The Times of India* is on safer ground when it says that the tragedy is a special call to Islam, for, all thoughtful Mahomedans must realize that the honour of

their religion is at stake'. I wish to emphasize the warning. It must be the special duty of every Khilafat worker to be more careful than hitherto in insisting on complete freedom from violence as the condition precedent to successful non-co-operation. I am sure it is possible to cite texts from the Koran in condemnation of murder of innocent men. I can understand violence being done to wrongdoers in order to compel justice. It is unfortunately the chosen method of the civilized world. It has scriptural authority. Islam is said openly to preach violence to the wrong-doer. The so-called votaries of Christianity justify organized warfare for the removal of wrongs, fancied or real. Thousands of Hindus interpret the Gita to be a certificate for war in the cause of justice. It is only a minority (daily growing in numbers) which religiously believes that violence is wrong in itself and cannot be justified even to vindicate truth. But it cannot (it may be civilized) be religious to murder innocent unarmed men without warning. It is not enough for Khilafat workers to be satisfied with public condemnations (necessary as they are) or for the sake of decorum to join them. It is necessary for us to preach privately, publicly and incessantly the necessity of refraining from violence especially when an active campaign of non-co-operation full of promise is going on. We must feel in every fibre of our own being that every murder, every deed of violence must retard the progress of the movement.

This is an opportunity for distinguishing the Sinn Fein or the Egyptian non-co-operation from ours. The Sinn Feiners resort to violence in every shape and form. Theirs is a 'frightfulness' not unlike General Dyer's. We may pardon it if we choose, because we sympathize with their cause. But it does not on that account differ in quality from General Dyer's act. The Central Khilafat Committee has openly and deliberately accepted non-violence for its creed so long as non-co-operation is being carried on. We must therefore seek to guard English life as our own. We must constitute ourselves as self-appointed volunteers guarding English life from violent hands. And our success depends upon our ability to control all the violent and fanatical forces in our midst.

*Young India*, 1-9-'20, p. 2

## 5. NO MEETING GROUND

(From "My Path")

My path is clear. Any attempt to use me for violent purposes is bound to fail. I have no secret methods. I know no diplomacy save that of truth. I have no weapon but non-violence. I may be unconsciously led astray for a while but not for all time. I have therefore well-defined limitations, within which alone I may be used. Attempts have been made before now to use me unlawfully more than once. They have failed each time so far as I am aware.

I am yet ignorant of what exactly Bolshevism is. I have not been able to study it. I do not know whether it is for the good of Russia in the long run. But I do know that in so far as it is based on violence and denial of God, it repels me. I do not believe in short-violent-cuts to success. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that however much I may sympathize with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There therefore really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself. But my creed of nonviolence not only does not preclude me but compels me even to associate with anarchists <sup>and</sup> all those who believe in violence. But that association is always for the sole object of weaning them from what appears to me to be their error. For experience convinces me that permanent good can never be the outcome of untruth and violence. Even if my belief is a fond delusion, it will be admitted that it is a fascinating delusion.

*Young India*, 11-12-'24, p. 406

## 6. PATRIOTISM RUN MAD

If it is true that certain Mulshipeta 'satyagrahis' have wrecked a train taking labourers to Tata's Works, injured the engine driver and slashed about labourers including women, it is a crime worthy of the highest condemnation. These offenders against law, order and decency are said to have declared themselves at war against Tatas and to have said that by waylaying the poor coolies they expect to stop the works in course of construction. This is terrorism in a cause supposed to be good. But all terrorism is bad whether put up in a good cause or bad. As a matter of fact every cause is good in the estimation of its champion. General Dyer (and he had thousands of Englishmen and women who honestly thought with him) enacted Jallianwala Bag for a cause which he undoubtedly believed to be good. He thought that by that one act he had saved English lives and the Empire. That it was all a figment of his imagination cannot affect the valuation of the intensity of his conviction. Lords Lytton and Reading honestly believe that the Swaraj Party of Bengal is steeped in violence. But their terrorism cannot be justified on the score of the honesty of their motives. The cause that these mad Mulshipeta 'satyagrahis' hold to be just and good, the Tatas and their supporters genuinely believe to be wicked. They are honestly of opinion that their scheme will benefit the surrounding villages, that they have paid full compensation to the parties dispossessed, that the latter have voluntarily vacated their holdings and that their scheme will be a boon to Bombay and that therefore those who seek to thwart the scheme are enemies of progress. They are as much entitled to this belief as I am to mine that the scheme will not benefit the people in the neighbourhood, that it will spoil the natural beauty of the place that the poor villagers had no mind of their own and could therefore hardly be said to have voluntarily vacated their holdings, that no compensation is an adequate consideration for vacating a possession which sentiment has hallowed and it is a debatable question if the scheme will be a boon to Bombay. But immediately I arrogate to myself the exclusive title to being in the right, I usurp the function of the Deity. And there being no

absolute and universal standard of right, terrorism must be held to be wrong in every case. In other words pure motives can never justify impure or violent action. I am therefore unable to congratulate the offenders even on their voluntary surrender to the authorities. This surrender is no mitigation of the crime. It may easily be simple bravado. The murderer of a lady the other day in Kirkee could not save himself after the murder. The assault upon the innocent women who were earning an honest livelihood was an unpardonable wickedness. The fiends of the Mulshi villagers had a perfect, right, if they had wished, to go to the labourers and by argument wean them from labouring for the Tatas. But they had no right to take the law into their own hands. They have damaged a good cause by adopting the wrong method of terrorism and alienated what public sympathy they had. Terrorism set up by reformers may be just as bad as Government terrorism and it is often worse because it draws a certain amount of false sympathy. I heard a lady haranguing upon the self-sacrifice of revolutionaries and visibly moving the audience. A little reflection would however show that self-sacrifice must not be allowed to excuse a crime. Not even self-immolation can be allowed to support a bad or an immoral cause. He would be a weak father who would permit his child to play with fire because the child is hunger-striking for the permission. The youths who the other day very nearly murdered near Calcutta an innocent taxi-driver deserve no sympathy because they were robbing the driver for helping the cause of the country and because they were risking their lives in the attempt. Those who are betrayed into showing sympathy for such misguided youths are harming the country and doing no service to the youths.

*Young India*, 18-12-'24, p. 415

## 7. TO ANOTHER REVOLUTIONARY

(From "Notes")

I am afraid your advice to me to retire from public life is not so easy to follow as it is to give. I claim to be a servant of India and therethrough of humanity. I cannot always have it my own way. If I have had my share of fair weather I must face the foul too. I must not abandon the field of battle so long as I feel that I am wanted. When my work is done and I have become a disabled or worn out soldier, I shall be put away. Till then I must continue to do my work and endeavour to neutralize in all the ways accessible to me the poison of the revolutionary activity. A well-meaning and self-sacrificing physician who prescribes arsenic when he should have given fresh grape juice is one to be shunned in spite of his good intentions and even sacrifice. I invite the revolutionaries not to commit suicide and drag with them unwilling victims. India's way is not Europe's. India is not Calcutta and Bombay. India lives in her seven hundred thousand villages. If the revolutionaries are as many let them spread out into these villages and try to bring sunshine into the dark dungeons of the millions of their countrymen. That would be worthier of their ambition and love of the land than the exciting and unquenchable thirst for the blood of English officials and those who are assisting them. It is nobler to try to change their spirit than to take their lives.

*Young India*, 12-3-'25, p. 89 at p. 91

## 8. A REVOLUTIONARY'S DEFENCE

A correspondent, who has given me his name but not his address, has sent me what he calls 'an open letter'. It is a letter in reply to my remarks on the revolutionary movement in my address to the Belgaum Congress. The letter breathes love of the country, fervour and a spirit of self-sacrifice. It is moreover written under a sense of wrong, said to have been done by me to the revolutionaries. I, therefore, gladly print the letter without the name. The address of the writer is not given. The following is the unchanged full text of the letter:

"I think it my duty to remind you of the promise you made sometime back that you would retire from the political field at the time when the revolutionaries will once more emerge from their silence and enter into the Indian political arena. The experiment with the non-violent non-cooperation movement is now over. You wanted one complete year for your experiment, but the experiment lasted at least four complete years, if [not five, and still do you mean to say that the experiment was not tried long enough?

"You are one of the greatest of personalities in the present age and under your direct guidance and inspiration, your programme was actually taken up for some reason or other, by the best men in the land. Thousands of young men, the flower of the youth of our country, embraced your cult with all the enthusiasm they could gather. Practically the whole nation responded to your call. We can safely say that the response was phenomenal if not miraculous. What more could you want? Sacrifice and sincerity on the part of your followers were not wanting; the most selfish of professional men gave up their professions, young men of the country renounced all their worldly prospects and joined the forces under your banner; hundreds of families were rendered destitute for want of pecuniary income. Money was not wanting. You wanted one crore of rupees and you got more than you wanted. In fact I shall perhaps be not

far from the truth if I say that the response to your call was more than you yourself expected. I venture to say that India followed your lead to the best of her ability and this I think can hardly be denied, and still do you mean to say that the experiment was not tried far enough?

"In fact your programme failed for no fault of the Indians. You gave only a programme to the country, but you could not lead the nation to a victorious end. To say that non-violent non-co-operation failed because the people were not sufficiently non-violent is to argue like a lawyer and not like a prophet. The people could not be more non-violent than they were during the last few years. I would like to say that they were non-violent to a degree which smelt of cowardice. You would perhaps say that it was not this nonviolence—the non-violence of the cowards—that you wanted. But your programme did not contain that item which could transform cowards into heroes or which could detect and ultimately reject the cowards from the bands of heroes. This was no fault of the people. And to say that the majority of non-co-operators were cowards and not heroes is to shirk responsibilities. To say this is rather to commit an outrage on the manliness of the nation. Indians are not cowards. Their heroism can always be compared with that of the best heroes of the world. To deny this is to deny history. When I speak of India's heroism I mean not only the heroism which sparkled in the annals of the glorious past, but I include the heroism that is manifesting itself in the present, because India is still not dead.

"What India wants is a true leader, a leader like Guru Govind Singh or Guru Ramdas and Shivaji. India wants a Krishna who can give a worthy ideal to be followed not by India alone, but by all humanity, by all the members of this humanity with diverse temperaments and capacities.

"Non-violent non-co-operation movement failed not because there was sporadic outburst of suppressed feelings here and there but because the movement was lacking in a worthy ideal. The ideal that you preached was not in keeping with Indian culture and traditions. It savoured of

imitation. Your philosophy of non-violence, at least the philosophy that you gave to the people, for their acceptance, was a philosophy arising out of despair. It was not the spirit of *kshama* of the Indian Rishis, it was not the spirit of ahimsa of the great Indian Yogins. It was an imperfect physical mixture of Tolstoyism and Buddhism and not a chemical mixture of East and West. You adopted the Western methods of congresses and conferences and tried to persuade the whole nation to accept the spirit of ahimsa, irrespective of *desk*, *kal* and *patra* like Tolstoy, but which was a matter of individual *sadhana* with the Indians. And above all, you were and are still vague as regards India's ultimate political goal. This is miserable. Your idea of independence is not in consistence with Indian ideals. India stands for *Saruam paravasham dukhkhama Sarvamatmavasham sukham* and for the ideal that individual existence is solely for the purpose of humanity and through humanity serving God. *Jagathitaya shrikrishnaya cha*. The non-violence that India preaches is not non-violence for the sake of non-violence, but non-violence for the good of humanity, and when this good for humanity will demand violence and bloodshed, India will not hesitate to shed blood just in the same way as a surgical operation necessitates the shedding of blood. To an ideal Indian, violence or non-violence has the same significance provided they ultimately do good to humanity. *Vinashaya cha dushkritam* was not spoken in vain.

"To my mind, therefore, the ideal that you gave to the nation or the programme of action that you laid before it is neither consistent with Indian culture nor practicable as a political programme.

"It is simply inconceivable and incomprehensible to think that you still dare to entertain the slightest hope that England can be just and generous out of her free will,—this England 'which believes in Jallianwala Bagh massacres as a legitimate means of self-defence, this England which tried the O'Dwyer—Nair case and gave judgment in favour of barbarism. If you have an iota of faith left in you in the good sense of the British

Government, then according to you where is the necessity of any programme at all? If there is any necessity of any movement in order to bring the British Government to their senses, then why speak of the honesty and good intentions of the British Government? It seems that the prophet in you is gone and you are once more a lawyer defending a weak case; or perhaps you are always an exponent—a mighty exponent of half-truths only. A sovereign independent Indian republic in alliance or in federation with the other independent nations of the earth is one thing, and self-governing India within this imperialistic British Empire is perfectly another thing. Your sentiment of remaining within the British Empire reminds one of the many Himalayan miscalculations that you have repeatedly committed. It seems to me that you have compromised a worthy ideal with the present needs of a false expediency and this is the reason that you have failed to capture the imagination of the youths of the country— youths who could dare and who are still daring to go against your wishes although they unhesitatingly recognize you as one of the greatest of personalities of the modern age. These are the Indian revolutionaries. They have now decided to remain silent no more and therefore they request you to retire from the political field or else to direct the political movement in a way so that it may be a help and not a hindrance to the revolutionary movement. They suspended their activities so long simply to your requests direct and indirect, and they went further. They actually helped you in the carrying out of your programme to the best of their abilities. But now the experiment is over and therefore the revolutionaries are free from their promise, or, as a matter of fact, they promised to remain silent only for a year and no more.

"Further, I would like to point out that you have misjudged the revolutionaries in many respects when you blamed them in your recent presidential address in the 39th Congress. You said that the revolutionaries are retarding India's progress. I do not know what you mean by this word 'progress'. If you mean political progress, then can you

deny that every political progress that India has already made however little that might be, has been made chiefly by the sacrifices and the efforts of the revolutionary party? Can you deny that the Bengal partition was annulled through the efforts of the Bengal revolutionaries? Can you doubt that the Morley-Minto reform was the outcome of the Indian revolutionary movement? Can you be blind to the forces of this revolutionary movement which was mainly though not wholly instrumental in bringing about the Montford reform? I shall not be very much surprised if you will answer these queries in the affirmative but I can assure you that the British Government realizes the potentiality of this movement. Even the late Mr. Montagu expressed to an Indian of position and rank that he took the trouble of coming to India and risked his life simply due to the activities of the young Indian revolutionaries.

"If you mean that these reforms are no index to true progress, then I would venture to say that this revolutionary movement has achieved no mean progress in the moral advancement of India. Indians were miserably afraid of death and this revolutionary party once more made the Indians realize the grandeur and the beauty that lie in dying for a noble cause. The revolutionaries have once again demonstrated that death has a certain charm and is not always a dreadful thing. To die for one's own beliefs and convictions, to die in the consciousness that by so doing one is serving God in the nation, to accept death or to risk one's life when there is every probability of death, for a cause which one honestly believes to be just and legitimate, – is this no moral progress ?

"To cling to one's cherished ideal even in adversity and temporary failures—not to be swayed away by temporary excitements and by the seemingly noble doctrines of an alluring personality not to be daunted by long terms of imprisonment with hard labour, to be true to one's own self for years together—is this tenacity of purpose, this sturdiness in the character no index to true moral progress that India has made? And is this not the manifest outcome of the revolutionary ideal?

"You have said to the revolutionaries, 'You may not care for your own lives, but you dare not disregard those of your countrymen who have no desire to die a martyr's death.' But the revolutionaries are at a sad loss to understand the meaning of this sentence. Do you mean to say that the revolutionaries are responsible for the deaths of 10 men who were condemned in the Chauri Chaura trial? Do you mean to say that the revolutionaries are responsible for the bombing and killing of innocent people at Jallianwala Bagh and Gujranwalla? Did the revolutionaries during their struggle for the last twenty years, in the past or in the present, ever ask the starving millions to take part in the revolutionary struggle? The revolutionaries have perhaps a better knowledge of the mass psychology than most of the present leaders. And this was the reason that they never wanted to deal with the masses until they became sure of their own strength. They always believed that the masses of Northern India were ready for any emergency and they were also right in thinking the Northern India mass as a dense matter of high explosive, dangerous to be handled carelessly. It was you and your lieutenants who misjudged the sentiment of the masses and dragged them into the satyagraha movement, people who were groaning under a thousand oppressions from within and without where the lightning of anger laid unperceived and you had to pay the penalty for it. But can you give any instance where the revolutionaries dragged unwilling souls into the valley of death?

"But if you mean by the sentence that innocent people are being harassed, imprisoned and put to death due to the activities of the revolutionaries, then I would unhesitatingly and honestly admit, as far as my knowledge goes, that not a single individual was hanged who was innocent of any revolutionary activity, and about imprisonments and tortures, I may say that many innocent men were actually harassed and put to torture. But can the revolutionary party be made responsible for the atrocities committed by a foreign Government? The foreign Government is determined to crush any manifestation of manhood in the

nation, in any form whatsoever; but in so crushing the Government is very liable to commit blunders and harass and imprison and put to torture cowards along with the heroes; but are the brave people to be blamed for the sufferings of the cowards? Moreover these sufferings cannot be termed as martyr's death.

"Lastly, I would like to say something about the remarks you have made in connection with the strength of the British Empire. You have said to the revolutionaries, 'Those whom you seek to depose are better armed and infinitely better organized than you are.' But is it not shameful that a handful of Englishmen are able to rule India, not by the free consent of the Indian people but by the force of the sword? And if the English can be well-armed and well-organized why can the Indians be not better armed and better organized still,— Indians who are saturated with the high principles of spirituality? Indians are men in the same sense as the Englishmen are. Then, what on earth makes the Indians so helpless as to think that they can never be better organized than their English masters? By what argument and logic of fact can you disprove the possibilities in which the revolutionaries have immense faith? And the spirit of non-violence that arises out of this sense of helplessness and despair can never be non-violence of the strong, the non-violence of the Indian Rishis. This is *tamas* pure and simple.

"Excuse me Mahatmaji, if I am severe in criticizing your philosophy and principles. You have criticized the revolutionaries most unsympathetically and even you went so far as to describe them as the enemies of the country, simply because they differ from your views and methods. You preach tolerance but you have been violently intolerant in your criticisms of the revolutionaries. The revolutionaries have risked their everything to serve their motherland, and if you cannot help them, at least be not intolerant towards them."

I never made any promise to anybody as to when and how I should retire from the political life of the country. But I did say and now repeat that I

would certainly retire if I find that India does not imbibe my message *and* that India wants a bloody revolution. I should have no part in that movement because I do not believe in its utility either for India, or, which is the same thing, for the world.

I do believe that there was a wonderful response to the call of non-co-operation but I do also believe the success was more than proportionate to the measure of non-co-operation. The wonderful awakening of the masses is a standing demonstration of the fact.

I do believe too, that the country exercised great self-restraint; but I must reiterate my opinion that the observance of non-violence was far below the required standard.

I do not believe that 'my philosophy' is an indifferent mixture of Tolstoy and Buddha. I do not know what it is except that it is what I feel to be true. It sustains me. I owe much to Tolstoy and much to Buddha. I still somehow or other fancy that 'my philosophy' represents the true meaning of the teachings of the Gita. I may be totally mistaken. Such a mistake can do no harm either to me or to anybody. For the source of my inspiration is of no consequence if what I stand for be unadulterated truth.

Let the philosophy I represent be tested on its own merits. I hold that the world is sick of armed rebellions. I hold too that whatever may be true of other countries, a bloody revolution will not succeed in India. The masses will not respond. A movement in which masses have no active part can do no good to them. A successful bloody revolution can only mean further misery for the masses. For it would be still foreign rule for them. The nonviolence I teach is active non-violence of the strongest. But the weakest can partake in it without becoming weaker. They can only be the stronger for having been in it. The masses are far bolder today than they ever were. A non-violent struggle necessarily involves construction on a mass scale. It cannot therefore lead to *tamas* or darkness or inertia. It means a quickening of the national life. That movement is still going on silently almost imperceptibly but none the less surely.

I do not deny the revolutionary's heroism and sacrifice. But heroism and sacrifice in a bad cause are so much waste of splendid energy and hurt the good cause by drawing away attention from it by the glamour of the misused heroism and sacrifice in a bad cause.

I am not ashamed to stand erect before the heroic and self-sacrificing revolutionary because I am able to pit an equal measure of non-violent men's heroism and sacrifice untarnished by the blood of the innocent. Self-sacrifice of lone innocent man is a million times more potent than the sacrifice of million men who die in the act of killing others. The willing sacrifice of the innocent is the most powerful retort to insolent tyranny that has yet been conceived by God or man.

I invite the attention of the revolutionaries to the three great hindrances to Swaraj—the incomplete spread of the spinning wheel, the discord between Hindus and Musalmans and the inhuman ban upon the suppressed classes. I ask them patiently to take their due share in this work of patient construction. It may not be spectacular enough. But on that very account it requires all the heroic patience, silent and sustained effort and self-effacement of which the tallest among the revolutionaries is capable. Impatience will blur the revolutionary's vision and lead him astray. Slow and inglorious self-imposed starvation among the starving masses is every time more heroic than the death on the scaffold under false exaltation.

All criticism is not intolerance. I have criticized the revolutionary because I have felt for him. He has the same right to hold me to be in error as I believe him to be in error.

There are other points that are covered by the 'open letter'. But I have omitted to refer to them because I think that they can be easily answered by the reader and in no case do they touch the vital issue.

*Young India*, 12-2-'25, p. 58

## 9. MY FRIEND THE REVOLUTIONARY

The revolutionary whom I endeavoured to answer some time ago has returned to the charge and challenges me to answer certain questions that arise out of my previous answers to him. I gladly do so. He seems to me to be seeking light even as I am and argues fairly and without much passion. So long as he continues to reason calmly I promise to continue the discussion. His first question is:

"Do you really believe that the revolutionaries of India are less sacrificing, less noble or less lovers of their country than the Swarajists, Moderates and Nationalists? May I challenge you to keep before the public the names of some Swarajists, Moderates or Nationalists who have embraced the death of a martyr for the sake of the motherland? Can you be bold, nay, arrogant enough to deny it in the face of historical facts that the revolutionaries have sacrificed more for their country than any other party which professes to serve India? You are ready to make compromise with other parties, while you abhor our party and describe the sentiments as poison. Will you not tremble to use the same word of intolerance for the sentiments of any other party which is decidedly inferior in the eyes of God and man to us? What makes you shrink from calling them misguided patriots or venomous reptiles?"

I do not regard the revolutionaries of India to be less sacrificing, less noble or less lovers of their country than the rest. But I respectfully contend that their sacrifice, nobility and love are not only a waste of effort, but being ignorant and misguided, do and have done more harm to the country than any other activity. For, the revolutionaries have retarded the progress of the country. Their reckless disregard of the lives of their opponents has brought on repression that has made those who do not take part in their warfare more cowardly than they were before. Repression does good only to those who are prepared for it. The masses are not prepared for the repression that follows in the trail of revolutionary activities and unwittingly strengthen the hands of the

very Government which the revolutionaries are seeking to destroy. It is my certain conviction that had the Chauri Chaura murders not taken place the movement attempted at Bardoli would have resulted in the establishment of Swaraj. Is it, therefore, any wonder that with such opinion I call the revolutionary a misguided and therefore dangerous patriot? I would call my son a misguided and dangerous nurse who because of his ignorance and blind love fought at the cost of his own life the physicians whose system of medicine no doubt did me harm but which I could not escape for want of will or ability. The result would be that I would lose a noble son and bring down upon my head the wrath of the physicians who suspecting my complicity in the son's activities might seek to punish me in addition to continuing their harmful course of treatment. If the son had attempted to convince the physicians of their error or me of my weakness in submitting to the treatment, the physicians might have mended their way or I might have rejected the treatment or would at least have escaped the wrath of the physicians. I do make certain compromises with the other parties because, though I disagree with them, I do not regard their activities as positively harmful and dangerous as I regard the revolutionaries'. I have never called the revolutionaries 'venomous reptiles'. But I must refuse to fall into hysterics over their sacrifices, however great they may be, even as I must refuse to give praise to the sacrifice of my misguided son for his sacrifice in the illustration supposed by me. I feel sure that those who through insufficient reasoning or false sentiment secretly or openly give praise to the revolutionaries for their sacrifices do harm to them and the cause they have at heart. The writer has asked me to quote instances of non-revolutionary patriots who gave their lives for the country. Well, two completed cases occur to me as I write these notes. Gokhale and Tilak died for their country. They worked in almost total disregard of their health and died much earlier than they need have. There is no necessary charm about death on the gallows; often such death is easier than a life of drudgery and toil in malarious tracts. I am quite satisfied that among the Swarajists and others there are men who will any day lay down their lives if they felt convinced that their death would bring deliverance to the country. I suggest to my friend the revolutionary that the

death on the gallows serves the country only when the victim is a 'spotless lamb'.

" 'India's path is not Europe's.' Do you really believe it? Do you mean to say that warfare and organization of army was not in existence in India, before she came in contact with Europe? Warfare for fair cause—Is it against the spirit of India? *Vinashaya cha dushkritam*—Is it something imported from Europe? Granted that it is, will you be fanatic enough not to take from Europe what is good? Do you believe that nothing good is possible in Europe? If conspiracy, bloodshed and sacrifice for fair cause are bad for India, will they not be bad as well for Europe?"

I do not deny that India had armies, warfare, etc. before she came in contact with Europe. But I do say that it never was the normal course of Indian life. The masses unlike those of Europe were untouched by the warlike spirits. I have already said in these pages that I ascribe to the Gita, from which the writer has quoted the celebrated verse (*Vinashaya cha dushkritam*), a totally different meaning from that ordinarily given. I do not regard it as a description of, or an exhortation to, physical warfare. And in any case according to the verse quoted it is God the All Knowing who descends to the earth to punish the wicked. I must be pardoned if I refuse to regard every revolutionary as an all-knowing God or an *avatar*. I do not condemn everything European. But I condemn for all climes and for all times secret murders and unfair methods even for a fair cause.

" 'India is not Calcutta and Bombay'. May I most respectfully put it before your Mahatmaship that the revolutionaries know the geography of India enough to be able to know this geographical fact easily. We hold this fact as much as we hold that a few spinners do not form the Indian nation. We are entering villages and have been successful everywhere. Can you not believe that they, the sons of Shivaji, Pratap and Ranjit, can appreciate our sentiments with more readiness and depth than anything else? Don't you think that armed and conspired resistance against something satanic and ignoble is infinitely more befitting for any nation

especially Indian, than the prevalence of effortlessness and philosophical cowardice? I mean the cowardice which is pervading the length and breadth of India owing to the preaching of your theory of non-violence or more correctly the wrong interpretation and misuse of it. Non-violence is not the theory of the weak and the helpless, it is the theory of the strong. We want to produce such men in India, who will not shrink from death whenever it may come and in whatever form—will do the good and die. This is the spirit with which we are entering the villages. We are not entering the villages to extort votes for councils and district boards, but our object is to secure co-martyrs for the country who will die and a stone will not tell where his poor corpse lies. Do you believe like Mazzini that ideas ripen quickly, when nourished by the blood of martyrs?"

It is not enough to know the geographical difference between Calcutta and the villages outside the railways. If the revolutionaries knew the organic difference between these, they would like me, become spinners. I own that the few spinners we have do not make India. But I claim that it is possible to make all India spin as it did before, and so far as sympathy is concerned minions are even now in sympathy with the movement, but they never will be with the revolutionary. I dispute the claim that revolutionaries are succeeding with the villagers. But if they are, I am sorry. I shall spare no pains to frustrate their effort. Armed conspiracies against something satanic is like matching satans against satan. But since one satan is one too many for me, I would not multiply him. Whether my activity is effortlessness or all efforts remains perhaps to be seen. Meanwhile, if it has resulted in making two yards of yarn spin where only one was spinning, it is so much to the good. Cowardice, whether philosophical or otherwise, I abhor. And if I could be persuaded that revolutionary activity has dispelled cowardice, it will go a long way to soften my abhorrence of the method, however much I may still oppose it on principle. But he who runs may see that owing to the non-violent movement, the villagers have assumed a boldness to which only a few years ago they were strangers. I admit that non-violence is a weapon essentially of the strong. I also admit that often cowardice is mistaken for non-violence.

My friend begs the question when he says a revolutionary is one who 'does the good and dies'. That is precisely what I question. In my opinion he does the evil and dies. I do not regard killing or assassination or terrorism as good in any circumstances whatsoever. I do believe that ideas ripen quickly when nourished by the blood of martyrs. But a man who dies slowly of jungle fever in service bleeds as certainly as the one on the gallows. And if the one who dies on the gallows is not innocent of another's blood, he never had ideas that deserved to ripen.

"One of your objections against the revolutionaries is that their movement is not mass movement, consequently the mass at large will be very little benefited by the revolution for which we are preparing. That is indirectly saying that we shall be most benefited by it. Is it really what you mean to say? Do you believe that those persons who are ever ready to die for their country—those mad lovers of their country—I mean the revolutionaries of India in whom the spirit of *nishkama karma* reigns, will betray their motherland and secure privileges for a life—this trifling life? It is true that we will not drag the mass just now in the field of action, because we know that it is weak, but when the preparation is complete we shall call them in the open field. We profess to understand the present Indian psychology full well, because we daily get the chance of weighing our brethren along with ourselves. We know that the mass of India is after all Indian, it is not weak by itself but there is want of efficient leaders; so when we have begot the number of leaders required by constant propaganda and preaching, and the arms, we shall not shrink from calling, and if necessary dragging the mass in the open field to prove that they are the descendants of Shivaji, Ranjit, Pratap and Govind Singh. Besides, we have been constantly preaching that the mass is not for the revolution but the revolution is for the mass. Is it sufficient to remove your prejudice in this connection?"

I neither say nor imply that the revolutionary benefits if the masses do not. On the contrary, and as a rule the revolutionary never benefits in the ordinary

sense of the word. If the revolutionaries succeed in attracting, not 'dragging' the masses to them, they will find that the murderous campaign is totally unnecessary. It sounds very pleasant and exciting to talk of 'the descendants of Shivaji, Ranjit, Pratap and Govind Singh.' But is it true? Are we all descendants of these heroes in the sense in which the writer understands it? We are their countrymen, but their descendants are the military classes. We may in future be able to obliterate caste, but today it persists and therefore the claim put up by the writer cannot in my opinion be sustained.

"Last of all, I shall ask you to answer these questions. Was Guru Govind Singh a misguided patriot because he believed in warfare for noble cause? What will you like to say about Washington, Garibaldi and Lenin? What do you think of Kemal Pasha and De Valera? Would you like to call Shivaji and Pratap, well-meaning and sacrificing physicians who prescribed arsenic when they should have given fresh grape-juice? Will you like to call Krishna Europeanized because he believed also in the *vinasha of dushkritas*?"

This is a hard or rather awkward question. But I dare not shirk it. In the first instance Guru Govind Singh and others whose names are mentioned did not believe in secret murder. In the second, these patriots knew their work and their men, whereas the modern Indian revolutionary does not know his work: He has not the men, he has not the atmosphere, that the patriots mentioned had. Though my views are derived from my theory of life I have not put them before the nation on that ground. I have based my opposition to the revolutionaries on the sole ground of expedience. Therefore, to compare these activities with those of Guru Govind Singh or Washington or Garibaldi or Lenin would be most misleading and dangerous. But by test of the theory of non-violence I do not hesitate to say that it is highly likely that had I lived as their contemporary and in their respective countries I would have called every one of them a misguided patriot, even though a successful and brave warrior. As it is, I must not judge them. I disbelieve history so far as details of acts of heroes are concerned. I accept broad facts of history and draw my lessons for my conduct.

I do not want to repeat it in so far as the broad facts contradict the highest laws of life. But I positively refuse to judge men from the scanty material furnished to us by history. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Kemal Pasha and De Valera I cannot judge. But for me as a believer in non-violence out and out they cannot be guides in life in so far as their faith in war is concerned. I believe in Krishna perhaps more than the writer. But my Krishna is the Lord of the universe, the creator, preserver and destroyer of us all. He may destroy because He creates. But I must not be drawn into a philosophical or religious argument with my friends. I have not the qualifications for teaching my philosophy of life. I have barely qualifications for practising the philosophy I believe. I am but a poor struggling soul yearning to be wholly good—wholly truthful and wholly non-violent in thought, word and deed, but ever failing to reach the ideal which I know to be true. I admit, and assure my revolutionary friends, it is a painful climb but the pain of it is a positive pleasure for me. Each step upward makes me feel stronger and fit for the next. But all that pain and the pleasure are for me. The revolutionaries are at liberty to reject the whole of my philosophy. To them I merely present my own experiences as a co-worker in the same cause even as I have successfully presented them to the Ali Brothers and many other friends. They can and do applaud whole-heartedly the action of Mustafa Kemal Pasha and possibly De Valera and Lenin. But they realize with me that India is not like Turkey or Ireland or Russia and that revolutionary activity is suicidal at this stage of the country's life at any rate, if not for all time in a country so vast, so hopelessly divided and with the masses so deeply sunk in pauperism and so fearfully terror-struck.

*Young India*, 9-4-'25, p. 124 10

### 10. TO 'REVOLUTIONARY IN THE MAKING'

You will pardon me for not reproducing your letter. I would have gladly published it, if it was a presentable letter—not that the language of your letter is at all in bad taste or violent. On the contrary you have attempted to present your case fairly and calmly, but the argument is loosely and unconvincingly put. What you want to say is that the revolutionary does no violence because when he takes the life of his adversary he does so to benefit him, i.e. his soul, even as a surgeon performs a painful operation on a patient for his (the latter's) good. You argue that the adversary has a vile body which vitiates the soul and that the sooner it is destroyed the better for him.

Now the analogy of the surgeon is wrong because he is concerned merely with the body. He operates on the body to benefit the body. His science ignores the soul. Who can say how many bodies have been repaired by surgeons at the expense of the soul? But the revolutionary destroys the body for the supposed benefit of the adversary's soul. In the first instance, I do not know a single revolutionary who has ever thought of the adversary's soul. His single aim has been to benefit the country even "though the adversary may perish body and soul. In the second instance, since you believe in the Law of Karma, a compulsory destruction of a body merely paves the way for the creation of a tougher body for the same soul. For, the man whose body is destroyed will weave for himself a body after his own longing. That to my mind is the meaning of the persistence of evil and the crimes we see about. The more we punish, the more persistent crimes become. They may change colour but the substance is the same. The way to save the adversary's soul is to appeal to the soul. It defies destruction, but it is amenable to appeals tuned to the required pitch. Souls must react upon souls. And since non-violence is essentially a quality of the soul, the only effective appeal to the soul must lie through non-violence. And do we not arrogate to ourselves infallibility when we seek to punish our adversaries? Let us remember that they regard us to be as harmful to society as we regard them. It is idle to drag in the name of Krishna. Either we believe him

to be the very God or we do not. If we do, we impute to him omniscience and omnipotence. Such a one can surely destroy. But we are puny mortals ever erring and ever revising our views and opinions. We may not without coming to grief ape Krishna, the inspirer of the Gita. You should remember too that the so-called Christians of the middle ages thought exactly as you believe revolutionaries think. They burnt heretics for the benefit of the latter's souls. We of today laugh at the atrocious folly of these ignorant so-called Christians of the middle ages. We now know that the inquisitors were wrong, their victims were totally innocent.

I am glad you are turning the wheel. Its silent revolution will bring you peace and bring the freedom you love much nearer than you imagine. Do not mind' your fickle friends who have deserted you leaving behind a legacy of 'bugridden bed born' slivers. If I were you, I would re-card those slivers. You may not know carding. If you do not, you must go to the nearest man who knows it and learn the beautiful art of carding. He is an indifferent spinner who knows not how to card. You need not be afraid that the method of non-violence is a slow long drawn out process. It is the swiftest the world has seen, for it is the surest. You will see that it will overtake the revolutionaries whom you imagine I have misjudged. To point out errors is not to misjudge. I am devoting so much space to them because I want their exhaustless energy to be directed in the right channel.

*Young India*, 30-4-'25, p. 153

## 11. AT IT AGAIN

My revolutionary friend has returned to the charge but I must tell him that he has not been as patient with his composition as before. He has introduced in his letter under discussion much irrelevant matter and has argued loosely. So far as I can see, he has exhausted all his argument and has nothing new to say. But should he write again, I advise him to write his letter more carefully and boil down his thoughts. I have been obliged to do that for him this time. But as he is seeking light, let him read carefully what I write, then think out his thoughts calmly and then write them out clearly and briefly. If it is merely questions he has to ask let him simply write them out without arguing to convince me. I do not pretend to know everything about the revolutionary movement, but as I have been obliged to think, observe and write a great deal, there is very little new he can tell me. Whilst, therefore, I promise to keep an open mind, I ask him, please to spare a busy servant of the nation and a true friend of the revolutionary the labour of reading much that he need not read. I am anxious to keep in touch with the revolutionary and I can only do so through these columns. I have a soft corner for him in my heart for there is one thing in common between him and me—the ability to suffer. But as I humbly believe him to be mistaken and misguided, I desire to wean him from his error or in the process, myself be weaned from mine.

My revolutionary friend's first question is:

" 'The revolutionaries have retarded the progress of the country.' Do you differ with your own view when you wrote in connection with the Bengal Partition: 'After the partition people saw that petitions must be backed up by force, and that they must be capable of suffering. This spirit must be considered to be the chief result of the partition... That which the people said tremblingly and in secret began to be said and written openly.... People young and old, used to run away at the sight of an English face; it no longer awed them. They did not fear even a row, or being imprisoned. Some of the 'best sons of India' are at present in

banishment.' The movement which followed the partition or more correctly which was the manifestation of the unrest of the people was the revolutionary movement, and the best sons of India you speak of mostly revolutionaries or semi- revolutionaries. How is it that these so-called ignorant and misguided persons were able to reduce if not remove the cowardice of India? Would you be so intolerant as to call the revolutionaries ignorant, because they cannot understand your peculiar dogma of non-violence?" There is no difference between the view expressed in *Indian Home Rule* from which the writer has quoted and the views now expressed by me. Those who led the partition movement, whatever and whoever they were, undoubtedly shed the fear of Englishmen. That was a distinct service to the country. But bravery and self-sacrifice need not kill. Let my friend remember that Indian Home Rule as the booklet itself states was written in answer to the revolutionary's arguments and methods. It was an attempt to offer the revolutionary something infinitely superior to what he had, retaining the whole of the spirit of self-sacrifice and bravery that was to be found in the revolutionary. I do not call the revolutionary ignorant, merely because he does not understand or appreciate my method but because he does not even appear to me to understand the art of warfare. Every one of the warriors whom my friend quotes knew his art and had his men.

The second question is:

"Was Terence MacSwiney a 'spotless lamb' when he died of hunger strike of 71 days? Please remember that he was to the last an advocate of conspiracy, bloodshed and terrorism, and maintained his ideas expressed in his famous book *Principles of Freedom*. If you can call MacSwiney a 'spotless lamb' will you not be ready to use the same term for Gopimohan Shaha?"

I am sorry to say I do not know enough of the life of MacSwiney to be able to give an opinion. But if he advocated 'conspiracy, bloodshed and terrorism' his method was open to the the same objections that have been advanced in these

pages. I never regarded him as a 'spotless lamb'. I gave my humble opinion when his fast was declared, that from my standpoint it was an error. I do not justify every fast.

The third question is:

"You believe in *varnas*. Therefore it is self evident that you hold the *Kshatriyas* to be of the same utility as any other *varna*. The revolutionaries profess to be *Kshatriyas* in this *nihkshatriya* epoch in India. *Kshatat trayate iti Kshatriyas*. I consider this state of India to be the greatest *Kshata* which India has ever met with, in other words this is the time when the need of *Kshatriyas* in India is the uppermost. Manu, the Prince of Hindu law gives prescribes four ways for the *Kshatriya*: '*sama, dama, danda, bheda*'. In this connection I reproduce a passage from Vivekananda which I think will greatly help you to comprehend the matter full well.

" 'All great teachers have taught 'Resist not evil', have taught that the non-resisting is the highest moral ideal. We all know that if, in the present state of world, people try to carry out this doctrine, the whole social fabric would fall to pieces, society would be destroyed, the violent and the wicked will take possession of our property, and possibly take our lives also. Even one day of such non-resistance would lead to the utter dissolution of the country.' I know what you will do in this awkward position, you will try to interpret it differently, but you shall find that he has left no room for such misinterpretation, because he instantly adds, 'some of you have read perhaps the Bhagavadgita and many of you in Western countries may have felt astonished at the first chapter wherein our Shri Krishna calls Arjuna a hypocrite and coward, on account of his refusal to fight or offer resistance, because his adversaries were his friends and relatives—his refusal on the plea that non-resistance was the highest ideal of love. There is a great lesson for us all to learn, that in all things the two extremes are alike; the extreme positive and the extreme negative are always similar; when the vibrations of light are too slow we

do not see them nor do we see them when they are too rapid; so also with sound, when very low in pitch we do not hear it, when very high we do not hear it either. Of like nature is the difference between resistance and non-resistance. . . . We must first care to understand whether we have the power of resistance or not. Then having the power if we renounce it and do not resist we are doing a grand act of love; but if we cannot resist and yet at the same time make it appear and ourselves believe that we are actuated by motives of highest love, we shall be doing the exact opposite of what is morally good. Arjuna became coward at the sight of the mighty array against him, his 'love' made him forget his duty towards his country and king. That is why Shri Krishna told him that he was a hypocrite: 'Thou talkest like a wise man, but thy actions betray thee to be a coward, therefore stand up and fight'. I want to add nothing more except a few questions. Do you think that your so-called heart and soul non-violent disciples can resist this alien bureaucrat government by physical force? If yes, on what ground; if not how then does your non-violence remain the weapon of the strong? Please answer these questions in the most unmistakable terms, so that no one can make different interpretations.

"Along with it I shall ask you the following questions, which directly arise from your statement. In your Swarajya is there any place for soldiers? Will your Swarajya government keep armies? If so will they fight—I mean use physical force, when necessary, or will they offer satyagraha against their opponents?"

I have room in my philosophy of life for *Kshatriyas*. But my definition of him I take from the Gita. He who does not run away from battle, i.e. danger is a *Kshatriya*. As the world progresses the same terms acquire new values. Manu and the other law givers did not lay down eternal principles of conduct. They enunciated certain eternal maxims of life and laid down for their ages rules of conduct more or less in accord with those maxims. I am unable to subscribe to the methods of bribery and deceit even for gaining entrance into heaven much

less for gaining India's freedom. For heaven will not be heaven and freedom will not be freedom if either is gained through such methods.

I have not verified the quotation said to be from Vivekananda. It has neither the freshness nor the brevity that mark most of that great man's writings. But whether it is from his writings or not, it does not satisfy me. If a large number of people carry out the doctrine of non-resistance, the present state of the world will not be what it is. Those individuals who have carried it out have not lost anything. They have not been butchered by the violent and the wicked. On the contrary the latter have shed both their violence and wickedness in the presence of the non-violent and the good.

I have already stated my meaning of the Gita. It deals with the eternal duel between good and evil. And who does not, like Arjuna, often quail when the dividing line between good and evil is thin and when the right choice is so difficult?

I heartily endorse, however, the statement that he alone is truly non-violent who remains non-violent even though he has the ability to strike. I do, therefore, claim that my disciple (I have only one and that is myself) is quite capable of striking, very indifferently and perhaps ineffectively I admit; but he has no desire to do so. I have had in my life many an opportunity of shooting my opponents and earning the crown of martyrdom but I had not the heart to shoot any of them. For I did not want them to shoot me, however much, they disliked my methods. I wanted them to convince me of my error as I was trying to convince them of theirs. 'Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you.'

Alas! In my Swaraj of today there is room for soldiers. Let the revolutionary friend know that I have described the disarmament and consequent emasculation of a whole people as the blackest crime of the British. I have not the capacity for preaching universal non-violence to the country. I preach therefore non-violence restricted strictly to the purpose of winning our freedom and therefore perhaps for preaching the regulation of international relations by non-violent means. But my incapacity must not be mistaken for

that of the doctrine of non-violence. I see it with my intellect in all its effulgence. My heart grasps it. But I have not yet the attainments for preaching universal non-violence with effect. I am not advanced enough for the great task. I have yet anger within me, I have yet the *Dwaita Bhava*—duality in me. I can regulate my passions, I keep them under subjection, but before I can preach universal non-violence with effect, I must be wholly free from passions. I must be wholly incapable of sin. Let the revolutionary pray with and for me that I may soon become that. But meanwhile let him take with me the one step to it which I see as clearly as day light, i.e. to win India's freedom with strictly non-violent means. And then under Swaraj you and I shall have a disciplined intelligent educated police force that would keep order within and fight raiders from without if by that time I or some one else does not show a better way of dealing with either.

*Young India*, 7-5-'25, p. 160

## 12. BOTH ON PRINCIPLE AND EXPEDIENCY

(From "On the Verge of It")

Q. What is more inhuman and terrible, rather what is more violent, to let 33 millions suffer, stagnate and perish, or a few thousand be killed? What would you prefer, to see the slow death of a mass of 33 millions through degeneration, or killing of a few hundred of people? This certainly is to be proved that the killing of a few hundred will stop the degeneration of 33 millions. But then, it is a matter of detail and not principle. It may be later on discussed whether it is expedient or not. But if it is proved that by killing a few hundred, we can put a stop to the degeneration of 33 millions, will you object to violence on principle?

A There is no principle worth the name if it is not wholly good. I swear by non-violence because I know that it alone conduces to the highest good of mankind, not merely in the next world but in this' also. I object to violence because, when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent. I do not believe that the killing of even every Englishman can do the slightest good to India. The millions will be just as badly off as they are today, if some one made it possible to kill off every Englishman tomorrow. The responsibility is more ours than that of the English for the present state of things. The English will be powerless to do evil if we will but do good. Hence my incessant emphasis on reform from within.

But before the revolutionary I have urged non-violence not on the highest ground of morality but on the lower ground of expedience. I contend that the revolutionary method cannot succeed in India. If an open warfare were a possibility, I may concede that we may tread the path of violence that the other countries have and at least evolve the qualities that bravery on the battlefield brings forth. But attainment of Swaraj through warfare I hold to be an impossibility for any time that we can foresee. Warfare may give us another rule for the English rule but not self-rule in terms of the masses. The pilgrimage to Swaraj is a painful climb. It requires attention to details. It means vast

organizing ability, it means penetration into the villages solely for the service of the villagers. In other words it means national education, i.e. education of the masses. It means an awakening of national consciousness among the masses. It will not spring like the magician's mango. It will grow almost unperceived like the banyan tree. A bloody revolution will never perform the trick. Haste here is most certainly waste. The revolution of the spinning wheel is the quickest revolution conceivable.

*Young India*, 21-5-'25, p. 177

### 13. 'A REVOLUTIONARY IN THE MAKING'

(From "Notes")

You are too philosophical and too abstruse for me. We must for the time being, therefore, agree to differ and pray for each other till we meet some day in the course of my wanderings. Your decision to add carding to spinning appeals to me most forcibly. I hope that you will make discoveries of the hidden powers of the spinning wheel and the carding bow. You can infect your surroundings, too, with your zeal for spinning and if it becomes successful as it can be when all who are ready-made revolutionaries or who are on the verge of it or are in the making devote their undoubted talents and energy to the great task, they will find that a bloody revolution is not necessary for our country's salvation. Let these friends of mine help me to make the spinning wheel hum, let them help me to make the villagers busy and happy and if even then we have not succeeded in bringing the Englishmen to book, they will catch me in my weakest moment and may possibly claim me as their convert. And then like all converts they may expect me to outstrip them in my red activities.

*Young India*, 2-1-25, p. 233 at p. 234

#### 14. CURSE OF ASSASSINATION

The assassination of the Assistant Superintendent Mr. Saunders of Lahore was a dastardly act apart from whether it had a political motive behind it or not. Violence being in the air there will no doubt be silent and secret approbation of the act, especially if it is discovered to have had any connection with the assault on Lalaji and his utterly innocent comrades. The provocation was great and it became doubly great by the death of Lalaji which was certainly hastened by the nervous shock received by him from the disgraceful conduct of the police. Some will insist, not without considerable justification, on ascribing the death even to the physical effect of the injury received by the deceased in the region of the heart. The provocation received also additional strength from the Punjab Government's defence of the police conduct. I should not wonder if the assassination proves to be in revenge of the high-handed policy of the Punjab Government.

I wish however that it was possible to convince the hot youth of the utter futility of such revenge. Whatever the Assistant Superintendent did was done in obedience to instructions. No one person can be held wholly responsible for the assault and the aftermath. The fault is that of the system of Government. What requires mending is not men but the system. And when the youth of the country have the real determination they will find that it is in their power as it is in nobody else's to kill the system.

English books have taught us to applaud as heroic deeds of daring even of free-hooters, villains, pirates and train-wreckers. Newspapers fill columns with exciting stories real or in their absence, imaginary, of such deeds. Some of us have successfully learnt this art of applauding as heroic anything adventurous irrespective of the motives or contemplated results behind such deeds.

This cannot be regarded as anything but a bad omen. Surely there is nothing heroic about a cold-blooded robbery accompanied by murder of an innocent wealthy pilgrim carrying treasures for distribution in well-conceived charity. There is equally none in the deliberate secret' assassination of an innocent

police officer who has discharged his duty however disagreeable its consequences may be for the community to which the assassin belongs. Let us remember that the administrators of the system have held on to the system in spite of previous assassinations. After all the story of the building of the British Empire is not itself wanting in deeds of valour, adventure and sacrifice worthy in my opinion of a better cause. If we may regard the assassination of Mr. Saunders as a heroic deed the British people would be able to answer this one, I hope, solitary act of so-called heroism with countless such acts enough to fill a volume. But it is time we began irrespective of nationalities to regard deeds with mean motives or meaner consequences with nothing but horror, indignation and disapprobation no matter how daring they may be. I know that this means a new valuation of such terms as heroism, patriotism, religiousness and the like. No one, I hope, regards the assassinations of Presidents Cleveland and Carnot as reflecting any credit upon the assassins or the nations in whose cause the mad men carried out their evil plans. Islam is not better for the assassination of so many Caliphs or to take a modern instance, for the assassination of the late Swami Shradhanandji. Nor has Hinduism been ennobled by the frenzied deeds one occasionally reads about of so-called protectors of the cow. The curse of assassination and kindred crimes is not advancing the progress to humanity, religion or true civilization.

Let the youth of India realize that the death of Lalaji can only be avenged by regaining her freedom. Freedom of a nation cannot be won by solitary acts of heroism even though they may be of the true type, never by heroism so-called. The temple of freedom requires the patient, intelligent and constructive effort of tens of thousands of men and women, young and old. Acts such as we are deploring decidedly retard the progress of this quick building. When it does nothing else, it diverts the attention of countless builders.

*Young India, 27-12-'28, p. 428*

## 15. SWORD V. SPIRIT

A friend sends the following interesting extract from an old number of *My Magazine*.

"No conqueror ever gained more by wars than did Napoleon, Emperor of the French, who beginning as a poor Corsican Lieutenant, for a little while dominated Europe, altering boundaries, upsetting thrones. Yet Napoleon knew that it was folly to rely on force. 'There are only two powers in the world', he said, not after he had been defeated and exiled, but while he appeared to be at the height of his success; 'those powers are the spirit and the sword. In the long run *the sword will always be conquered by the spirit.*'

"But why, we may ask, did Napoleon if he saw so plainly the uselessness of war, continue to make war? Why did he use the sword until it was wrenched out of his hand at Waterloo? Partly because Napoleon, like the rest of us, could not practise what he preached, but partly because other kings and emperors would not let him alone. They were not as wise as he. When he pleaded for peace they would not believe he was sincere. To the Emperor of Austria after a fierce battle he addressed this personal appeal.

" 'Thousands of Frenchmen and Austrians have been killed. The prospect of continuance of such horrors distresses me so greatly that I make a personal appeal to you. Amid grief and surrounded by 15,000 corpses, I implore Your Majesty, I feel bound to give you an urgent warning. You are far from the scene, your heart cannot be so deeply moved as mine is on the spot.

" 'Let us give our generation peace and tranquillity. If the men of the later days are such fools as to come to blows they will learn wisdom after a few years of fighting and will then live at peace with one another.'

"Would that India which through her Congress has subscribed to the policy of non-violence will adhere to it and demonstrate to a world groaning under the curse of the sword that the spirit does triumph over the swords in national affairs as it has ever been shown to have triumphed in individual affairs.

*Young India*, 14-2-'29, p. 49

## 16. THE BOMB AND THE KNIFE

At the back of the bomb thrown in the Assembly by men bearing Hindu names and the knife of Rajpal's assassin bearing Muslim name runs the same philosophy of mad revenge and impotent rage. The bomb throwers have discredited the cause of freedom in whose name they threw the bombs, the user of the knife has discredited Islam in whose name the perpetrator did the mad deed. The Government would be foolish if they became nervous and resort to counter madness. If they are wise, they will perceive that they are in no small measure to blame for the madness of the bomb thrower. By their indifference to popular feeling they are exasperating the nation and the exasperation is bound to lead some astray. Congressmen whose creed is nonviolence will do well not to give even secret approval to the deed but pursue their method with redoubled vigour, if they have real faith in it.

Rajpal's assassination has given him a martyrdom and a name which he did not deserve. He had made full reparation in regard to his pamphlet. He had also already suffered for it. The assassination has brought him posthumous renown. I tender the members of the martyr's family my condolences and hope that neither they nor the Arya Samajists will harbour any ill-will against the Musalmans because of the deed of one mad man amongst them. The assassin will, I expect, in due course pay the last penalty for his deed. It is to be fervently hoped that there will not be a repetition of the sorry scenes one witnessed over the funeral of Abdul Rashid.

Of course the bomb and the knife derive their lease of life from the world's belief in violence as a remedy for securing supposed justice. Organized destruction is no less immoral because it is not a crime in the penal code of nations. The insensate speed with which the nations of the West are hourly forging new weapons of destruction for purposes of war is suffocating the world with the spirit of violence. Little wonder if hot heads of all nations and all faiths should overstep the limits of the penal code even at the risk of their lives. The bomb thrower and the assassin will live on so long as public opinion

of the world tolerates war. But they can always be kept under check if local opinion does not approve of or tolerate their activity.

The bomb is more easily dealt with than the knife. The bomb has no milieu in India. The Government can stop it today if they choose, not by frightfulness but by conceding the national demand gracefully and in time. But that is hoping against hope. For the Government to do so would be a change of heart, not merely of policy. And there is nothing on the horizon to warrant the hope that any such change is imminent.

The hope therefore lies really in the nation, in the Congressmen. In my wanderings I have sensed no belief amongst national workers in methods of violence. I have however missed a living faith in the method of non-violence, I have felt even a want of faith in it. An atmosphere of despair undoubtedly pervades the air. This demoralizing uncertainty disables workers from appreciating to the full the programme prescribed by the National Congress. They do not see that if non-violence is to express itself in national activities for attainment of freedom, the Congress programme is the natural and inevitable outcome. We can to a great extent checkmate the bomb thrower, if we would have faith in our own programme and work for it.

*Young India*, 18-4-'29, p. 124

## 17. THE CULT OF THE BOMB

There is so much violence in the atmosphere immediately surrounding us, politically minded part of India, that a bomb thrown here and a bomb thrown there causes little perturbation and there is even joy over such an event in the hearts of some. If I did not know that this violence was like froth coming to the surface in an agitated liquid, I should probably despair of non-violence succeeding in the near future in giving us the freedom which we are all violently-minded and non-violently-minded people yearning for. Happily I have a certain belief based upon ceaseless experience during my tour in the heart of India for the past twelve months very nearly, that the vast masses who have become conscious of the fact that they must have freedom are untouched by the spirit of violence. In spite therefore of sporadic violent outbursts such as the bomb explosion under the Viceregal train I feel that non-violence for our political battle has come to stay. It is because of my increasing faith in the efficacy of non-violence in political warfare and the possibility of its being practised by masses of people that I propose to reason with those who may not be so much saturated with violence as to be beyond the pale of reason. Let us then think for a moment, what would have happened if the Viceroy had been seriously injured or killed. There certainly would have been no meeting of 23rd ultimo and therefore no certainty as to the course to be adopted by the Congress. That surely would have been, to say the least, an undesirable result. Fortunately for us the Viceroy and his party escaped unhurt, and with great self-possession he went through the day's routine as if nothing had happened. I know that those who have no regard even for the Congress, who hope nothing from it and whose hope lies only through violence, will not be affected by this speculative reasoning. But the others, I hope, will not fail to realize the truth of the argument and to put together several important deductions that can be drawn from the hypothetical case put by me.

Take again the net result of political violence practised in this country. Every time violence has occurred we have lost heavily, that is to say military expenditure has risen. As against this, I am willing to put the Morley-Minto

reforms, the Montagu reforms and the like. But an ever widening circle of politicians is now beginning to realize that they have been like toys given to us against heavy economic burden. Whilst paltry concessions have been made, a few more Indians have found employment under Government, the masses in whose name, and for whose sake, we want freedom, have had to bear greater burdens without having any return whatsoever therefor. If we would only realize that it is not by terrorizing the foreigner that we shall gain freedom, but by ourselves shedding fear and teaching the villager to shed his own fear that we shall gain true freedom, we would at once perceive that violence is suicidal.

Then consider its reaction on ourselves. From violence done to the foreign ruler, violence to our own people whom we may consider to be obstructing the country's progress is an easy natural step. Whatever may have been the result of violent activities in other countries and without reference to the philosophy of non-violence, it does not require much intellectual effort to see that if we resort to violence for ridding society of the many abuses which impede our progress, we shall but add to our difficulties and postpone the day of freedom. The people unprepared for reform because unconvinced of their necessity will be maddened with rage over their coercion, and will seek the assistance of the foreigner in order to retaliate. Has not this been happening before our eyes for the past many years of which we have still painfully vivid recollections?

Take now the positive side of the argument. When, that is in 1920, non-violence came to be part of the Congress creed, the Congress became a transformed body as if by magic. Mass awakening came no one knows how. Even remote villages were stirred. Many abuses seemed to have been swept away. The people became conscious of their power. They ceased to fear authority. The system of *begar* vanished like mist in Almoda and several other parts of India, wherever the people had become awakened to a sense of the power that lay within themselves. Such as it was, it was their freedom that they had attained by their own strength. It was true Swaraj of the masses attained by the masses. If the march of non-violence had not been interrupted by events culminating in Chauri Chaura, I make bold to say that we would have been today in full possession of Swaraj. No one has been found to dispute this

proposition. But many have shaken their heads as they have said, 'But you can't teach non-violence to the masses. It is only possible for individuals and that too in rare cases.' This is, in my opinion, a gross self-deception. If mankind was not habitually non-violent, it would have been self-destroyed ages ago. But in the duel between forces of violence and nonviolence the latter have always come out victorious in the end. The truth is that we have not had patience enough to wait and apply ourselves wholeheartedly to the spread of non-violence among the people as a means for political ends.

We are now entering upon a new era. Our immediate objective and not our distant goal is complete independence. Is it not obvious that if we are to evolve the true spirit of independence amongst the millions, we shall only do so through non-violence and all it implies? It is not enough that we drive out Englishmen by making their lives insecure through secret violence. That would lead not to independence but to utter confusion. We can establish independence only by adjusting our differences through an appeal to the head and the heart, by evolving organic unity amongst ourselves, not by terrorizing or killing those who, we fancy, may impede our march, but by patient and gentle handling, by converting the opponent, we want to offer mass civil disobedience. Everybody owns that it is a certain remedy. Everybody understands that 'civil' here means strictly non-violent, and has it not often been demonstrated that mass civil disobedience is an impossibility without mass nonviolence and without mass discipline? Surely it does not require an appeal to our religious faith to convince us that the necessity of our situation, if nothing else, demands non-violence of the limited type I have indicated. Let those who are not past reason then cease either secretly or openly to endorse activities such as this latest bomb outrage. Rather let them openly and heartily condemn these outrages, so that our deluded patriots may for want of nourishment to their violent spirit realize the futility of violence and the great harm that violent activity has every time done.

*Young India*, 2-1-'30, p. 4

## 18. CONFUSION OF THOUGHT

A correspondent who is an honours graduate and an LL.B., writes:

"To avoid any misunderstanding that this letter may give rise to, I must state at the outset that I am a regular reader of *Young India* and a believer in your invincible creed of non-violence. Your 'cult of the bomb' has been, quite naturally read with great interest in all circles. But many a reader must have felt that your treatment of the subject is rather one-sided. While it is possible to leave one to condemn or praise the cult as his convictions dictate it is perhaps not open even to 'the greatest man living' to presume that the outrage is the work of 'deluded patriots'. You have proceeded and condemned this sad occurrence on this assumption.

"In your enthusiasm to condemn the outrage, as it is against your cherished creed of non-violence, you seem to have neglected to look at the other side of the picture. Can't it be the work of the group which did not like the idea of your interview with the Viceroy and feared lest some good should come out of it? They are the avowed enemies of India and her struggle for freedom. Is it not possible that they by this silly trick wanted to make the Conference impossible, or at any rate create uncalm atmosphere to make sure that amnesty for political prisoners will not come as its result? And then there are 'the Guardians of Law and Order' who want to justify their existence or magnify their importance. Is it impossible that they arranged this dangerous demonstration for their big bellies? May be, it is the work of these or similar people. But your article is bound to strengthen the hands of the Government which will have recourse to repression and violence. You will have, then, by being instrumental in the commission' of violence, committed *himsa*. Besides, you have not a word to say about the policy which is directly responsible for the creation of the cult-of- the-bomb mentality."

This letter shows how even a trained lawyer can become confused when he is obsessed with an idea. The group that would not have liked the interview to

succeed is the very group I had in mind. They are not the avowed enemies of India, but they are 'deluded patriots'. The other group writer refers to could never concoct a plot to assassinate the Viceroy for whose protection they are paid. Of course nothing is impossible, but we can only act on probabilities. Moreover the outrage deserves condemnation even if the plotter was a person belonging to a Government department. The Congress could not pass the incident by without laying itself open to the charge of hypocrisy or criminal indifference about its own creed.

And why am I guilty of participating in violence when I condemn the outrage? Condemnation or no condemnation, the Government would go its own way in trying to find out the guilty parties. I would be participator in violence if I approved of the penal code and its sanctions. If I had my way I would fling open doors of prisons and discharge even murderers. But I know that in holding this opinion, I am in the proud position of being in the minority of one. I must not however take up the valuable time of the reader by discussing my pet theories about crimes and punishments.

The writer pays poor compliment to the party of violence or by whatever name it may be called, when he imputes to them fear of death. They forfeited their lives when they dedicated themselves to their creed. That they keep themselves in hiding does not mean that they fear death, but it means that they want to hang on to life as long as possible so as to carry out their project. They stand in no need of my protection, active or passive. They know that I hold their lives as dear as my own, but they know too that I am a determined enemy of their creed. But my enmity resolves itself into an attempt to convert them to my own. Condemnation of the outrage was a method of conversion. That it may fail in its purpose does not affect it. I must act according to my lights and leave the result to the Higher Power.

Lastly, the writer's complaint that I had not a word to say about the policy that is responsible for the existence of cult of the bomb shows what a superficial reader of *Young India* he must be. He must know that almost every issue of *Young India* contains some condemnation of the Government policy. What

perhaps he means is that I should have said something about it in the very article. Well, it would have been wholly irrelevant, and what is more, my analysis of the doings of the cult would have lost much of its force. The point to be made in the article was that violence was ineffective, no matter how wicked was the policy of the Government.

*Young India*, 6-2-'30, p. 48

## 19. THE CULT OF VIOLENCE

Mr. Peddie's murder and the making of the murderer of Mrs. Curtis a hero at the Sikh League meeting bring but in clear light the tragic fact that the cult of violence has still many votaries. The extolling of murderers is being overdone. If we are to sing the praises of every murderer because the murder has a political motive behind it, we should proceed from praising the deed to the deed itself. The praising of Sajjansingh as a hero raises a doubt in my mind about the wisdom of my having been the author of the Congress resolution about Bhagatsingh. My motive was plain enough. The deed was condemned. The spirit of bravery and sacrifice was praised. The hope behind was that we would thereby be able to distinguish between the deed and the motive, and ultimately learn to detest deeds such as political murders, no matter how high the motive might be. But the effect of the Congress resolution has been perhaps quite the contrary. It seems to have given a passport for extolling murder itself. I repeat my deliberate opinion that whatever may be true of other countries in India at least political murder can only harm the country. This is much more true whilst an experiment on the largest scale yet known to the world is being made to win liberty through strictly peaceful methods. He who runs can see that the experiment has proved its merit beyond all expectation, and is almost on the point of succeeding. I make bold to say that had the experiment not been interrupted by political murders and the violence in thought and less often in speech and still less often in action of civil resisters, India would by this time have been free.

Non-violence is the weapon not of the weak but of the strong. Non-violence means forgiving an injury and not retaliating. 'Forgiveness is an ornament of the strong\*', says a Sanskrit proverb. Yudhishtira gave an exhibition of this quality when he even though provoked beyond measure by Virata not only forgave him but took extraordinary measures to protect him against the wrath of his brother Arjuna who would but for those precautions have killed him for insulting and injuring the great King Yudhishtira.

Non-violence is not a mechanical performance. It is the finest quality of the heart and comes by training. When it comes, it seems, because it is, natural, and the possessor wonders that it should have cost any trouble at all in its attainment. What can be more natural than to return blow for blow, says the beast in us. What can be more natural or more human than that we should return a blow with forgiveness, says the man in us. He who gave the blow was ignorant and forgot himself. Why should the injured person betray ignorance and forget himself? Are the many wives who suffer the brutalities of their brutal husbands more than human because they forgive their husbands? They would of course do better if they would not add pampering to their forgiveness and would withdraw cooperation from their husbands for the latter's own sakes. But let me not get into deeper waters. Those who profess non-violence should realize their strength and be non-violent in thought, word and deed. Let those, who still doubt the efficacy of the non-violent method and are not sure of that of the violent method, ponder over the following:

1. India's millions have no tradition of the violent method.
2. They, the villagers, have never been known to have combined on any large scale to use the violent method.
3. They have no definite idea as yet of political freedom in terms of India as one country.
4. Whereas in Europe the people have gained their freedom by the violent method, the people were more or less trained in the use of arms.
5. They, the peoples of Europe, gained their freedom by being able to use greater violence than the enthroned authority.
6. It is at least doubtful if they, not excluding the English, have got real freedom. The masses there still feel that they are being ground down by the moneyed classes who have the reins of Government in their hands. Look at their varied problems ever increasing in perplexity.

7. In India on the other hand we know that it is through the non-violent method alone that the phenomenal mass consciousness, including the awakening of women, has come into being.
8. We know as a proved fact that where the people erred and became violent, they lost ground, became demoralized and were cowed down.

If I were to give more thought to the past twelve months I could elaborate the list. But as it is, it is perhaps enough for my purpose.

To those who have settled convictions in favour of the violent method, I say: 'You will give me the same credit that you claim for yourselves for love of the country. If so, you should accept my testimony that by mixing your method with mine you protect the agony. The belief which, I know, some of you have that an occasional murder of an official helps the cause is wholly unfounded. On the contrary I know that every murder has hampered me in my pursuit. I know that you are as anxious as I am, you will probably say you are more anxious than I am, for the release of all political prisoners. You must admit that the terrorist method can only retard their discharge. Constituted as this Government is, all Governments are, they will not discharge political offenders convicted of violence when political violence takes place. All things considered, therefore, you will do well to listen to my advice and request, and suspend your activities whilst the nation is giving a trial to my experiment.'

*Young India*, 16-4-'31, p. 75

1. क्षमा वीरस्य भूषणम्।

## 20. 'ONE OF THE MANY' (?)

The open letter written by 'One of the Many' is the late Sukhdev's letter. Sjt. Sukhdev was Sardar Bhagatsingh's comrade. The letter was delivered to me after his death. Want of time prevented me from giving the letter earlier publication. It is printed without any alteration.\*

The writer is not 'one of the many'. Many do not seek the gallows for political freedom. However condemnable political murder may be, it is not possible to withhold recognition of the love of the country and the courage which inspire such awful deeds. And let us hope that the cult of political assassination is not growing. If the Indian experiment succeeds, as it is bound to, the occupation of the political assassin will be gone for ever. At any rate I am working in that faith.

The writer does me less than justice when he says that I have made no more than sentimental appeals to the revolutionaries to call off their movement, and I claim on the contrary that I have given them hard facts which, though they have been often repeated in these columns, will bear recapitulation:

1. The revolutionary activity has not brought us near our goal.
2. It has added to the military expenditure in the country.
3. It has given rise to reprisals on the part of the Government without doing any good.
4. Whenever revolutionary murder has taken place, it has for a time and in that place demoralized the people.
5. It has in no way contributed to mass awakening.
6. Its effect on the masses has been doubly bad in that they had to bear the burden ultimately of additional expense and the indirect effect of Government wrath.
7. Revolutionary murder cannot thrive in the Indian soil, Indian tradition, as history teaches us, being unfavourable to the growth of political violence.

8. If the revolutionaries seek to convert the masses to their method, we would have to wait for an indefinitely long time for it to permeate the masses and then to gain freedom.
9. If the method of violence ever becomes popular, it is bound to recoil, as it has done in other countries on our own heads.
10. The revolutionaries have an ocular demonstration of the efficacy of the opposite method, i.e. non-violence which has gone on in spite of sporadic cases of violence on their part and in spite even of violence occasionally done by the so-called votaries of non-violence.
11. Revolutionaries should accept my testimony when I tell them that their activity has not only not done any good to the movement of non-violence, but it has on the contrary harmed the cause. In other words, if I had a completely peaceful atmosphere we would have gained our end already.

These, I claim, are hard facts and no appeal to sentiment. But the writer further objects to my making public appeals to the party and suggests that thereby I help the bureaucracy to crush the movement. Surely the bureaucracy is in no need of my help to deal with the movement. It fights for life both against the revolutionary and me. It scents more danger from the non-violent movement than from the violent. It knows how to deal with the latter. It is baffled by the former which has already shaken it to its foundations.

Moreover, authors of political murder count the cost before they enter upon their awful career. No action of mine can possibly worsen their fate.

And seeing that the revolutionary party must work in secret, I have no other way open to me but that of making public appeals to its unknown members. I may say parenthetically that my public appeals have not altogether fallen on deaf ears. I count many past revolutionaries among my co-workers.

The open letter complains that prisoners other than satyagrahis have not been released. I have explained in these pages the reasons why it was impossible to insist on the release of the other prisoners. Personally, I want the release of all of them. I would make every effort to secure their release. I am aware that

some of them ought to have been discharged long ago. The Congress has a resolution in that behalf. Sjt. Nariman has been appointed by the Working Committee to collect all names. As soon as he has got the list, steps will be taken to secure their release. But those who are out must help by preventing revolutionary murder. We may not have the cake and also eat it. Of course there are political prisoners who should be discharged in any case. I can only give the assurance to all concerned that the delay is due not to want of will but to want of ability. Let it be also remembered that when the final settlement comes, if it does, in the course of a few months, all political prisoners must be discharged. If it does not come, those who are trying to secure the release of the other political prisoners will find themselves in prison.

*Young India*, 23-4-'31, p. 84

\*Omitted from this Collection.

## 21. THE TRUTH ABOUT THAT RESOLUTION

(Originally appeared under the title "My Faith")

A Bengali correspondent who gives his name and address even for publication if necessary has written a long letter which I condense as follows:

"Much has been said about Bhagatsingh and his comrades yet even now I find great difficulty in appreciating the wisdom of passing the resolution at the Karachi Congress.

"I am afraid it will not be possible for me to explain to you properly the different peculiar and surreptitious ways in which your remarks about Bhagatsingh and the Karachi Resolution extolling him are being exploited here by some interested politicians to serve their own purpose and undermine your influence.

"1. They accuse you for the niggardly way in which the resolution had been worded by you. These people are trying to impress upon the minds of the young men that you really had no sincere sympathy for those unfortunate men and that you gave your support to the resolution and expressed your admiration for Bhagatsingh and his comrades only being prevailed upon by the Navajuvanwallas, whose strong agitation you could not resist, and you wanted to placate Pandit Jawaharlal.

"2. They question your integrity and sincerity and try to belittle you (and your cause) by surreptitiously propagating an idea that while you gave your active support to the resolution about Bhagatsingh at Karachi you severely criticized the late Deshabandhu Das or his responsibility in carrying out an exactly similar resolution at Faridpur Conference praising Gopinath Saha who lost his life on the gallows under exactly similar circumstances; and in this they say you are not immune from provincial bias. They are taking every opportunity to undermine your influence in Bengal by appealing to the sentiment of local patriotism. They say that many Bengal youths sacrificed their lives even within this very year for

the same cause for which Bhagatsingh and his comrades died. Among those who thus died in Bengal there were Benoy Bose and his comrades, there were the Chittagong raiders—the twenty-one lads, who died fighting bravely against the British troops on the Jalalabad Hills whose deeds were much more courageous and romantic than you would imagine, but how strange— you did not find romance there—not a word of sympathy passed from your lips! The insidious appeal made to their sentiment of local patriotism easily estranges them from you and your path of non-violence."

I have already expressed my doubts as to the propriety of my having drafted and sponsored the Bhagatsingh resolution not because it was wrong in principle but for the misinterpretation it has lent itself to. But the reader must know that it was neither the fear of the Navajuvans nor my love for Pandit Jawaharlal that prompted me to initiate the resolution. Not that I should be ashamed of yielding to Navajuvans or placating Jawaharlal. I should be foolish if I did not yield to Navajuvans, if yielding advanced the interest of the country and involved no sacrifice of principle. And I should go a very long way to please Jawaharlal and retain his affection which I have the privilege of possessing in abundance. But there was no prompting required in this case. I had interested myself in the movement for the commutation of the death sentence on Bhagatsingh and his comrades. I had put my whole being into the task. I had therefore to study the life of the principal actor in the tragedy. I had to come in contact with his devoted father and those who were attached to Bhagatsingh not for his deed but for his character. I was thus drawn to the resolution in the natural course. I am too sensitive not to be moved by circumstances demanding sympathy.

Therefore had I found myself impelled to interest myself in any of the Bengali youths and had fancied myself in possession of influence which I could exercise in their behalf, I should have with equal zest plunged myself into their case. I regard myself as incapable of having any provincial bias. Bengal is as dear to me as the Punjab. And I owe a special debt to Bengal for the inspiration it gave

me in my youth. It is true that Deshabandhu and I differed as to the emphasis in the matter of Gopinath Saha resolution.

I do not know that my resolution on Gopinath Saha differed in substance from the Karachi Resolution. But the reader should know that whatever our differences, Deshabandhu and I always remained friends. Indeed towards the end of his all too short life, we came much nearer each other even in our ideals and methods of working towards them.

I should therefore be sorry to discover that there was any secret propaganda against me in Bengal. I have many precious coworkers in Bengal. I want the number to grow.

I know the value of the co-operation of the youth of Bengal. I need it for their sakes, for the sake of the country they love so well, but sometimes, alas, blindly. They must not by their unwarranted prejudice deny themselves the service of a true friend. If I have any influence over the youth of the country, it is a treasure I want to use for gaining the freedom of the motherland. I am therefore glad that my correspondent has given me the opportunity of stating my position. But whether I retain my hold on the youth of Bengal or any other province or I do not, I must proclaim my creed from the house-top. Freedom of India's starving millions is attainable only through Truth and Ahimsa.

*Young India*, 11-6-'31, p. 139

## 22. THE GARLICK MURDER

This murder in Bengal of a judge who was performing his duty according to his lights is a disgrace to the perpetrators. We may not wonder at the agitation that has troubled the European community in Calcutta and elsewhere. The young men who delight in murdering those whom they dislike, no matter from how patriotic motive, do not advance the cause they claim to espouse. And murders planned by secret societies make everyone in their immediate neighbourhood a suspect. Indeed one murder of a European official affects the atmosphere in the whole of India.

It is the duty of every person who sincerely dislikes these murders to express his strong disapproval of such acts, and wherever he can find the followers of the cult of murder, reason with its members and non-co-operate with them if they do not listen. Satyagraha is no respecter of persons. Given a correct atmosphere, satyagraha can be far more effectively used against our own friends than against those who regard us as their enemies. The nearer the relation, the more effective does satyagraha become.

We must realize that any toleration or indifference shown towards these activities will not only postpone Swaraj, but will make Swaraj Government difficult, if not impossible. For, whilst it may be possible for an over-armed alien Government to carry on administration in spite of the activities of murderous secret societies, an administration, based purely on popular will, cannot be efficiently conducted in the midst of murderous activities. There is no warrant to suppose, that if the idea that it is right to murder officials or persons whom we dislike becomes popular, it will subside the moment we gain Swaraj. From even the most selfish considerations therefore, it is necessary for lovers of real freedom to put forth their best endeavour to check this evil before it becomes too late.

I have had it whispered to me, that violence going on side by side with non-violence must help the latter. As the author of the non-violent programme and as an expert in the line, let me proclaim with all the strength of conviction that

it is a serious delusion to think that violence can help non-violence. On this matter my evidence based on long experience should be regarded as conclusive. I can assert that every act of political violence injures the non-violent movement. Everyone knows how it unnerves me. What has been called the Bardoli blunder and what I claim as an act of first class wisdom was due to an ugly outbreak of violence on the part of professing Congressmen at Chauri Chaura. But for the postponement of civil disobedience at the time, the country would not have made the phenomenal progress it has made. Let everyone concerned understand that if this contagion of murder spreads, without my wishing it or doing it, the active non-violent movement may automatically suffer a check. Like everything in nature it has its own law to govern it.

It may not be amiss here to examine the resentment caused in European circles over my article on the attempted assassination of His Excellency the Acting Governor of Bombay. The resentment was caused by my making a distinction between the murder of a guest by a host and any other murder. I thought that I had made my meaning quite clear. I heightened the sinfulness of the act because of the additional fact that Sir Ernest Hotson was a guest of the college. Of course every murder is sinful and deserving of condemnation. But there are surely degrees of guilt even about these acts. And it has often happened before now that some special ugliness about such acts has stirred the conscience of those concerned and arrested the growth of the disease. It was with that object in view that I drew the distinction and pointed out the gravity of murderous acts. I know as a matter of fact that the article has affected some of those whom it was intended to influence. I ask my European critics to be patient with me. I understand their irritation. But they will not improve the situation by losing their balance and suspecting where there is no ground for suspicion.

*Young India*, 6-8-'31, p. 203

23

FOUL PLAY

I

The worst feature of the attempted assassination of Sir Ernest Hotson the Acting Governor of the Bombay Presidency was, that the act was done by a student of the college which had invited His Excellency when as its honoured guest he was being shown round the college premises. It was as though a host was injuring his guest under his own roof. The canon recognized throughout the world is that the deadliest enemy, when he is under one's roof as guest, is entitled to protection from all harm. The act of the student was therefore essentially foul play without a single redeeming feature.

For the Acting Governor it was a providential escape, and it was fortunate for India and more so for the student world. I tender my congratulations to Sir Ernest Hotson as also to the nation.

It would be well if the believers in violence will take a lesson from this happy tragedy—happy because no one has suffered but the assailant.

Has he suffered, is he suffering, or is he deluding himself with the belief that he is a hero? Let this event be a warning for the students. After all a school or a college is a sanctuary where there should be nothing that is base or unholy. Schools and colleges are factories for the making of character. Parents send their boys and girls to them so that they may become good men and women. It would be an evil day for the nation, if every student is suspected as a would-be assassin capable of treachery.

The Bhagatsingh worship has done and is doing incalculable harm to the country. Bhagatsingh's character about which I had heard so much from reliable sources, the intimate connection I had with the attempts that were being made to secure commutation of the death sentence carried me away and identified me with the cautious and balanced resolution passed at Karachi. I regret to observe that the caution has been thrown to the winds. The deed itself is being

worshipped as if it was worthy of emulation. The result is *goondaism* and degradation wherever this mad worship is being performed.

The Congress is a power in the land, but I warn Congressmen that it will soon lose all its charm if they betray their trust and encourage the Bhagatsingh cult whether in thought, word or deed. If the majority do not believe in the Congress *policy* of non-violence and truth, let them have the first article altered. Let us understand the distinction between policy and creed. A policy may be changed, a creed cannot. But either is as good as the other whilst it is held. Those therefore who hold non-violence only as a policy may not, without exposing themselves to the charge of dishonourable conduct, use the Congress membership as a cover for violence. I cannot get rid of the conviction, that the greatest obstacle to our progress towards Swaraj is our want of faith in our policy. Let this fortunate failure of attempted assassination open our eyes.

'But look at the Governor's black record. Does not the doer himself say he shot because of the Sholapur deeds, because he superseded an Indian and became Acting Governor?' some hasty youths or even grown up people will argue. My answer is: We knew all this when in 1920 we settled the Congress policy of non-violence and truth. There were, within our knowledge at the time, deeds much blacker than his worst enemies have imputed to Sir Ernest Hotson. The Congress deliberately and after full debate came to the conclusion in 1920, that the answer to the vile and violent deeds of the Government was not greater violence on our part, but that it was profitable for us to answer violence with nonviolence and vileness with truth. The Congress saw further, that the worst administrators were not bad inherently, but that they were a fruit of the system of which they were willing or unwilling victims. We saw too that the system corrupted even the best from among ourselves. And so we evolved a policy of non-violent action that should destroy the system. Ten years' experience has shown that the policy of non-violence and truth though followed halfheartedly has answered phenomenally well, and that we are very near the harbour. The record of Sir Ernest Hotson, however bad it may be, is wholly irrelevant and can in no way extenuate, much less excuse the double

crime of attempted assassination and treachery. The reported hostile demonstration by some students has made the ugly affair uglier still. I hope, that the students and the teachers throughout India will seriously bestir themselves and put the educational house in order. And in my opinion, it is the peremptory duty of the forthcoming meeting of the All-India Congress Committee to condemn the treacherous outrage and reiterate its policy in unequivocal terms.

One word to the Government and the administrators. Retribution and repression will not do. These violent outbreaks are portents. They may judge those who are immediately guilty. But they can deal with the disease only by dealing with the cause. If they have neither the will nor the courage to do so, let them leave the rest to the nation. It has progressed past repression and retribution. It will deal with violence in its own ranks in its own way. Any Government action in excess of the demands of the common law will simply intensify the madness, and make the task of believers in non-violence more difficult than it already is.

*Young India*, 30-7-'31, p. 195

## II

(Originally appeared under the title "The Other Side")

Under the above mentioned heading a correspondent has written a long letter, protesting against my condemnation, of the attempt made by a student of the Fergusson College on the life of the Acting Governor of Bombay. I give below a very much condensed summary of the letter:

"I was extremely pained to read your note in the last issue of *Navajivan* under the heading "madness" (*gandpan*), I must at the very outset make it clear, that I have been a non-violent non-co-operator since 1921, and accept the Congress creed of non-violence by faith as farthest as possible, and as a policy in exceptional circumstances alone, such as the molestation of the honour of women or of the National Flag. True non-violence is possible even in the most provoking circumstances as long as

these two are not in actual danger. But whenever women are molested or the National Flag is dishonoured, I fear my non-violence will melt away, and if it does not, it would be so not out of any merit in me, but on most occasions owing to the weakness of the flesh and on exceptional occasions only, on account of studious self-restraint. I was, if I can say so with modesty, the first to start the idea of offering civil disobedience to the Martial Law at Sholapur and suffer imprisonment after actual disobedience. This much by way of personal explanation.

"It is, in my opinion, no use denouncing one who is almost in the jaws of death. He deserves pity if anything. Violence in action is a merit or demerit, which can neither prosper by mere public praise however great, as it is a question of life and death; nor can it be wiped out by the strongest public denunciation or by Government repression, or by both, as it is the outcome of rebelling emotions. Those who fear not the gallows will not be daunted by public opinion. Virtue or vice, it is exceptional bursting out only after severest repression or molestation of women; it can be wiped out permanently, only if the rulers mend their ways or end themselves.

"We may justly wish to remain safe and unhurt till doomsday, only if we are virtuous and sin-fearing; but what right have we, after committing the most heinous of sins, to feel pain for treachery practised against us? And especially when we have blocked all open, honest, honourable, untreacherous ways of revenge? The glory of no country however great, not even of India lies in meekly suffering injustice, *zulum* and beastly atrocities. 'Nothing is unfair in love and war', is a general maxim, and it is the truer, in the case of unequal parties, for the weaker.

"Now the philosophy of hosts and guests, whose guest was Mr. Hotson? Of the Fergusson College? Surely of the Principal, and professors too; but never of the unwilling students. Were the students consulted before inviting such a worthy guest? Was not the Prince of Wales too a guest of the Indian Government and consequently, by the same argument, of

India? But how was he welcomed? Sjt. Gogate in this case therefore is the last to be blamed for not having extraordinary self-restraint; the real responsibility or irresponsibility is of Sjt. Mahajani, and the real offender or rather the real instigator of the offence is the Acting Governor, who ought to be advised to behave better.

"I appreciate the courageous presence of mind shown by the Acting Governor, as well as the extraordinary coolness with which just after the unsuccessful outrage he told Sjt. Gogate, 'That was a foolish thing to do, my boy,' and inquired, 'What made you do a thing like that?' But this generous and seemingly affectionate mood of the Acting Governor was very short-lived. Had it been courageously preserved by him a little longer, leaving Sjt. Gogate to himself as if nothing unusual had happened, what a dramatic effect it would have produced on the revolutionary mentality in the country? The Acting Governor always under the protection of his A.D.C. and the military guards, needs not fear foolish things done by stray Gogates. The time is not yet done. Trust begets trust. Forgiveness melts bitterest enmity. But the forgiveness must be of the strong, never of the weak. The Acting Governor is the right man to make a beginning in this direction. But the signs of the times clearly show that there is very little chance that good sense will prevail."

As this note is being written on board the s.s. *Rajputana*, it will therefore be printed three weeks after it is written.-The subject matter being unfortunately an evergreen, the note need not be considered stale. It is very much to be feared, that the correspondent represents a mentality prevailing amongst many students. But the attitude is all the more poisonous and harmful, because it is honestly held. It is contrary to experience to say, as the correspondent says, that emotional youth will act on the spur of the moment irrespective of the atmosphere surrounding them. There is no doubt about their reckless bearing, but I refuse to believe, that they are so devoid of pride as to be wholly indifferent to praise or blame. I am quite certain that if they knew that their

acts would be universally condemned, they would never throw away their precious lives. I have no doubt therefore in my mind, that it is the duty of every one who realizes the immense wrong done to the cause by such deeds to condemn them unequivocally. It, is altogether misleading to hold the Acting Governor responsible either for the Sholapur Martial Law or the acts done under it. It is the system that is at fault. The Congress therefore having realized the central fact is trying to assassinate the system, and not the helpless administrators. Even if an angel was put to administer the system based upon the exploitation of a vast country like India by a powerful corporation, that angel would plead helplessness, and on due occasions do exactly what the Acting Governor did. The ten-headed Havana was no human monster, but it was the system personified in Ravana, who had new heads popping up as soon as the old ones were cut off. It was only when Rama's attention was drawn to the root from which the heads sprang up, that he was able effectively to deal with Ravana.

We have had many assassinations, and in the place of each official assassinated another has been posted, and the system has gone on as merrily as ever. But if we once succeed in dealing with the root of the mischief, we shall have no more repetitions of Sholapur and the distasteful hangings. So far therefore at the condemnation of the many wrongs which rankle in the youthful breasts is concerned, I would be just as strong as they are in condemning them. Let them leave aside all specious reasoning and join hands with the Congress in destroying the system. The way of assassination of persons gives it a new lease of life. The war of non-violence, shortens its life, and if it can be completely assimilated, it ensures complete eradication of the system. Let those who argue like the correspondent remember, that the cult of assassination, if it is not checked in its progress, will recoil on our own heads, and our last state may be worse than the first. Let us not run the very grave danger of reviving the system under a new garb. The same system administered by brown men instead of white men will work the same havoc as now, if not 'infinitely greater.

*Young India*, 24-9-'31, p. 271

## 24. ACCUMULATING EVIDENCE

A man reaps as he sows. Having written on Violence, I am getting evidence from all parts of India supporting my statement. The saddest case to come under my observation is that of a Congress Committee having incited the ryots of a *Zamindari* simply to take possession of the lands of that *zamindari*. This act of spoliation was preceded by speeches of Congressmen reeking with violence. I sent the papers to Dr. Patabhi Sitaramayya for investigation. He confirms generally the complaints made by my correspondent. I am hoping that the District Committee or the Provincial Committee will be able to right the wrong. Failing that, of course, Rajaji's Government has to give redress. In saying this I do not wish to suggest that the land does not belong to the worker on it. I endorse the socialist theory of possession. But no socialist that I know has defended the usurpation practised in Andhra. If all the land in India is ever to belong to or be possessed by the worker alone, it would be either by a bloody revolution or by equitable legislation. It must be clear to every sane man that the act of confiscation will never last. Had it not been for the Congress Government, the spoliation could never have taken place. The Congress Government will dig its grave if it fails to restore the land to the legal possessor. I may add in parenthesis that the dispossessed *zamindar* is reputed to be a docile man with pro-Congress tendencies.

The other piece of evidence is choice cuttings from the U.P, C.R and Bombay Press. The singularity of the U.P cuttings is that they contain incitement to violence in poems and prose. A lady writer waxes eloquent over the misdeeds of the *zamindars* and the wrongs of the *Kisans*. She draws a terrible contrast between the opulence of the haves and the penury of the have-nots. Having prepared the ground she invites the *kisans* to a feast of blood and thunder. "Take any weapon you get hold of, strike and strike hard. Don't be cowards. It is all yours and you must seize it by your powerful arms." This is a mild rendering, all too brief, of the red original. Had not the lady's name stared me in the face as writer, I would not have thought a daughter of India to be capable of

incitement to such merciless violence. I must confess that even if I screw myself up properly I could not fill the three columns that she has done with invective. If no one has had his head turned by the writing it is certainly not her fault. Fortunately the millions to whom it is addressed cannot read.

The C.E and Bombay cuttings contain unthinkable falsehoods. There is no restraint on the pen. No language is foul enough to blacken the character of persons. Some of the things said are patent inventions. The writings easily come under the law of libel. But what can libel proceedings do? They invite libel proceedings. These advertise the papers. Defence would be an additional opportunity for invention. There are veiled incitements too. And even without incitement, why should not youths reading the portraiture of persons in blackest colours take it into their heads to go and kill the 'lepers' described in the columns? To many their newspapers are their Bible. They believe in them. And some of these papers are supposed to represent the Congress policy. The evil is on the increase during the Congress regime. It is well that what was inside is now coming out. But this is not civil liberty; it is criminal licence. Swaraj will not come by way of falsehoods and violence. And we shall do a double wrong if we do all these things in the name of truth and non-violence. I adhere to the advice I have tendered to the Congress and Congressmen.

*Harijan, 17-9-'33, p. 259*

## 25. THE LONDON ASSASSINATION

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the above title)

Further details that have come through the Press of the assassination of Sir Michael O'Dwyer and the attempted assassination of Lord Zetland, Lord Lamington and Sir Louis Dane confirm my opinion that it was a work of insanity. It is nonetheless reprehensible on that account. We had our differences with Sir Michael O'Dwyer, but that should not prevent us from being grieved over his assassination or condoling with Lady O'Dwyer and her family. I would like every Indian patriot to share with me the shame of the act and the joy that the lives of the three distinguished Englishmen were saved. We have our grievance against Lord Zetland. We must fight his reactionary policy. But there should be no malice or vindictiveness in our resistance. The papers tell us that the accused acted with amused nonchalance when he faced the court and the spectators. This does not command my admiration. It is to me a sure sign of continuing insanity. The accused is intoxicated with the thought of his bravery. I have known drunken men act with a recklessness of which they would be incapable in a sober state. I understand that extra rum is issued to soldiers who are sent to specially hazardous tasks. What am I to praise, the rum or its after-effects? The word assassin owes its origin to the hasheesh that was administered to the would-be assassins in order to deaden their conscience. This continuing insanity of the accused should fill us with pity and grief. If we are to fight fairly and squarely, we must, as far as is humanly possible, make every Englishman feel that he is as safe in our midst as he is in his own home. It fills me with shame and sorrow that for some time at least every Indian face in London will be suspect. Is it not possible for us all to realize that the masses will never mount to freedom through murder? I would like every reader of these lines to know that every such act harms our non-violent struggle, and therefore to dissociate himself in the secret of his heart and openly from such acts of insanity.

*Harijan, 23-3-'40, p. 56*

## 26. GURU GOVIND SINGH

### I

(From "For the Sikh Friends")

As to what I am supposed to have said about Guru Govind Singh, I can only repeat what I have said about, the charge that I have no recollection whatsoever of having made the remark attributed to me. Whoever brings the charge should at least refer me to the passage in question in my writings. I have searched in vain. What is however more to the point is to know what I think about Guru Govind Singh. I have the highest regard for him. The popular belief is that it was he who gave the sword to the Khalsa. I have believed that to the extent that he did so he departed from the non-violence of his predecessors. This is not the place to examine or question the justification for the Great Guru's step. A learned Sikh friend tells me that he could show that Guru Govind Singh never departed from the teachings of the preceding Gurus on non-violence. But such proof may have an academic value. The common belief as I have understood it among the Sikhs is that Guru Govind Singh accepted resort to the sword in well-defined circumstances as quite valid. Be that as it may, there never was the slightest disrespect on my part for the great Guru or the Sikh *Panth*. Indeed among the *bhajans* sung at the Ashram prayers there are several of Guru Nanak's.

*Harijan*, 5-7-'42, p. 209

### II

At last after diligent search Mahadev Desai and others have traced the writing in which I have referred to Guru Govind Singh. It appears in *Young India* of 9th April 1925. It is headed "My Friend the Revolutionary". I would commend it to my Sikh friends and, for that matter, others the whole of the article. It is reasonable and they will profit by it whether they accept or reject the views propounded in it. Here I must content myself with only relevant extracts from that article. Here they are:

"One of your objections against the revolutionaries is that their movement is not mass-movement, consequently the mass at large will be very little benefited by the revolution, for which we are preparing. That is indirectly saying that we shall be most benefited by it. Is it really what you mean to say? Do you believe that those persons who are ever ready to die for their country—those mad lovers of their country—I mean the revolutionaries of India in whom the spirit of *Nishkama karma* reigns, will betray their motherland and secure privileges for a life— this trifling life? It is true that we will not drag the mass just now in the field of action, because we know that it is weak; but when the preparation is complete we shall call them in the open field. We profess to understand the present Indian psychology full well, because we daily get the chance of weighing our brethren along with ourselves. We know that the mass of India is after all Indian, it is not weak by itself but there is want of efficient leaders; so when we have begot the number of leaders required by constant propaganda and preaching, and the arms, we shall not shrink from calling, and if necessary, dragging the mass in the open field to prove that they are the descendants of Shivaji, Ranjit, Pratap and Govind Singh. Besides we have been constantly preaching that the mass is not for the revolution but the revolution is for the mass. Is it sufficient to remove your prejudice in this connection?"

I neither say nor imply that the revolutionary benefits if the masses do not. On the contrary, and as a rule, the revolutionary never benefits in the ordinary sense of the word. If the revolutionaries succeed in attracting, not 'dragging', the masses to them, they will find that the murderous campaign is totally unnecessary. It sounds very pleasant and exciting to talk of 'the descendants of Shivaji, Ranjit, Pratap and Govind Singh'. But is it true? Are we all descendants of these heroes in the sense in which the writer understands it? We are their countrymen, but their descendants are the military classes. We may in future be able to obliterate caste, but today it persists, and therefore the claim put up by the writer cannot in my opinion be sustained.

"Last of all, I shall ask you to answer these questions: Was Guru Govind Singh a misguided patriot because he believed in warfare for noble cause? What will you like to say about Washington, Garibaldi and Lenin? What do you think of Kemal Pasha and De Valera? Would you like to call Shivaji and Pratap well-meaning and sacrificing physicians who prescribed arsenic when they should have given fresh grape-juice? Will you like to call Krishna Europeanized because he believed also in the *vinasha of dushkritas*?"

This is a hard or rather awkward question. But I dare not shirk it. In the first instance Guru Govind Singh and others whose names are mentioned did not believe in secret murder. In the second, these patriots knew their work and their men, whereas the modern Indian revolutionary does not know his work. He has not the men, he has not the atmosphere, that the patriots mentioned had. Though my views are derived from my theory of life I have not put them before the nation on that ground. I have based my opposition to the revolutionaries on the sole ground of expedience. Therefore, to compare their activities with those of Guru Govind Singh or Washington or Garibaldi or Lenin would be most misleading and dangerous. But by test of the theory of non-violence I do not hesitate to say that it is highly likely that, had I lived as their contemporary and in the respective countries, I would have called every one of them a misguided patriot, even though a successful and brave warrior. As it is, I must not judge them. I disbelieve history so far as details of acts of heroes are concerned. I accept broad facts of history and draw up my own lessons for my conduct. I do not want to repeat it in so far as the broad facts contradict the highest laws of life. But I positively refuse to judge men from the scanty material furnished to us by history. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Kemal Pasha and De Valera too I cannot judge. For me as a believer in non-violence out and out they cannot be my guides in life so far as their faith in war is concerned. But I believe in Krishna perhaps more than the writer. But my Krishna is the Lord of the universe, the creator, preserver and destroyer of us all. He may destroy because He creates. But I must not be drawn into a philosophical or religious argument with my friends. I have not the qualifications for teaching my

philosophy of life. I have barely qualifications for practising the philosophy I believe. I am but a poor struggling soul yearning to be wholly good—wholly truthful and wholly non-violent in thought, word and deed, but ever failing to reach the ideal which I know to be true. I admit, and assure my revolutionary friends, it is a painful climb, but the pain of it is a positive pleasure for me. Each step upward makes me feel stronger and fit for the next. But all that pain and pleasure are for me. The revolutionaries are at liberty to reject the whole of my philosophy. To them I merely present my own experiences as a co-worker in the same cause even as I have successfully presented them to the Ali Brothers and many other friends. They can and do applaud whole-heartedly the action of Mustafa Kemal Pasha and possibly De Valera and Lenin. But they realize with me that India is not like Turkey or Ireland or Russia and that revolutionary activity is suicidal at this stage of the country's life at any rate if not for all time, in a country so vast, so hopelessly divided and with the masses so deeply sunk in pauperism and so fearfully terror-struck.

I reverted to the same subject in another article written a short time after, from which I need take only the following lines: "My belief about the Sikh Gurus is that they were deeply religious teachers and reformers, that they were all Hindus, that Guru Govind Singh was one of the greatest defenders of Hinduism. I believe too that he drew the sword in its defence. But I cannot judge his actions nor can I use him as my model so far as his resort to the sword is concerned."

It must be clear even to him who runs that I never applied the word 'misguided patriot' to the Great Guru and that I have not written a word in disrespect or of which I have any reason to be ashamed or to repent. I abide by every word I have said in that article. I hope that now that the source of the mischief has been traced it will abate entirely and the Sikhs will count me, though a humble Hindu, as a fellow devotee of the *Panth*.

Sevagram, 4-7-'42

*Harijan*, 12-7-42, p. 219

## SECTION TWO: SOUL-FORCE OR SATYAGRAHA

### PART I: SATYAGRAHA AS A FORCE

#### 27. SATYAGRAHA

##### I

(From the statement submitted by Gandhiji to the Hunter Committee)

For the past thirty years I have been preaching and practising satyagraha. The principles of satyagraha, as I know today, constitute a gradual evolution.

Satyagraha differs from passive resistance as North Pole from South. The latter has been conceived as a weapon of the weak and does not exclude the use of physical force or violence for the purpose of gaining one's end, whereas the former has been conceived as a weapon of the strongest and excludes the use of violence in any shape or form.

The term satyagraha was coined by me in South Africa to express the force that the Indians there used for full eight years and it was coined in order to distinguish it from the movement then going on in the United Kingdom and South Africa under the name of passive resistance.

Its root meaning is holding on to truth, hence truth-force. I have also called it love-force or soul-force. In the application of satyagraha I discovered in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be truth to the one may appear to be error to the other. And patience means self-suffering. So the doctrine came to mean vindication of truth not by infliction of suffering on the opponent but on one's self.

But on the political field the struggle on behalf of the people mostly consists in opposing error in the shape of unjust laws.

When you have failed to bring the error home to the law-giver by way of petitions and the like, the only remedy open to you, if you do not wish to submit to error, is to compel him by physical force to yield to you or by suffering in your own person by inviting the penalty for the breach of the law. Hence satyagraha largely appears to the public as civil disobedience or civil resistance. It is civil in the sense that it is not criminal.

The law-breaker breaks the law surreptitiously and tries to avoid the penalty; not so the civil resister. He ever obeys the laws of the State to which he belongs not out of fear of the sanctions but because he considers them to be good for the welfare of society. But there come occasions, generally rare, when he considers certain laws to be so unjust as to render obedience to them a dishonour. He then openly and civilly breaks them and quietly suffers the penalty for their breach. And in order to register his protest against the action of the law-givers, it is open to him to withdraw his co-operation from the State by disobeying such other laws whose breach does not involve moral turpitude.

In my opinion the beauty and efficacy of satyagraha are so great and the doctrine so simple that it can be preached even to children. It was preached by me, to thousands of men, women and children commonly called indentured Indians with excellent results.

*Young India*, 14-1-'20, p. 5



(From the examination of Gandhiji by Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, a member of the Hunter Committee)

*Sir Chimanlal:* With regard to your satyagraha doctrine, so far as I understand it, it involves the pursuit of truth and in that pursuit you invite suffering on yourself and do not cause violence to anybody else.

*Mr. Gandhi:* Yes, Sir.

Q. However honestly a man may strive in his search for truth his notions of truth may be different from the notions of others. Who then is to determine the truth?

A. The individual himself would determine that.

Q. Different individuals would have different views as to truth. Would that not lead to confusion?

A. I do not think so.

Q. Honestly striving after truth is different in every case.

A. That is why the non-violence part was a necessary corollary. Without that there would be confusion and worse.

Q. Must not the person wanting to pursue truth be of high moral and intellectual equipment?

A. No. It would be impossible to expect that from everyone. If A has evolved a truth by his own efforts which B, C and others are to accept I should not require them to have the equipment of A.

Q. Then it comes to this that a man comes to a decision and others of lower intellectual and moral equipment would have to blindly follow him.

A. Not blindly. All I wish to urge is that each individual unless he wants to carry on his pursuit of truth independently needs to follow someone who has determined truth.

Q. Your scheme involves the determination of truth by people of high moral and intellectual equipment and a large number of people may follow them blindly being themselves unable to arrive at similar conclusions by reason of their lower intellectual equipment.

A. I would exact from them nothing more than I would expect from an ordinary being.

Q. I take it that the strength of the propaganda must depend on the number of its followers.

A No. In satyagraha success is possible even if there is one satyagrahi of the proper stamp.

\* \* \*

Q. Does not suffering and going on suffering require extraordinary self-control ?

A. No. No extraordinary self-control is required. Every mother suffers. Your countrymen, I submit, have got such a control and they have exhibited that in a very large measure.

\* \* \*

Q. Ordinarily your doctrine contemplates co-operation with the Government and elimination of race hatred and inviting self- suffering. Does not suffering create ill-will?

A. It is contrary to my thirty years' experience that people have by suffering been filled with any ill-will against the Government. In South Africa after a bitter struggle the Indians have lived on the best of terms with the Government, and Gen. Smuts was the recipient of an address which was voluntarily voted by the Indians.

\* \* \*

Q. Is not the underlying idea embarrassment of Government?

A Certainly not. A satyagrahi relies not upon embarrassment but upon self-suffering for securing relief.

Q. Would not ordered Government be impossible?

A. Ordered Government cannot be impossible if totally inoffensive people break the laws. But I would certainly make Government impossible if I found it had taken leave of its senses.

Q. In your message you ask people to refrain from violence and still violence occurred. Does it not- show that ordinary mind finds it very difficult to practise the theory of non-violence?

A After having used methods of violence for years it is difficult for them to practise abstention.

*Young India*, 21-1-'20, p. 2 at p. 7

## 28. ELEMENTS OF SATYAGRAHA

(From "The Topic of the Hour")

What are then our countrymen in South Africa to do? There is nothing in the world like self-help. The world helps those who help themselves. Self-help in this case, as perhaps in every other, means, self-suffering, self-suffering means satyagraha. When their honour is at stake, when their rights are being taken away, when their livelihood is threatened, they have the right and it becomes their duty to offer satyagraha. They offered it during 1907 and 1914 and won the support even of the Government of India, indeed the recognition of the Europeans and the Government of South Africa. They can do likewise again if they have the will and the courage to suffer for the common good.

That time is not yet. They must, as they are doing, exhaust every diplomatic remedy. They must await the result of the negotiations the Government of India are carrying on with the Union Government. And when they have explored and tried every other available channel and failed to find a way out, the case for satyagraha is complete. Then it would be cowardice to flinch. And victory is a certainty. No power on earth can make a person do a thing against his will. Satyagraha is a direct result of the recognition of this great law, and is independent of numbers participating in it.

Terms of satyagraha are imperative, admitting of no exception. There should be no violence in any shape or form. There must be an irreducible minimum—a minimum that would commend itself to any reasonable and impartial judge. We may be justly entitled to many things but satyagraha is offered for things without which self-respect, or which is the same thing, honourable existence, is impossible.

They must count the cost. Satyagraha cannot be offered in bravado or as a mere trial. It is a measure of the depth of one's feeling. It is therefore offered because it becomes irresistible. No price is too dear to pay for it, i.e. truth. Success comes when it is least expected. It is undertaken not from a belief in

human aid but it is based upon an unquenchable faith in God and His justice. And God is both gentle and hard. He tries us through and through to the last suffering point but he is so gentle as never to test us to the breaking point.

*Young India*, 18-2-'26, p. 66

## 29. THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF SATYAGRAHA

[The following is taken from an article by Gandhiji contributed to the Golden Number of *Indian Opinion* which was issued in 1914 as a souvenir of the eight years' satyagraha in South Africa.—V G. D.]

Carried out to its utmost limit, satyagraha is independent of pecuniary or other material assistance; certainly, even in its elementary form, of physical force or violence. Indeed, violence is the negation of this great spiritual force, which can only be cultivated or wielded by those who will entirely eschew violence. It is a force that may be used by individuals as well as by communities. It may be used as well in political as in domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and invincibility. It can be used alike by men, women and children. It is totally untrue to say that it is a force to be used only by the weak so long as they are not capable of meeting violence by violence. This superstition arises from the incompleteness of the English expression, 'passive resistance'. It is impossible for those who consider themselves to be weak to apply this force. Only those who realize that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively be satyagrahis. This force is to violence, and therefore to all tyranny, all injustice what light is to darkness. In politics its use is based upon the immutable maxim, that Government of the people is possible only so long as they consent either consciously or unconsciously to be governed. We did not want to be governed by the Asiatic Act of 1907 of the Transvaal, and it had to go before this mighty-force. Two courses were open to us—to use violence when we were called upon to submit to the Act, or to suffer penalties prescribed under the Act, and thus to draw out and exhibit the force of the soul within us for a period long enough to appeal to the sympathetic chord in the Governors or the lawmakers. We have taken long to achieve what we set about striving for. That was because our satyagraha was not of the most complete type. All satyagrahis do not understand the full value of the force, nor have we men who always from conviction refrain from violence. The use of this force requires the

adoption of poverty, in the sense that we must be indifferent whether we have the wherewithal to feed or clothe ourselves. During the past struggle, all satyagrahis, if any at all, were not prepared to go that length. Some again were only satyagrahis so-called. They came without any conviction, often with mixed motives, less often with impure motives. Some even whilst engaged in the struggle, would gladly have resorted to violence but for most vigilant supervision. Thus it was that the struggle became prolonged; for the exercise of the purest soul-force, in its perfect form, brings about instantaneous relief. For this exercise, prolonged training of the individual soul is an absolute necessity so that a perfect satyagrahi has to be almost, if not entirely, a perfect man. We cannot all suddenly become such men, but if my proposition is correct—as I know it to be correct—the greater the spirit of satyagraha in us, the better men will we become. Its use, therefore, is I think, indisputable, and it is a force, which, if it became universal, would revolutionize social ideals and do away with despotisms and the ever-growing militarism under which the nations of the West are groaning and are being almost crushed to death, and which fairly promises to overwhelm even the nations of the East. If the past struggle has produced even a few Indians who would dedicate themselves to the task of becoming satyagrahis as nearly perfect as possible, they would not only have served themselves in the truest sense of the term, they would also have served humanity at large. Thus viewed, satyagraha is the noblest and best education. It should come, not after the ordinary education in letters of children, but it should precede it. It will not be denied, that a child before it begins to write its alphabet and to gain worldly knowledge, should know what the soul is, what truth is, what love is, what powers are latent in the soul. It should be an essential of real education that a child should learn, that in the struggle of life, it can easily conquer hate by love, untruth by truth, violence by self-suffering.

*Young India*, 3-11-'27, p. 369

### 30. MY IDEAS ABOUT SATYAGRAHA

(Reproduced herebelow is the text of a letter, dated 2-9-1917 written by Gandhiji to Shri Shankarlal Banker)

You want to know my ideas about satyagraha. Here they are in brief:

The English phrase "passive resistance" does not suggest the power I wish to write about; "satyagraha" is the right word. Satyagraha is soul-force, as opposed to armed strength. Since it is essentially an ethical weapon, only men inclined to the ethical way of life can use it wisely. Prahlad, Mirabai, and others were satyagrahis. At the time of the Morocco fighting, the Arabs were under fire from French guns. The Arabs were fighting, as they believed, solely for their religion. Reckless of their lives, they advanced running towards the French guns with cries of "Ya Allah".<sup>1</sup> Here, there was no scope at all for fighting back to kill. The French gunners refused to fire on these Arabs and, throwing up their caps, ran to embrace these brave Arabs with shouts of joy. This is an example of satyagraha and the success it can achieve. The Arabs were not satyagrahis by deliberate choice. They got ready to face death under pressure of a strong impulse, and had no life in their hearts. A satyagrahi bears no ill-will, does not lay down his life in anger, but refuses rather to submit to his "enemy" or oppressor because he has the strength himself to suffer. He should, therefore, have a courageous spirit and a forgiving and compassionate nature. Imam Hassan<sup>1</sup> and Hussain<sup>2</sup> were merely two boys. They felt that an injustice had been done to them. When called upon to surrender, they refused. They knew at the time that this would mean death for them. If, however, they were to submit to injustice, they would disgrace their manhood and betray their religion. In these circumstances, they yielded to the embrace of death. The heads of these fine young men rolled on the battlefield. In my view, Islam did not attain its greatness by the power of the sword but entirely through the self-immolation of its fakirs. It is soldierlike to allow oneself to be cut down by a sword, not to use the sword on another. When he comes to realize that he is guilty of murder, the killer, if he has been in the wrong, will feel sorry for ever

afterwards. The victim, however, will have gained nothing but victory even if he had acted wrongly in courting death. Satyagraha is the way of non-violence. It is, therefore, justified, indeed it is the right course, at all times and all places. The power of arms is violence and condemned as such in all religions. Even those who advocate the use of arms put various limits on it. There are no limits on satyagraha, or rather none except those placed by the satyagrahi's capacity for *tapascharya*, for voluntary suffering.

Obviously, it is irrelevant to raise issues about the legality of such satyagraha. It is for the satyagrahi to decide. Observers may judge satyagraha after the event. The world's displeasure will not deter a satyagrahi. Whether or not satyagraha should be started is not decided by any mathematical rule. A man who believes that satyagraha may be started only after weighing the chances of defeat and victory and assuring oneself of the certainty of victory, may be a shrewd enough politician or an intelligent man, but he is no satyagrahi. A satyagrahi acts spontaneously.

Satyagraha and arms have both been in use from time immemorial. We find them praised in the extant scriptures. They are the expressions, one of the *daivi sampad* and the other of the *asuri sampad*. We believe that in former times in India the *daivi sampad* was much the stronger of the two. Even today that is the ideal we cherish. Europe provides the most striking example of the predominance of the *asuri sampad*.

Both these forms of strength are preferable to weakness, to what we know by the rather plain but much apter word 'cowardice'. Without either, Swaraj or genuine popular awakening is impossibly Swaraj achieved otherwise than through resort to one or the other will not be true Swaraj. Such Swaraj can have no effect on the people. Popular awakening cannot be brought about without strength, without manliness. Let the leaders say what they like and the Government strive its utmost, unless they and we, all of us, strengthen the forces of satyagraha, the methods of violence are bound automatically to gain ascendancy. They are like weed which grow wild in any soil. The crop of satyagraha require] willingness to exert oneself or a venturesome spirit by way

oil manure. Just as, moreover, the seedlings are likely to be lost among the weeds if the latter are not plucked out, so also will weeds of violence keep growing unless we keep the land free of them by *tapascharya* and, with compassion, pluck out those which have already grown. We can, with the help of satyagraha, win over those young men who have been driven to desperation and anger by what they think to be the tyranny of the Government and utilize their courage and their mettlesome spirit, their capacity for suffering, to strengthen the *daivi sampad* of satyagraha. It is therefore very much to be desired that satyagraha is propagated as quickly as can be. This is in the interest both of the rulers and the ruled. The satyagrahi desires to harass neither the Government nor anyone else. He takes no step without the fullest deliberation! He is never arrogant. Consequently, he will keep away from 'boycott' but be always firm in the vow of Swadeshi as a matter of duty. He fears God alone, so that no other power can intimidate him. He will never, out of fear of punishment, leave a duty undone.

I need hardly say now that it is our duty to resort to satyagraha to secure the release of the learned Annie Bai and her co-workers. Whether we approve of every or any action of hers is another question. I, for one, certainly do not approve of some of them; all the same, her incarceration by the Government is a great mistake and an act of injustice. I know, of course, that the Government does not think it a mistake. Maybe the people are wrong in desiring her release. The Government has acted according to its lights. What can the people do to express their outraged feelings? Petitions, etc., are good enough when one's suffering is bearable. When it is unbearable, there is no remedy but satyagraha. Only when people find it unbearable will they, and only those who find it unbearable will, devote their all, body, mind and possessions, to securing the release of Annie Bai. This will be a powerful expression of popular feeling. It is my unshakable faith that before so great a self-sacrifice even the power of an emperor will give way. People may certainly restrain their feelings in view of the forthcoming visit of Mr. Montagu. That will be an expression of faith in his sense of justice. If she is not released, however, before his arrival, it will be our duty to resort to satyagraha. We do not want to provoke the Government or

put difficulties in its way. By resorting to satyagraha, we reveal the intensity of our injured feelings and thereby serve the Government.

*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. XIII, (1964), p. 517*

1 Glory to God.

2. Sons of Ali by his wife Fatima, daughter of the Prophet. They refused to acknowledge the authority of Yazid (Caliph, 680-3). Hussain Revolted against him, but was defeated and killed at Karbala.

### 31. SOME RULES OF SATYAGRAHA

Satyagraha literally means insistence on truth. This insistence arms the votary with matchless power. This power or force is connoted by the word satyagraha. Satyagraha, to be genuine, may be offered against parents, against one's wife or one's children, against rulers, against fellow citizens, even against the whole world.

Such a universal force necessarily makes no distinction between kinsmen and strangers, young and old, man and woman, friend and foe. The force to be so applied can never be physical. There is in it no room for violence. The only force of universal application can, therefore, be that of ahimsa or love. In other words it is soul-force.

Love does not burn others, it burns itself. Therefore, a satyagrahi, i.e. a civil resister will joyfully suffer even unto death®

It follows, therefore, that a civil resister, whilst he will strain every nerve to compass the end of the existing rule, will do no intentional injury in thought, word or deed to the person of a single Englishman. This necessarily brief explanation of satyagraha will perhaps enable the reader to understand and appreciate the following rules:

#### As an Individual

1. A satyagrahi, i.e. a civil resister will harbour no anger.
2. He will suffer the anger of the opponent.
3. In so doing he will put up with assaults from the opponent, never retaliate; but he will not submit, out of fear of punishment or the like, to any order given in anger.
4. When any person in authority seeks to arrest a civil resister, he will voluntarily submit to the arrest, and he will not resist the attachment or removal of his own property, if any, when it is sought to be confiscated by authorities.

5. If a civil resister has any property in his possession as a trustee, he will refuse to surrender it, even though in defending it he might lose his life. He will, however, never retaliate.
6. Non-retaliation excludes swearing and cursing.
7. Therefore a civil resister will never insult his opponent, and therefore also not take part in many of the newly coined cries which are contrary to the spirit of ahimsa.
8. A civil resister will not salute the Union Jack, nor will he insult it or officials, English or Indian.
9. In the course of the struggle if any one insults an official or commits an assault upon him, a civil resister will protect such official or officials from the insult or attack even at the risk of his life.

#### **As a Prisoner**

10. As a prisoner, a civil resister, will behave courteously towards prison officials, and will observe all such discipline of the prison as is not contrary to self-respect; as for instance, whilst he will *salam* officials in the usual manner, he will not perform any humiliating gyrations and refuse to shout Victory to Sarkar or the like. He will take cleanly cooked and cleanly served food, which is not contrary to his religion, and will refuse to take food insultingly served or served in unclean vessels.
11. A civil resister will make no distinction between an ordinary prisoner and himself, will in no way regard himself as superior to the rest, nor will he ask for any conveniences that may not be necessary for keeping his body in good health and condition. He is entitled to ask for such conveniences as may be required for his physical or spiritual well-being.
12. A civil resister may not fast for want of convenience whose deprivation does not involve any injury to one's self-respect.

### As a Unit

13. A civil resister will joyfully obey all the orders issued by the leader of the corps, whether they please him or not.
14. He will carry out orders in the first instance even though they appear to him insulting, inimical or foolish, and then appeal to higher authority. He is free before joining to determine the fitness of the corps to satisfy him, but after he has joined it, it becomes a duty to submit to its discipline irksome or otherwise. If the sum total of the energy of the corps appears to a member to be improper or immoral, he has a right to sever his connection, but being within it, he has no right to commit a breach of its discipline.
15. No civil resister is to expect maintenance for his dependants. It would be an accident if any such provision is made. A civil resister entrusts his dependants to the care of God. Even in ordinary warfare wherein hundreds of thousands give themselves up to it, they are able to make no previous provision. How much more, then, should such be the case in satyagraha? It is the universal experience that in such times hardly anybody is left to starve.

### In Communal Fights

16. No civil resister will intentionally become a cause of communal quarrels.
17. In the event of any such outbreak, he will not take sides, but he will assist only that party which is demonstrably in the right. Being a Hindu he will be generous towards Musalmans and others, and will sacrifice himself in the attempt to save non- Hindus from a Hindu attack. And if the attack is from the other side, he will not participate in any retaliation but will give his life in protecting Hindus.
18. He will, to the best of his ability, avoid every occasion that may give rise to communal quarrels.
19. If there is a procession of satyagrahis they will do nothing that would wound the religious susceptibilities of any community, and they will not

take part in any other processions that are likely to wound such susceptibilities.

*Young India*, 21-2-'30, p. 69

### 32. REQUISITE QUALIFICATIONS

The four days' fast set me thinking of the qualifications required in a satyagrahi. Though they were carefully considered and reduced to writing in 1921 they seem to have been forgotten. As satyagraha in the form of civil disobedience is being offered or contemplated in several States, it is necessary to reiterate the qualifications and to dispel false ideas that seem to be prevalent among many workers.

Moreover the greatest care is necessary at the present moment when violence, not non-violence, seems to pervade the air. Indeed it may be reasonably argued that in an atmosphere surcharged with violence there is no scope for non-violence. This argument may be carried too far, so far that non-violence may be made wholly ineffective; whereas it is claimed to be the only effective force for counteracting violence no matter how terrible. But when violence pervades the air the expression of non-violence may not be through civil disobedience. And if it is to be civil disobedience it must be hedged in by adequate restrictions. In satyagraha, it is never the numbers that count; it is always the quality, more so when the forces of violence are uppermost.

Then it is often forgotten that it is never the intention of a satyagrahi to embarrass the wrong-doer. The appeal is never to his fear; it is, must be, always to his heart. The satyagrahi's object is to convert, not to coerce, the wrong-doer. He should avoid artificiality in all his doings. He acts naturally and from inward conviction.

Keeping these observations before his mind's eye, the reader will perhaps appreciate the following qualifications which I hold essential for every satyagrahi, in India:

1. He must have a living faith in God. He is his only Rock.
2. He must believe in truth and non-violence as his creed and therefore have faith in the inherent goodness of human nature which he expects to evoke by his truth and love expressed through his suffering.

3. He must be leading a chaste life and be ready and willing for the sake of his cause to give up his life and possessions.
4. He must be a habitual khadi-wearer and spinner. This is essential for India.
5. He must be a teetotaler and be free from the use of other intoxicants in order that his reason may be always unclouded and his mind constant.
6. He must carry out with a willing heart all the rules of discipline as may be laid down from time to time.
7. He should carry out the jail rules unless they are specially devised to hurt his self-respect.

The qualifications are not to be regarded as exhaustive. They are illustrative only.

*Harijan*, 25-3-'39, p. 64

### 33. SUFFERING—WISE AND UNWISE

(From a statement which Gandhiji made at a press conference of American and Indian Journalists for explaining the terms of his truce with Lord Irwin.)

I hope, therefore, that the millions who have taken part in this struggle of suffering during the past twelve months will now during the period of conference and construction, show the same willingness, the same cohesion, the same effort and the same wisdom that they have in an eminent degree shown during what I would describe as a heroic period in the modern history of India.

But I know that, if there would be men and women who will feel elated by the settlement, there are, also those who will be and are keenly disappointed.

Heroic suffering is like the breath of their nostrils. They rejoice in it as in nothing else. They will endure unendurable sufferings, be they ever so prolonged, but when suffering ceases they feel their occupation gone and feel also that the goal has receded from the view. To them I will only say, 'wait, watch, pray and hope'.

Suffering has its well-defined limits. Suffering can be both wise and unwise, and when the limit is reached, to prolong it would be not unwise but the height of folly.

*Young India*, 12-3-'31, p. 30

### 34. TIRED OF SATYAGRAHA?

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

News comes from Durban that a group of Indians has sprung up in South Africa, who have lost faith in satyagraha. They cherish the dream that they can overthrow the rule of the white man there, only by joining forces with the Negroes, the coloured people, other Asiatic and European sympathizers and adopting violent means. The rumour, if there is any truth in it, is disturbing and a definite fly in the ointment. All, whether they believe in non-violence or not, should realize that Indians in South Africa gained world-wide esteem, simply because in spite of being a handful they showed infinite capacity for suffering and did not, through losing their patience, resort to sabotage and violence. They learnt the wholesome lesson that true well-being springs from suffering and that victory lies in unity. From my own experience, my firm advice to Indians in South Africa is that they should, on no account, be lured away into throwing aside the matchless weapon of satyagraha.

This does not, however, imply that they are not to accept the help of the coloured people, Negroes and any other sympathizers or that they will not help them in their need, should occasion arise. The only condition is that satyagraha should be their one and only weapon. If they go astray from the path of non-violence, they will conform to the description of the poor woman, who, as an Indian proverb goes, went in search of a son and succeeded in losing her husband!

New Delhi, 11-9-1946

*Harijan*, 22-9-'46, p. 321

### 35. OBSTRUCTIONISM NOT SATYAGRAHA

(Originally appeared in "Question Box" under the title "Satyagraha and Obstructionism")

Q. Is the policy of obstructionism compatible with satyagraha? Can a satyagrahi, who is supposed to stand for principles rather than party, adopt one attitude with regard to a measure when it is sponsored by his party, and another when the same measure is sponsored by the opposite party? Would you approve of this policy in Municipalities and District Boards as is being done by some Congressmen at present?

A. I have always opposed obstruction as being anti-satyagraha. Congressmen, to be correct in their behaviour, should always give co-operation to their opponents when the latter are in a majority and adopt any wise measure. The object of Congressmen should never be attainment of power for power's sake. Indeed such discriminatory co-operation will enhance the prestige of the Congress and may even give it majority.

*Harijan, 25-5-'40, p. 137*

### 36. TO PROGRESS WE MUST MAKE NEW HISTORY

(Originally appeared under the title "From Far-off America")

Some time ago I answered some questions put by a correspondent in America. He now returns to the charge and puts several further questions, the first being:

"What good is that brave and fearless mentality when it cannot save the things you love? You may not be afraid to die, but what is it that will keep a band of robbers from taking away from you what you cherish if you are going to remain non-violent to the end. If the victims of a robber do not offer violent resistance it is so much easier for the robber to loot them. Robbery has been going on and it will go on in the world till the victims are easy. The strong will rob the weak, resistance or no resistance. To be weak is a sin. Not to prepare by all means to get rid of this weakness is a crime."

The writer forgets that retaliation does not always succeed. The robber is likely, if stronger, to defeat the protector and vent his wrath, kindled by the resistance received, on the unfortunate victim whose plight would therefore be the worse for the resistance offered on her behalf. It is true that the protector will have the satisfaction of having done his best for his charge. But the same satisfaction will be available to the non-violent protector. For, he too will die in the attempt to rescue the victim. What is more, he will have the additional satisfaction of having tried to soften the heart of the robber by his pleading. The writer's difficulty arises from the fact of his having assumed that the non-violent protector is to be a mere passive helpless spectator of the robbery. As a matter of fact, however, in my scheme, love is presumed to be a more active and potent force than brute force. He who has not the love and remains passive is a coward. He is neither man nor brute. He has proved himself unfit to protect.

The writer obviously cannot realize, as I have done, the tremendous power that non-violent resistance has over one's adversary. Non-violent resistance is the

resistance of one's will against another. That resistance is possible only when it is freed from reliance on brute force. Reliance on brute force as a rule presupposes surrender when that force is exhausted. Does the writer know that a woman with determined will can successfully resist her ravisher however powerful he may be?

I admit that the strong will rob the weak and that it is sin to be weak. But this is said of the soul in man, not of the body. If it be said of the body, we could never be free from the sin of weakness. But the strength of soul can defy a whole world in arms against it. This strength is open to the weakest in body. A weak-willed Zulu, though strong as a giant in body, surrenders to a little white child. Who has not seen strong-bodied bullies surrendering to their frail mothers? Love conquers the brute in the son. The law that subsists between mother and son is universal in its application. Nor need love be reciprocal. It is its own reward. Many a mother has tamed by her love her erring defiant children. Let us all prepare to get rid of the weakness of love. There is chance of success there. The rivalry in loving is conducive to health. The world has been trying all these ages to become strong in the wielding of brute force and it has miserably failed. Rivalry in generating brute force is race suicide.

The writer adds:

"The British rulers seem to have as much soul-force as you have, but they have military force and practical knowledge of human nature besides. The result is obvious." Military force is inconsistent with soul-force. Frightfulness, exploitation of the weak, immoral gains, insatiable pursuits after enjoyments of the flesh are utterly inconsistent with soul-force. The soul-force that the British rulers have is therefore subservient to the brute force if it is not asleep altogether. The writer then puts the eternal conundrum:

"There are certain greedy persons in the world and they are doing mischief. They have power in their hands. They may be mad, but they are doing harm nevertheless. It will not do for us to stand with folded hands and let them go on with their devilish work. We must take the

power away from them even at the cost of non-violence, so that they may not do any more harm."

History teaches one that those who have, no doubt, with honest motives, ousted the greedy by using brute force against them, have in their own turn become a prey to the disease of the conquered. If it be better to be slaves than slave-drivers, if this is no mere copy-book maxim, we can easily afford to let the slave-drivers do their worst, whilst being weary of the brutal tug of war, so unbefitting our human nature, we try to explore the possibilities of matching the brute force of the greedy exploiters and the like with soul-force.

But the writer is met with this difficulty at the threshold of the experiment:

"Mahatmaji, you admit that the people of India have not followed your creed. You do not seem to realize the cause of it. The truth is that the average person is not a Mahatma. History proves this fact beyond doubt. There have been a few Mahatmas in India and elsewhere. These are exceptions. And the exceptions only prove the rule. You must not base your actions on the exceptions."

It is curious how we delude ourselves. We fancy that one can make the perishable body impregnable and we think it impossible to evoke the hidden powers of the soul. Well, I am engaged in trying to show, if I have any of these powers, that I am as frail a mortal as any of us and that I never had anything extraordinary about me nor have any now. I claim to be a simple individual liable to err like any other fellow-mortal. I own, however, that I have humility enough in me to confess my errors and to retrace my steps. I own that I have an immovable faith in God and His goodness and unconsumable passion for truth and love. But is that not what every person has latent in him? If we are to make progress, we must not repeat history but make new history. We must add to the inheritance left by our ancestors. If we may make new discoveries and inventions in the phenomenal world, must we declare our bankruptcy in the spiritual domain? Is it impossible to multiply the exceptions so as to make them the rule? Must man always be brute first and man after, if at all?

*Young India*, 6-5-'26, p. 164

## **PART II : NON-VIOLENCE**

### **37. THE LAW OF BRUTE IS DOOMED**

(From "How Should the Indian Union Act?")

Tit for tat is the law of the brute or unregenerate man. Such men have had their day. The world is sick of the application of the law of the jungle. It is thirsting for the brave law of love for hate, truth for untruth, toleration for intolerance. If this law of regenerate man is not to rule the world, it is thrice doomed.

*Harijan, 22-6-'47, p. 201*

### **38. INFINITE SUPERIORITY OF NON-VIOLENCE OVER VIOLENCE**

(Originally appeared under the title "The Doctrine of the Sword")

In this age of the rule of brute force, it is almost impossible for anyone to believe that anyone else could possibly reject the law of the final supremacy of brute force. And so I receive anonymous letters advising me that I must not interfere with the progress of non-co-operation even though popular violence may break out. Others come to me and assuming that secretly I must be plotting violence, enquire when the happy moment for declaring open violence is to arrive. They assure me that the English will never yield to anything but violence secret or open. Yet others, I am informed believe that I am the most rascally person living in India and they have not a shadow of a doubt that I believe in violence just as much as most people do.

Such being the hold that the doctrine of the sword has on the majority of mankind, and as success of non-co-operation depends principally on absence of violence during its pendency and as my views in this matter affect the conduct of a large number of people, I am anxious to state them as clearly as possible.

I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I would advise violence. Thus when my eldest son asked me what he should have done, when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use, and defended me, I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence. Hence it was that I took part in the Boer war, the so-called Zulu rebellion and the late war. Hence also do I advocate training in arms for those who believe in the method of violence! I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or] remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour.

But I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness is more manly than punishment. क्षमा वीरस्य भूषणम् | Forgiveness adorns a soldier. But abstinence is forgiveness only when there is the power to punish; it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature. A mouse hardly forgives a cat when it allows itself to be torn to pieces by her. I therefore appreciate the sentiment of those who cry out for the condign punishment of General Dyer and his ilk. They would tear him to pieces if they could. But I do not believe India to be helpless. I do not believe myself to be a helpless creature. Only I want to use India's and my strength for a better purpose.

Let me not be misunderstood. Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will. An average Zulu is any way more than a match for an average Englishman in bodily capacity. But he flees from an English boy, because he fear the boy's revolver or those who will use it for him. He fears death and is nerveless in spite of his burly figure. We in India may in moment realize that one hundred thousand Englishmen need not frighten three hundred million human beings. A definite forgiveness would therefore mean a definite recognition of our strength. With enlightened forgiveness must come mighty wave of strength in us, which would make it impossible for a Dyer and a Frank Johnson to heap affront upon India's devoted head. It matters little to me

that for the moment I do not drive my point home. We feel too downtrodden not to be angry and revengeful. But I must not refrain from saying that India can gain more by waiving the right of punishment. We have better work to do, a better mission to deliver to the world.

I am not a visionary. I claim to be a practical idealist. The religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the Rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law—to the strength of the spirit.

I have therefore ventured to place before India the ancient law of self-sacrifice. For satyagraha and its off-shoots, non-cooperation and civil resistance, are nothing but new names for the law of suffering. The Rishis, who discovered the law of nonviolence in the midst of violence, were greater geniuses than Newton. They were themselves greater warriors than Wellington. Having themselves known the use of arms, they realized their uselessness and taught a weary world that its salvation lay not through violence but through non-violence.

Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration.

And so I am not pleading for India to practise non-violence because she is weak. I want her to practise non-violence being conscious of her strength and power. No training in arms is required for realization of her strength. We seem to need it because we seem to think that we are but a lump of flesh. I want India to recognize that she has a soul that cannot perish and that can rise triumphant above every physical weakness and defy the physical combination of a whole world. What is the meaning of Rama, a mere human being with his host of\*

monkeys pitting himself against the insolent strength of ten-headed Ravana surrounded in supposed safety by the raging waters on all sides of Lanka ? Does it not mean the conquest of physical might by spiritual strength? However, being a practical man, I do not wait till India recognizes the practicability of the spiritual life in the political world. India considers herself to be powerless and paralysed before the machine-guns, the tanks and the aeroplanes of the English. And she takes up non-co-operation out of her weakness. It must still serve the same purpose, namely, bring her delivery from the crushing weight of British injustice if a sufficient number of people practise it.

I isolate this non-co-operation from Sinn Feinism, for, it is so conceived as to be incapable of being offered side by side with violence. But I invite even the school of violence to give this peaceful non-co-operation a trial. It will not fail through its inherent weakness. It may fail because of poverty of response. Then will be the time for real danger. The high-souled men, who are unable to suffer national humiliation any longer, will want to vent their wrath. They will take to violence. So far as I know, they must perish without delivering themselves or their country, from the wrong. If India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she may gain momentary victory. Then India will cease to be the pride of my heart. I am wedded to India because I owe my all to her. I believe absolutely that she has a mission for the world. She is not to copy Europe blindly. India's acceptance of the doctrine of the sword will be the hour of my trial. I hope I shall not be found wanting. My religion has no geographical limits. If I have a living faith in it, it will transcend my love for India herself. My life is dedicated to service of India through the religion of non-violence which I believe to be the root of Hinduism.

Meanwhile I urge those who distrust me, not to disturb the even working of the struggle that has just commenced, by inciting to violence in the belief that I want violence. I detest secrecy as a sin. Let them give non-violent non-co-operation a trial and they will find that I had no mental reservation whatsoever.

*Young India*, 11-8-'20, p. 3

### 39. NEW FIELDS FOR NON-VIOLENCE

(Originally appeared under the title "A Cry in The Wilderness?")

ऊर्ध्वबाहुविरौम्येष न च कश्चिच्छृणोति मे |  
धर्मादर्थश्च कामश्च स धर्मः किं न सेव्यते ||

"With hands upraised I cry:

(But none listens to me)

*Dharma*<sup>1</sup> yields both *Artha*<sup>2</sup> and *Kama*<sup>3</sup>;

Why is that *Dharma* not observed?"

Bapuji Aney on his way back from Simla paid a flying visit to me at Delhi on Saturday. Whether we work together or seem to be working in opposite directions, his love for me endures, and so he never misses an opportunity to look in wherever I may be. He expresses himself freely before me, and often shares with me a verse or two from his inexhaustible store. During his Delhi visit he sympathized with me for my having to sever my connection with the Congress, but he really congratulated me. "They should, I think, leave you in peace", he said, "and let you go your way. I read your appeal to every Briton. It will fall on deaf ears. But that does not matter to you. You cannot help telling them what you feel to be their *Dharma* (duty)- But it is not strange that they will not listen to you—seeing that the Congress itself did not listen to you at the critical moment' When even sage Vyasa failed to make himself heard, how should others fare better. He had to conclude his great Epic—Mahabharata—with a verse which reveals the cry of his soul." With this he cited the verse I have quoted at the head of this article. He thereby strengthened my faith, and also showed how difficult was the way I had chosen.

And yet it has never seemed to me so difficult as it is imagined to be... If I have the power to carry W experiment of ahimsa to success in an apparently new field, if my faith endures, and if I am right in thinking that the masses are fundamentally non-violent, Rajaji and Sardar will again be with me as before.

What are these apparently new fields for the operation of non-violence? Those who have followed the Working Committee's resolutions and writings in *Harijan* are now familiar with these. Non-violence in its operation against constituted authority is one field. We have exercised this up to now with a fair amount of success, and I have always described it as the non-violence of the weak. This non-violence may be said to have come to stay with Congressmen.

The other field is the exercise of ahimsa in internal disturbances—Hindu-Muslim riots and the like. We have not been able to show visible success in the exercise of ahimsa in this field. What then should the Congressmen do when internal chaos is so imminent? Will they return blow for blow, or will they cheerfully bend their heads to receive violent blows? The answer to this is not so easy as we might think. Instead of going into the intricacies, I should say that Congressmen should try to save the situation by laying down their lives, not by taking any. He who meets death without striking a blow fulfils his duty cent per cent. The result is in God's hands.

But it is clear that this non-violence is not the non-violence of the weak. It does not give one the joy of jail-going. One can have that joy and also cover thereby the ill-will one harbours in his breast against the Government. One can also non-co-operate with the Government. But where swords, knives, lathis and stones are freely used, what is a man to do single handed? Is it possible for one to receive these deadly blows without ill-will in one's heart? It is clear that it is impossible to do so, unless one is saturated with charity. It is only he who feels one with his opponent that can receive his blows as though they were so many flowers. Even one such man, if God favours him, can do the work of a thousand. It requires soul-force—moral courage—of the highest type.

The man or woman who can display this non-violence of the brave can easily stand against external invasion. This is the third field for the exercise of non-violence. The Congress Working Committee were of the opinion that, while it might be possible for us to exercise ahimsa in internal disturbances, India has not the strength to exercise ahimsa against the invasion of a foreign foe. This their want of faith has distressed me. I do not believe that the unarmed

millions of India cannot exercise ahimsa with success in this wide field. It is for Congressmen to reassure the Sardar, whose faith in the ahimsa of the strong has for the moment been shaken, that ahimsa is the only weapon that can suit India in the fields mentioned. Let no one ask, "But what about the martial races in India?" For me that is all the more reason why Congressmen should train themselves to defend their country with a non-violent army. This is an entirely new experiment. But who, save the Congress, is to try it--the Congress which has tried it successfully in one field? It is my unshakable faith that, if we have a sufficient number of nonviolent soldiers, we are sure to succeed even in this new field, apart from the saving of the needless waste of crores of rupees.

On the train to Wardha, 7-7-1940

*Harijan*, 13-7-'40, p. 200

1. Duty
2. Wealth
3. Desire, aspiration

#### 40. THE BEST FIELD FOR AHIMSA

Last week I wrote three fields for the operation of ahimsa. I propose to invite attention today to the fourth and the best field for the operation of non-violence. This is the family field, in a wider sense than the ordinary. Thus members of an institution should be regarded as a family. Non-violence as between the members of such families should be easy to practise. If that fails, it means that we have not developed the capacity for pure nonviolence. For the love we have to practise towards our relatives or colleagues in our family or institution, we have to practise towards our foes, decoits, etc. If we fail in one case, success in the other is a chimera.

We have generally assumed that, though it may not be possible to exercise non-violence in the domestic field, it is possible to do so in the political field. This has proved a pure delusion. We have chosen to describe our methods adopted so far as non-violence, and thus caricatured non-violence itself. If non-violence it was, it was such poor stuff that it proved useless at the critical moment. The alphabet of ahimsa is best learnt in the domestic school, and I can say from experience that, if we secure success there, we are sure to do so everywhere else. For a non-violent person the whole world is one family. He will thus fear none, nor will others fear him.

It will be retorted that those who satisfy such a test of non-violence will be few and far between. It is quite likely, but that is no reply to my proposition. Those, who profess to believe in non-violence should know the implications of that belief. And if these scare them away, they are welcome to give up the belief. Now that the Congress Working Committee has made the position clear, it is necessary that those who claim to believe in non-violence should know what is expected of them. If, as a result, the ranks of the non-violent army thin down, it should not matter. An army, however small, of truly non-violent soldiers is likely some day to multiply itself. An army of those who are not truly non-violent is, never likely to yield any use whether it increases or decreases.

Let no one understand from the foregoing that a non-violent army is open only to those who strictly enforce in their lives all the implications of non-violence. It is open to all those who accept the implications and make an ever-increasing endeavour to observe them. There never will be an army of perfectly non-violent people. It will be formed of those who will honestly endeavour to observe non-violence. For the last fifty years I have striven to make my life increasingly non-violent and to inspire my co-workers in the same direction, and I think I have had a fair amount of success. The growing darkness around, far from damping my zeal and dimming my faith, brightens them, and makes the implications of non-violence more clearly visible to me.

Sevagram, 15-7-1940

*Harijan*, 21-7-'40, p. 214

#### 41. HOW TO CULTIVATE AHIMSA?

(From "Question Box"; translated from Gqjarati)

Q. What is the good of your crying 'ahimsa, ahimsa' in season and out of season? Will it by itself teach people to be nonviolent? Would it not be better, instead, to tell people how pure ahimsa or the ahimsa of the strong can be cultivated?

A. Yours is a very timely and opportune question. I have attempted before this on more occasions than one to answer it. But my effort has, I confess, been rather desultory. I have not concentrated upon it, or given it the weight I might have. This was all right while I was devoting all my energy to forging means to give battle to the Government. But it had the result of retarding the growth of pure ahimsa, so that today we are not even within ken of the ahimsa of the strong. If we now want to advance further, we ought, at least for some time, to completely forget the idea of offering non-violent resistance to constituted authority. If non-violence in the domestic field is successfully achieved, we shall surely see the non-violence against constituted authority revived in its purified form, and it will be irresistible.

Now that I am no longer in the Congress, I may not offer civil disobedience even in my own person in its name. But I am certainly free to offer civil disobedience in my individual capacity whenever it may be necessary to. No one need suppose that all civil disobedience will necessarily be taboo while the country is still being educated in the ahimsa of the strong. But those who may want to join the non-violent force of my conception should not entertain any immediate prospect of civil disobedience. They should understand that, so long as they have not realized ahimsa in their own person in its pure form, there can be no civil disobedience for them.

Let not the mention of pure ahimsa frighten anybody. If we have a clear conception of it and have a living faith in its matchless efficacy, it will not be found to be so hard to practise as it is sometimes supposed to be. It will be well to remember the immortal Mahabharata verse in this connection. The Seer Poet

therein loudly proclaims to the whole world that *Dharma* includes within itself both legitimate *Artha* and *Kama*, and asks why men do not follow the royal road of *Dharma* that leads to both earthly and spiritual bliss. *Dharma* here does not signify, mere observance of externals. It signifies the way of truth and non-violence. The scriptures have given us two immortal maxims. One of these is: "Ahimsa is the supreme Law or *Dharma*". The other is: "There is no other Law or *Dharma* than truth." These two maxims provide us the key to all lawful *Artha* and *Kama*. Why should we then hesitate to act up to them? Strange as it may appear, the fact remains that people find the easiest of things often times to be the most difficult to follow. The reason, to borrow a term from the science of physics, lies in our inertia. Physicists tell us that inertia is an essential, and in its own place a most useful quality of matter. It is that alone which steadies the universe and prevents it from flying off at a tangent. But for it the latter would be a chaos of motion. But inertia becomes an incubus and a vice when it ties the mind down to old ruts. It is this kind of inertia which is responsible for our rooted prejudice that to practise pure ahimsa is difficult. It is up to us to get rid of this incubus. The first step in this direction is firmly to resolve that all untruth and *himsa* shall hereafter be taboo to us> whatever sacrifice it might seem to involve. For, the good these may seem to achieve is in appearance only, but in reality it is deadly poison. If our resolve is firm and our conviction clear, it would mean half the battle won, and the practice of these two qualities would come comparatively easy to us.

Let us confine ourselves to ahimsa. We have all along regarded the spinning wheel, village crafts, etc. as the pillars of ahimsa, and so indeed they are. They must stand. But we have now to go a step further. A votary of ahimsa will of course base upon non-violence, if he has not already done so, all his relations with his parents, his children, his wife, his servants, his dependants etc. But the real test will come at the time of political or communal disturbances or under the menace of thieves and dacoits. Mere resolve to lay down one's life under the circumstances is not enough. There must be the necessary qualification for making the sacrifice. If I am a Hindu, I must fraternize' with the Musalmans and the rest. In my dealings with them I may not make any

distinction between my co-religionists and those who might belong to a different faith. I would seek opportunities to serve them without any feeling of fear or unnaturalness. The word 'fear' can have no place in the dictionary of ahimsa. Having thus qualified himself by his selfless service, a votary of pure ahimsa will be in a position to make a fit offering of himself in a communal conflagration. Similarly, to meet the menace of thieves and dacoits, he will need to go among, and cultivate friendly relations with, the communities from which thieves and dacoits generally come.

A brilliant example of this kind of work is provided by Ravishankar Maharaj. His work among the criminal tribes in Gujarat has evoked praise even of the Baroda State authorities. There is an almost unlimited field for this kind of work, and it does not call for any other talent in one besides pure love. Ravishankar Maharaj is an utter stranger to English. Even his knowledge of Gujarati is barely sufficient for everyday use. But God has blessed him with unlimited neighbourly love. His simplicity easily wins all hearts and is the envy of everybody. Let his example provide a cue and inspiration to all those who may be similarly engaged in other fields of satyagraha.

Sevagram, 16-7-1940

*Harijan*, 21-7-'40 p. 215

#### 42. NON-VIOLENCE NOT ONLY FOR SELECT INDIVIDUALS

(Originally appeared in "Question Box" under the title "The Eternal Problem")

Q. Why can't you see that whilst there is possession it must be defended against all odds? Therefore your insistence that violence should be eschewed in all circumstances is utterly unworkable and absurd. I think non-violence is possible only for select individuals.

A. This question has been answered often enough in some form or other in these columns as also in those of *Young India*. But it is an ever-green. I must answer it as often as it is put, especially when it comes from an earnest seeker as this one does. I claim that even now, though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of non-violence, all the world over mankind lives and men retain their possessions on the sufferance of one another. If they had not done so, only the fewest and the most ferocious would have survived. But such is not the case. Families are bound together by ties of love and so are groups in the so-called civilized society called nations. Only they do not recognize the supremacy of the law of non-violence. It follows, therefore, that they have not investigated its vast possibilities. Hitherto out of sheer inertia, shall I say we have taken it for granted that complete non-violence is possible only for the few who take the vow of non-possession and the allied abstinences. Whilst it is true that the votaries alone can carry on research work and declare from time to time the new possibilities of the great eternal law governing man, if it is the law, it must hold good for all. The many failures we see are not of the law but of the followers, many of whom do not even know that they are under the law willy-nilly. When a mother dies for her child she unknowingly obeys the law. I have been pleading for the past fifty years for a conscious acceptance of the law and its zealous practice even in the face of failures. Fifty years' work has shown marvellous results and strengthened my faith. I do claim that by conscious practice we shall come to a state of things when lawful possession will command universal and voluntary respect. No doubt such possession will not be tainted. It will not be an insolent demonstration of the

inequalities that surround us everywhere. Nor need the problem of unjust and unlawful possessions appeal the votary of non-violence. He has at his disposal the non-violent weapon of satyagraha and non-cooperation which hitherto has been found to be a complete substitute of violence whenever it has been applied honestly in sufficient measure. I have never claimed to present the complete science of non-violence. It does not lend itself to such treatment. So far as I know no single physical science does, not even the very precise science of mathematics. I am but a seeker and I have fellow seekers like the questioner whom I invite to accompany me in the very difficult but equally fascinating search.

Sevagram, 9-2-1942

*Harijan*, 22-2-'42, p. 48

### 43. IS NON-VIOLENCE IMPOSSIBLE?

"One may admit that in theory non-violence is an infallible weapon and that no power on earth can be a match for the man who has achieved non-violence to the fullest extent. But is this possible? There may be a rare Yogi who can tame wild beasts like lions and tigers and render them meek as lambs, but an average man must resort to a rifle or similar weapon to protect himself against such beasts. You with your wonderful power may convert others by the sheer force of your thought, but the average man has to have recourse to worldly remedies like a law court, pleaders and so on. Even in the dim and distant past we rarely hear of men who practised ahimsa in daily affairs. Lord Buddha tried for a time to lead people along the path of ahimsa, but what happened after him? Society went back to its old ways, forgetting Buddha's teaching. The past, therefore, offers little promise for the future of society going along the lines of ahimsa any more than it has done before, and our sages, therefore, must have wisely left the world and resorted to the forest for practising truth and non-violence. You may inspire a few persons to study ahimsa, but society as a whole is not likely to take to it. The same argument applies to India as a nation. She must needs seek means other than those of ahimsa in order to win her liberty. It is idle to expect an infant learning his primer to understand a book like Tilak's Gita. Even so is it ideal to expect people steeped in worldly pleasures to understand the infallibility of ahimsa. Besides ahimsa is the final goal, the attainment of which requires much greater preparation than is required in order to obtain a degree in medicine or engineering. We shall have to have numerous colleges and universities for the teaching of the science and art of truth and non-violence. Today society directs its energies to creating new wants and satisfying them. How do you expect it to turn those energies in the direction of researches in ahimsa?"

The doubts and difficulties raised by this correspondent occur to others also, and I have on various occasions tried to solve them too. But when the Working Committee of the Congress has been instrumental in making of ahimsa a live issue, it seems necessary to deal with these doubts and difficulties at some length.

The correspondent doubts in substance the universal application of ahimsa, and asserts that society has made little progress towards it. Teachers like Buddha arose and made some effort with some little success perhaps in their lifetime, but society is just where it was in spite of them. Ahimsa may be good enough to be the duty of an individual; for society it is good for nothing, and India too will have to take to violence for her freedom.

The argument is, I think, fundamentally wrong. The last statement is incorrect inasmuch as the Congress has adhered to non-violence as the means for the attainment of Swaraj. It has indeed gone a step further. The question having been raised as to whether non-violence continues to be the weapon against all internal disturbances, the A.-I.C.C. clearly gave the answer in the affirmative. It is only for protection against outside aggression that the Congress has maintained that it would be necessary to have an army. And then even on this matter there was a considerable body of the members of the A.-I.C.C. who voted against the resolution. This dissent has got to be reckoned with when the question voted upon is one of principle. The Congress policy must always be decided by a majority vote, but it does not cancel the minority vote. It stands. Where there is no principle involved and there is a programme to be carried out, the minority has got to follow the majority. But where there is a principle involved, the dissent stands, and it is bound to express itself in practice when the occasion arises. That means that ahimsa for all occasions and all purposes has been recognized by a society, however small it may be, and that ahimsa as a remedy to be used by society has made fair strides. Whether it will make further strides or no is a different matter. The Working Committee's resolution, therefore, fails to lend any support to the correspondent's doubts. On the contrary it should in a certain degree dispel them.

Now for the argument that I am but a rare individual, and that what little society has done in the matter of ahimsa is due to my influence, and that it is sure to disappear with me. This is not right. The Congress has a number of leaders who can think for themselves. The Maulana is a great thinker of keen intellect and vast reading. Few can equal him in his Arabic and Persian scholarship. Experience has taught him that ahimsa alone can make India free. It was he who insisted on the resolution accepting ahimsa as a weapon against internal disturbances. Pandit Jawaharlal is not a man to stand in awe of anyone. His study of history and contemporary events is second to none. It is after mature thought that he has accepted ahimsa as a means for the attainment of Swaraj. It is true that he has said that he would not hesitate to accept Swaraj if non-violence failed and it could be won by means of violence. But that is not relevant to the present issue. There are not a few other big names in the Congress who believe in ahimsa as the only weapon at least for the attainment of Swaraj. To think that all of them will give up the way of ahimsa as soon as I am gone, is to insult them and to insult human nature. We must believe that everyone can think for himself. Mutual respect to that extent is essential for progress. By crediting our companions with independent judgment we strengthen them and make it easy for them to be independent-minded even if they are proved to be weak.

I hope neither the correspondent nor anyone else believes that the Congress or many Congress leaders have bidden goodbye to ahimsa. To the limited extent that I have pointed out faith in ahimsa has been reiterated and made clear beyond any doubt by the Congress. I agree that the limit laid down by the Congress considerably narrows down the sphere of ahimsa and dims its splendour. But the limited ahimsa of the Congress is good enough for the purpose of our present argument. For I am trying to make out that the field of ahimsa is widening, and the limited acceptance of ahimsa by the Congress sufficiently supports my position.

If we turn our eyes to the time of which history has any record down to our own time, we shall find that man has been steadily progressing towards ahimsa. Our

remote ancestors were cannibals. Then came a time when they were fed up with cannibalism and they began to live on chase. Next came a stage when man was ashamed of leading the life of a wandering hunter. He therefore took to agriculture and depended principally on mother earth for his food. Thus from being a nomad he settled down to civilized stable life, founded villages and towns, and from member of a family he became member of a community and a nation. All these are signs of progressive ahimsa and diminishing *himsa*. Had it been otherwise the human species should have been extinct by now, even as many of the lower species have disappeared.

Prophets and *avatars* have also taught the lesson of ahimsa more or less. Not one of them has professed to teach *himsa*. And how should it be otherwise? *Himsa* does not need to be taught as an animal is violent, but as spirit is non-violent. The moment he wakes to the spirit within he cannot remain violent. Either he progresses towards ahimsa or rushes to his doom. That is why the prophets and *avatars* have taught the lessons of truth, harmony, brotherhood, justice, etc.—all attributes of ahimsa.

And yet violence seems to persist, even to the extent of thinking people like the correspondent regarding it as the final weapon. But as I have shown history and experience are against him.

If we believe that mankind has steadily progressed towards ahimsa, it follows that it has to progress towards it still further. Nothing in this world is static, everything is kinetic. If there is no progression, then there is inevitable retrogression. No one can remain without the eternal cycle, unless it be God Himself.

The present War is a saturation point in violence. It spells to my mind also its doom. Daily I have testimony of the fact that ahimsa was never before appreciated by mankind as it is today. All the testimony from the West that I continue to receive points in the same direction. The Congress has pledged itself to ahimsa however limited. I invite the correspondent and doubters like him to shed their doubts and plunge confidently into the sacred sacrificial fire

of ahimsa. Then I have' little doubt that the Congress will retrace its step. "It is always within' ". Well has Pritam, our poet, sung:

Happiest are those that plunge in the fire

The lookers-on are all but scorched by flames.

Sevagram, 5-8-1940

*Harijan*, 11-8-'40, p. 244

#### 44. NON-VIOLENCE, MY BELIEF AND PRACTICE FOR OVER FORTY-FIVE YEARS

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Among Christian Circles")

The talk, I hear, is going the round among Christian circles that I have said in private conversation that had India been equipped for the use of arms, I would certainly have resorted to and advised the use of arms. I had fondly hoped that such a thing could never have been said and believed of me in India. I assure my Christian and other readers that I have never made any such statement to any person whatsoever. On the contrary, it has been my belief and practice for over forty years deliberately to practise the doctrine of non-resistance to evil, not to retaliate. There are more instances than one in my public life when with the ability to retaliate, I have refrained from doing so and advised friends to do likewise. My life is dedicated to the spread of that doctrine. I read it in the teaching of all the greatest teachers of the world, Zoroaster, Mahavir, Daniel, Jesus, Mahomed, Nanak, and a host of others. Indeed, I am not sure that we do justice to Moses when we impute to him the doctrine of retaliation in the sense that he made it obligatory on his followers to exact tooth for a tooth. It may be my wish that is father to the thought. But I do think that in an age when people were unrestrained in their appetite for the enemy's blood, Moses restricted retaliation to equal measure and no more. But I must not lead the reader into religious discussion. Whilst, however, non-violence is now, has ever been, and I pray to God, it ever may be my final creed for all occasions, it is true that there are thousands in the ranks of non-co-operation with whom non-violence is an expedient or a policy to which they are not committed for all time and all circumstances. They believe that for India as she is constituted, there is no method but that of nonviolence for regaining her freedom. And this they believe, not merely because she has no arms or training in them, but also because with her diverse creeds and races there is nothing for her but constant internecine strife, if her children began the habit of invoking the God of war for every occasion. The best of us are beginning to see more in the doctrine of non-violence than when we first approached it.

In this connection my attention has also been drawn to a paragraph in the *Dnyanodaya*. Sadhu Simdersingh, it is there stated, 'made quite plain his profound disapproval of Mr. Gandhi's methods telling him in so many words that they can lead India to nothing but ruin and useless suffering'. I am sorry that the Sadhu's name has been thus dragged into the controversy. But now that it has been, injustice to the Sadhu and the cause, I must say that so far as my recollection goes, not only did he not disapprove of my methods in 'so many words' but he entirely approved of them and agreed that India had no other choice. We had the closest communion. The Sadhu came purposely to understand some things about which he had no firsthand knowledge. He did not know, for instance, what the implications of the Hindu-Muslim friendship were and where the minorities stood and whether the movement could remain non-violent to the end. We had long discussions over all these and other matters and he certainly left on me the impression that for a religious man there was no course left open. The greatest difficulty undoubtedly is about the masses keeping non-violent to the end. With men nothing may be possible, for God nothing is impossible. I would fain have avoided any reference whatsoever to our conversation. But the friends who have brought the matter to my notice tell me that Sadhu Sundersingh is on the waters and that the paragraph in question is being exploited to wean Indian Christians from the movement. It has to stand or fall on its own merits. No certificate can save it, if its professors betray their trust; no condemnation can injure it permanently if the professors remain true to it to the end. But I felt that I could not withhold from the public what I knew about Sadhu Sundersingh's views.

*Young India*, 9-2-22, p. 81, p. 85 45

## 45. THE IMPLICATION OF NON-VIOLENCE

(Originally appeared under the title "Non-violence")

When a person claims to be non-violent, he is expected not to be angry with one who has injured him. He will not wish him harm; he will wish him well; he will not swear at him; he will not cause him any physical hurt. He will put up with all the injury to which he is subjected by the wrong-doer. Thus non-violence is complete innocence. Complete non-violence is complete absence of ill-will against all that lives. It therefore embraces even sub-human life not excluding noxious insects or beasts. They have not been created to feed our destructive propensities. If we only knew the mind of the Creator, we should find their proper place in His Creation. Non-violence is, therefore, in its active form good-will towards all life. It is pure love. I read it in the Hindu scriptures, in the Bible, in the Koran.

Non-violence is a perfect, state. It is a goal towards which all mankind moves naturally though unconsciously. Man does not become divine when he personifies innocence in himself. Only then does he become truly man. In our present state we are partly men and partly beasts and in our ignorance and even arrogance say that we truly fulfil the purpose of our species, when we deliver blow for blow and develop the measure of anger required for the purpose. We pretend to believe that retaliation is the law of our being, whereas in every scripture we find that retaliation is nowhere obligatory but only permissible. It is restraint that is obligatory. Retaliation is indulgence requiring elaborate regulating. Restraint is the law of our being. For, highest perfection is unattainable without highest restraint. Suffering is thus the badge of the human tribe.

The goal ever recedes from us. The greater the progress, the greater the recognition of our unworthiness. Satisfaction lies in the effort, not in the attainment. Full effort is full victory.

Therefore though I realize more than ever how far I am from that goal, for me the law of complete love is the law of my being. Each time I fail, my effort shall be all the more determined for my failure.

But I am *not* preaching this final law through the Congress or the Khilafat organization. I know my own limitations only too well. I know that any such attempt is foredoomed to failure. To expect a whole mass of men and women to obey that law all at once is not to know its working. But I do preach from the Congress platform the deductions of the law. What the Congress and the Khilafat organizations have accepted is but a fragment of the implications of that law. Given true workers, the limited measure of its application can be realized in respect of vast masses of people within a short time. But a little measure of it to be true must satisfy the same test as the whole. A drop of water must yield to the analyst the same results as a lakeful. The nature of my non-violence towards my brother cannot be different from that of my non-violence to the universe. When I extended the love for my brother to the whole universe, it must still satisfy the same test.

A particular practice is a policy when its application is limited to time or space. Highest policy is therefore fullest practice. But honesty as policy while it lasts is not anything different from honesty as a creed. A merchant believing in honesty as a policy will sell the same measure and quality of cloth to the yard as a merchant with honesty as a creed. The difference between the two is that the political merchant will leave his honesty when it does not pay, the believing one will continue it even though he should lose his all.

The political non-violence of the non-co-operator does not stand this test in the vast majority of cases. Hence the prolongation of the struggle. Let no one blame the unbending English nature. The hardest 'fibre' must melt in the fire of love. I cannot be dislodged from the position because I know it. When British or other nature does not respond, the fire is not strong enough, if it is there at all.

Our non-violence need not be of the strong, but it *has* to be of the truthful. We must not intend harm to the English or to our co-operating countrymen if and whilst we claim to be non-violent. But the majority of us *have* intended harm,

and we have refrained from doing it because of our weakness or under the ignorant belief that mere refraining from physical hurt amounted to a due fulfilment of our pledge. Our pledge of non-violence excludes the possibility of future retaliation. Some of us seem unfortunately to have merely postponed the date of revenge.

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not say that the policy of non-violence excludes the possibility of revenge when the policy is abandoned. But it does most emphatically exclude the possibility of future revenge after a successful termination of the struggle. Therefore whilst we are pursuing the policy of non-violence, we are bound to be actively friendly to English administrators and their co-operators. I felt ashamed when I was told that in some parts of India it was not safe for Englishmen or well-known co-operators to move about safely. The disgraceful scenes that took place at a recent Madras meeting were a complete denial of non-violence. Those who howled down the Chairman because he was supposed to have insulted me, disgraced themselves and their policy. They wounded the heart of their friend and helper, Mr. Andrews. They injured their own cause. If the Chairman believed that I was a scoundrel, he had a perfect right to say so. Ignorance is no provocation. But a non-co-operator is pledged to put up with the gravest provocation. Provocation there would be, when I act scoundrel like. I grant that it will be enough to absolve every non-co-operator from the pledge of non-violence and that any non-co-operator will be fully justified in taking my life for misleading him.

It may be that even cultivation of such limited non-violence is impossible in majority of cases. It may be that we must not expect people even out of self-interest not to *intend* harm to the opponent whilst they are *doing* none. We must then, to be honest, clearly give up the use of the word 'non-violence' in connection with our struggle. The alternative need not be immediate resort to violence. -But the people will not then be called upon to subject themselves to any discipline in non-violence. A person like me will not then feel called upon to shoulder the responsibility for Chauri Chaura. The school of limited non-

violence will then still flourish in its obscurity but without the terrible burden of responsibility it carried today.

But if non-violence is to remain the policy of the nation, for its fair name and that of humanity, we are bound to carry it out to the letter and in the spirit.

And if we intend to follow out the policy, if we believe in it, we must then quickly make up with the Englishmen and the co-operators. We must get their certificate that they feel absolutely safe in our midst and that they may regard us as friends although we belong to a radically different school of thought and politics. We must welcome them to our political platforms as honoured guests. We must meet them on neutral platforms as comrades. We must devise methods of such meeting. Our non-violence must not breed violence, hatred and ill-will. We stand like the rest of fellow mortals to be judged by our works. A programme of non-violence for the attainment of Swaraj necessarily means ability to conduct our affairs on non-violent lines. That means inculcation of a spirit of obedience. Mr. Churchill, who understands only the gospel of force, is quite right in saying that the Irish problem is quite different in character from the Indian. He means in effect that the Irish having fought their way to their Swaraj through violence will be well able to maintain it by violence, if need be. India, on the other hand, if she wins Swaraj in reality by non-violence, must be able to maintain it chiefly by non-violent means. This Mr. Churchill can hardly believe to be possible unless India proves her ability by an ocular demonstration of the principle. Such a demonstration is impossible, unless non-violence has permeated society so that people in their *corporate* i.e., political, life respond to non-violence, in other words, civil instead of military authority, as at present, gains predominance.

Swaraj by non-violent means can therefore never mean an interval of chaos and anarchy. Swaraj by non-violence must be a progressively peaceful revolution such that the transference of power from a close corporation to the people's representatives will be as natural as the dropping of a fully ripe fruit from a well nurtured tree. I say again that such a thing may be quite impossible of attainment. But I know that nothing less is the implications of non-violence.

And if the present workers do not believe in the probability of achieving such comparatively nonviolent atmosphere, they should drop the non-violent programme and frame another which is wholly different in character. If we approach our programme with the mental reservation that after all we shall wrest the power from the British by force of arms, then we are untrue to our profession of non-violence. If we believe in our programme, we are bound to believe that the British people are not unamenable to the force of affection as they are undoubtedly amenable to force of arms. For the unbelievers the Councils are undoubtedly the school of learning with their heavy programme of humiliations spread over a few generations or a rapid but bloody revolution probably never witnessed before in the world. I have no desire to take part in such a revolution. I will not be a willing instrument for promoting it. The choice, in my opinion, lies between honest non-violence with non-co-operation as its necessary corollary or reversion to responsive co-operation, i.e. cooperation cum obstruction.

*Young India*, 9-3-'22, p. 141

#### 46. INIQUITOUS END NOT ATTAINABLE THROUGH NON-VIOLENCE

(From "Question Box")

Q. A Gujarati Musalman correspondent writes: I am a believer in ahimsa as well as Pakistan. How can I use the ahimsa principle for the realization of my ideal?

A. It is not possible to attain an iniquitous end by non-violent means. For instance, you cannot commit theft non-violently. As I understand Pakistan I do not regard it as a worthy ideal. But since you consider it to be a worthy end, you can certainly carry on a non-violent movement on its behalf. This means that you will always strive to convert your opponents by patient reasoning. You will impress everybody by your selfless devotion to your ideal. You will give a respectful hearing to what your opponents might have to say, and respectfully point out to them their mistakes if they are in the wrong. Finally, if you feel that the people do not listen to you Out of sheer bigotry and prejudice although your cause is absolutely just, you can non-violently non-co-operate with the obstructionists. But you may not injure or seek to injure anybody and must, on your part, patiently endure any injury that might be done to you. All this you will be able to do if impartial persons endorse the justice of your cause.

*Harijan, 4-8-'40, p. 234*

## 47. NO FAILURE OF THE ETERNAL LAW

(Originally appeared under the title "Non-violence")

[The following is from Gandhiji's written message for the prayer gathering on 15-6-1947—S.N.]

I would love to attempt an answer to a question which has been addressed to me from more than one quarter of the globe. It is:

How can you account for the growing violence among your people on the part of political parties for the furtherance of political ends? Is this the result of the thirty years of non-violent practice for ending British rule? Does your message of nonviolence still hold good for the world? I have condensed the sentiments of my correspondents in my own language.

In answer I must confess my bankruptcy, not that of non-violence. I have already said that the non-violence that was offered during the past thirty years was that of the weak. Whether it is a good enough answer or not is for others to judge. It must be further admitted that such non-violence can have no play in the altered circumstances. India has no experience of the non-violence of the strong. It serves no purpose for me to continue to repeat that the non-violence of the strong is the strongest force in the world. The truth requires constant and extensive demonstration. This I am endeavouring to do to the best of my ability. What if the best of my ability is very little? May I not be living in fool's paradise? Why should I ask people to follow me in the fruitless search? These are pertinent questions. My answer is quite simple. I ask nobody to follow me. Everyone should follow his or her inner voice. If he or she has no ears to listen to it, he or she should do the best he or she can. In no case should he or she imitate others sheep-like.

One more question has been and is being asked. If you are sure that India is going the wrong way, why do you associate with the wrong-doers? Why do you not plough your own lonely furrow and have faith that if you are right, your erstwhile friends and followers will seek you out? I regard this as a very fair

question. I must not attempt to argue against it. All I can say is that my faith is as strong as ever. It is quite possible that my technique is faulty. There are old and tried precedents to guide one in such a complexity. Only, one should not act mechanically. Hence I can say to all my counsellors that they should have patience with me and even share my belief that there is no hope for the aching world except through the narrow and straight path of non-violence. Millions like me may fail to prove the truth in their own lives, that would be their failure, never of the eternal law.

*Harijan, 29-6-'47, p. 209*

#### **48. A CHALLENGE TO FAITH**

(The following is a question put by the Associated Press of America Correspondent and Gandhiji's answers thereto.)

Q. In view of recent Indian history—1942 unrest, I.N A. movement and unrest, R.I.N, mutiny, Calcutta-Bombay disturbances, movements in Indian States such as Kashmir and recent communal riots—can it be said your creed of non-violence has failed; in so far as non-violence has not taken roots in Indian life?

A. This is a dangerous generalization. All you mention can certainly be called *himsa* but that can never mean that the creed of non-violence has failed. At best it may be said that I have not yet found the technique required for the conversion of the mass mind. But I claim that the millions of the 700,000 villages of India have not participated in the violence alluded to by you. Whether nonviolence has taken roots in Indian life is still an open question which can only be answered after my death.

*Harijan, 17-7-'46, p. 404*

#### 49. OUT OF HIS DEPTH!

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Outside His Field")

Major-General Cariappa is reported to have said as follows: "Non-violence is of no use under the present circumstances in India and only a strong army can make India one of the greatest nations in the world." I fear, like many experts, General Cariappa has gone beyond his depth and has been unwittingly betrayed into a serious misconception of ahimsa, of whose working in the nature of things, he can only have very superficial knowledge. By reason of lifelong practice of ahimsa, I claim to be an expert in it, though very imperfect. Speaking in absolute terms, the more I practise it the clearer I see how far I am from the full expression of ahimsa in my life. It is his ignorance of this, the greatest duty of man in the world, which makes him say that in this age non-violence has little scope in the face of violence, whereas I make bold to say that in this age of the atom bomb unadulterated non-violence is the only force that can confound all the tricks put together of violence. It would have become the General, unaided as he can only now be, by his British teachers of military science and practice, not to have gone out of his depth. Generals greater than General Cariappa have been wise and humble enough frankly to make the admission that they can have no right to speak of the possibilities of the force of ahimsa. We are witnessing the tragic insolvency of military science and practice in its own home.

Should a bankrupt, who has been by the gamble in the share market, sing the praise of that particular form of gambling?

New Delhi, 7-11-1947

*Harijan*, 16-11-'47, p. 412

## 50. HOW TO BECOME A NON-VIOLENT ORGANIZATION?

(From "A Sign of the Times")

Let us therefore turn to the people of Bardoli. The lesson that they have to learn is that so long as they remain united they have nothing to fear, not even unwilling officials. But have they learnt that lesson, have they recognized the unseen power of nonviolence, have they realized that if they had committed one single act of violence, they would have lost their cause? If they have, then they will know from day to day that they will not become a non-violent organization unless they undergo a process of what may be called continuous corporate cleansing. This they can only do by engaging in carrying out a well thought out constructive programme requiring combined effort and promoting common good. In other words before they can claim to have become a non-violent organization, they must receive education in non-violence not through speeches or writings necessary as both may be, but through an unbroken series of corporate acts each evoking the spirit of non-violence.

*Young India*, 16-8-'28, p. 276

## 51. PEACE ORGANIZATION

If the Congress were an organization with a military bias, there is no doubt that today it would be a full-fledged military unit, every member becoming trained to be an efficient soldier. Fortunately for India and humanity, the Congress is not such an organization. No other purely national organization is or can be in the India of today. Fortunately again for India and humanity, the Congress has pledged itself since 1920 to win India's freedom through non-violent means. But up to now it has been largely a debating society, offering civil disobedience at intervals and all the time only playing with its vital programme of construction. At one time every Congressman was expected to create something for the nation. He or she was to spin for the nation. Congressmen would not respond, and the clause about spinning was dropped. There were other items too which every Congressmen was to work. But he has not done so to the extent expected. The moment has now come for him to make a definite choice. The only programme before him is to become a servant or soldier of peace. A soldier of peace, unlike the one of the sword, has to give all his spare time to the promotion of peace alike in war time as in peace time. His work in peace time is both a measure of prevention of, as also that of preparation for, war time.

If then I was a Congressman with a vote, I would vote, as an emergency measure, for requiring every Congressman now on the Congress register or to come hereafter to possess the minimum qualifications for working the constructive programme. It would be wrong to remind me that the Congress should retain its democratic character. It will not lose it because, of its own motion, it becomes an efficient working body which anybody undertaking to obey its discipline and conditions of membership may join. The Congress will cease to be popular, if it cannot deserve popularity in times of stress. If it cannot provide work for the workless and hungry, if it cannot protect the people from depredations or teach them how to face them, if it cannot help them in the face of danger, it will lose its prestige and popularity. No person or

corporation can live long on his or its capital. The latter has to circulate and multiply itself.

The Congress has become popular because it has been foremost in fighting imperialism. Today the old way is of no avail. Nobody thinks of mass revolt at the present moment. The best, quickest and most efficient way is to build up from the bottom. The psychological moment has come. "Back to the villages!" has become a necessity from every point of view. Now is the time to decentralize production and distribution. Every village has to become a self-sufficient republic. This does not require brave resolutions. It requires brave, corporate, intelligent work. As far as I know at the present moment this is common ground between the rulers and the people.

Let every Congressman answer for himself whether he will be a soldier or servant of peace or whether he will become a nonentity unwilling to take his place in building up Swaraj.

On train Bardoli-Wardha, 9-1-1942

*Harijan*, 18-1-'42, p. 4

## 52. NON-VIOLENT VOLUNTEER CORPS

(From *Harijanbandhu*)

Some time ago an attempt was made, at my instance, to form *shantidals* but nothing came of it. This lesson, however, was learnt that the membership, in its very nature, of such organizations could not be large. Ordinarily, the efficient running of a large volunteer corps based on force implies the possibility of the use of force in the event of breach of discipline. In such bodies little or no stress is laid on a man's character. Physique is the chief factor. The contrary must obtain in non-violent bodies in which character or soul-force must mean everything and physique must take second place. It is difficult to find many such persons. That is why non-violent corps must be small, if they are to be efficient. Such brigades may be scattered all over; there may be one each for a village or a *moholla*. The members must know one another well. Each corps will select its own head. All the members will have the same status, but where everyone is doing the same work there must be one person under whose discipline all must come, or else the work will suffer. Where there are two or more brigades the leaders must consult among themselves and decide on a common line of action. In that way alone lies success.

If non-violent volunteer corps are formed on the above lines, they can easily stop trouble. These corps will not require all the physical training even in *akhadas*, but a certain part of it will be necessary.

One thing, however, should be common to members of all such organizations and that is implicit faith in God. He is the only companion and doer. Without faith in Him these peace brigades will be lifeless. By whatever name one calls God, one must realize that one can only work through His strength. Such a man will never take another's life. He will allow himself, if need be, to be killed and thereby live through his victory over death.

The mind of the man in whose life the realization of this law has become a living reality will not be bewildered in crisis. He will instinctively know the right way to act.

In spite, however, of what I have said above I would like to give some rules culled from my own experience:

1. A volunteer may not carry any weapons.
2. The members of a corps must be easily recognizable.
3. Every volunteer must carry bandages, scissors, needle and thread, surgical knife etc. for rendering first aid.
4. He should know, how to carry and remove the wounded.
5. He should know how to put out fires, how to enter a fire area without getting burnt, how to climb heights for rescue work and descend safely with or without his charge.
6. He should be well acquainted with all the residents of his locality. This is a service in itself.
7. He should recite *Ramanama* ceaselessly in his heart and persuade others who believe to do likewise.

There are many who, whether from mental laziness or from having fallen into a bad habit believe that God is and will help us unasked. Why then is it necessary to recite His name? It is true that if God is, He is irrespective of our belief. But realization of God is infinitely more than mere belief! That can come only by constant practice. This is true of all science. How much more true of the science of all sciences?

Man often repeats the name of God parrot-wise and expects fruit from so doing. The true seeker must have that living faith which will not only dispel the untruth of parrot-wise repetition from within him but also from the hearts of others.

*Harijan*, 5-5-'46, p. 113

### 53. ATOM BOMB AND AHIMSA

It has been suggested by American friends that the atom bomb will bring in *ahimsa* (non-violence) as nothing else can. It will, if it is meant that its destructive power will so disgust the world that it will turn away from violence for the time being. This is very like a man glutting himself with dainties to the point of nausea and turning away from them only to return with redoubled zeal after the effect of nausea is well over. Precisely in the same manner will the world return to violence with renewed zeal after the effect of disgust is worn out.

Often does good come out of evil. But that is God's, not man's plan. Man knows that only evil can come out of evil, as good out of good.

That atomic energy though harnessed by American scientists and army men for destructive purposes may be utilized by other scientists for humanitarian purposes is undoubtedly within the realm of possibility. But that is not what was meant by my American friends. They were not so simple as to put a question which connoted an obvious truth. An incendiary uses fire for his destructive and nefarious purpose, a housewife makes daily use of it in preparing nourishing food for mankind.

So far as I can see, the atomic bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained mankind for ages. There used to be the so-called laws of war which made it tolerable. Now we know the naked truth. War knows no law except that of might. The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the allied arms but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see. Forces of nature act in a mysterious manner. We can but solve the mystery by deducting the unknown result from the known results of similar events. A slave-holder cannot hold a slave without putting himself or his deputy in the cage holding the slave. Let no one run away with the idea that I wish to put in a defence of Japanese misdeeds in pursuance of Japan's unworthy ambition. The difference was only one of degree. I assume that Japan's greed was more unworthy. But

the greater unworthiness conferred no right on the less unworthy of destroying without mercy men, women and children of Japan in a particular area. The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only by love. Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred. I am aware that I am repeating what I have many times stated before and practised to the best of my ability and capacity. What I first stated was itself nothing new. It was as old as the hills. Only I recited no copy-book maxim but definitely announced what I believed in every fibre of my being. Sixty years of practice in various walks of life has only enriched the belief which experience of friends has fortified. It is however the central truth by which one can stand alone without flinching. I believe in what Max Muller said years ago, namely that truth needed to be repeated as long as there were men who disbelieved it.

Poona, 1-7-1946

*Harijan*, 7-7-'46, p. 212

#### 54. WHY IS *HARIJAN* REVIVED?

(Originally appeared under the title "*Harijan* Revived")

Why is *Harijan* revived? This question may have occurred to many as it has to me. I may tell the reader that no effort was made for its revival. An application for the removal of the ban was made on 3-12-1945 and the ban was removed on 10-1-1946. Many readers, including English and American had all along felt a void and they began to feel it more after the defeat of the Fascist Powers. The reason for the feeling was obvious. They wanted my reaction, in terms of truth and non-violence, to the, various events happening in India, if not in the world. I wished to satisfy this desire.

There have been cataclysmic changes in the world. Do I still adhere to my faith in truth and non-violence? Has not the atom bomb exploded that faith? Not only has it not done so but it has clearly demonstrated to me that the twins constitute the mightiest force in the world. Before it the atom bomb is of no effect. The two opposing forces are wholly different in kind, the one moral and spiritual, the other physical and material. The one is infinitely superior to the other which by its very nature has an end. The force of the spirit is ever progressive and endless. Its full expression makes it unconquerable in the world. In saying this I know that I have said nothing new. I merely bear witness to the fact. What is more, that force resides in everybody, man, woman and child, irrespective of the colour of the skin. Only in many it lies dormant, but it is capable of being awakened by judicious training.

It is further to be observed that without the recognition of this truth and due effort to realize it, there is no escape from self- destruction. The remedy lies in every individual training himself for self-expression in every walk of life, irrespective of response by the neighbours. *Harijan* will attempt from week to week to stand up for this truth and illustrate it.

On way to Madura, 2-2-1946

*Harijan*, 10-2-'46, p. 8

## 55. HOW TO CANALIZE HATRED

(Some extracts from the above article are given below.)

Hatred is in the air and impatient lovers of the country will gladly take advantage of it, if they can, through violence, to further the cause of independence. I suggest that it is wrong at any time and everywhere. But it is more wrong and unbecoming in a country where fighters for freedom have declared to the world that their policy is truth and non-violence. Hatred they argue, cannot be turned into love. Those who believe in violence will naturally use it by saying, 'kill your enemy, injure him and his property wherever you can, whether openly or secretly as necessity requires'. The result will be deeper hatred and counter-hatred, and vengeance let loose on both sides. The recent war, whose embers have yet hardly died, loudly proclaims the bankruptcy of this use of hatred. And it remains to be seen whether the so-called victors have really won or whether they have not depressed themselves in seeking and trying to depress their enemies. It is a bad game at its best. Some philosophers of action in this country improve upon the model and say 'we shall never kill our enemy but we shall destroy his property'. Perhaps I do them an injustice when I call it 'his property', for the remarkable thing is that the so-called enemy has brought no property of his own and what little he has brought he makes us pay for. Therefore, what we destroy is really our own. The bulk of it, whether in men or things, he produces here. So what he really has is the custody of it. For the destruction too we have to pay through the nose and it is the innocent who are made to pay. That is the implication of punitive tax and all it carries with it. Nonviolence in the sense of mere non-killing does not appear to me, therefore, to be any improvement on the technique of violence. It means slow torture and when slowness becomes ineffective we shall immediately revert to killing and to the atom bomb, which is the last word in violence today. Therefore, I suggested in 1920 the use of non-violence and its inevitable twin companion truth, for canalizing hatred into the proper channel. The hater hates not for the sake of hatred but because he wants to drive away from his

country the hated being or beings. He will, therefore, as readily achieve his end by non-violent as by violent means. For the past 25 years, willingly or unwillingly, the Congress has spoken to the masses in favour of non-violence as against violence for regaining our lost liberty. We have also discovered through our progress that in the application of non-violence we have been able to reach the mass mind far more quickly and far more extensively than ever before. And yet, if truth is told as it must be, our nonviolent action has been half-hearted. Many have preached nonviolence through the lips while harbouring violence in the breast. But the unsophisticated mass mind has read the secret meaning hidden in our breasts and the unconscious reaction has not been altogether as it might have been. Hypocrisy has acted as an ode to virtue, but it could never take its place. And so I plead for nonviolence and yet more non-violence. I do so not without knowledge but with sixty years' experience behind me.

*Harijan, 24-2-'46, p. 20*

## 56. THE ANTIDOTE TO VIOLENCE

(From "To the Indian Critics")

There is undoubtedly a party of violence in the country. It is as patriotic as the best among us. What is more, it has much sacrifice to its credit. In daring it is not to be surpassed by any of us. It is easy enough to fling unkind adjectives at its members, but it will not carry conviction with them. I am not now referring to the frothy eloquence that passes muster for patriotism. I have in mind that secret, silent persevering brand of young men and even women who want to see their country free at any cost. But whilst I admire and adore their patriotism, I have no faith whatsoever in their method. They and I are as poles asunder. India's salvation does not lie through violence. I am convinced that their methods have cost the country much more than they know or will care to admit. Let them study the reforms which they claim were a result of their activity. Assuming that their claim is just, let them remember that the reforms have cost more than the country could at all pay. But they will listen to no argument however reasonable it may be, unless they are convinced that there is a programme before the country which requires at least as much sacrifice as the tallest among them is prepared to make. They will not be allured by our speeches, resolutions or even conferences. Action alone has any appeal for them. This appeal can only come from non-violent action which is no other than civil resistance. In my opinion it and it alone can save the country from impending lawlessness and secret crime. That even civil resistance may fail and may also hasten the lawlessness is no doubt a possibility. But if it fails in its purpose, it will not be civil resistance that will have failed. It will fail, if it does, for want of faith and consequent incapacity in the civil resisters. This argument may not appeal to the critic. I shall be sorry if it does not. Even so, he will perhaps admit the purity of my motive.

We must cease to dread violence, if it will have the country to be free. Can we not see that we are tightly pressed in the coil of violence? The peace we seem to prize is a mere make shift and it is bought with the blood of the starving

millions. If the critics could only realize the torture of their slow and lingering death brought about by forced starvation, they would risk anarchy and worse in order to end that agony. The agony will not end till the existing rule of spoliation has ended. I would have waited if I could have been convinced that the condition of the masses has undergone progressive amelioration under British rule. Alas, he who runs may see that it has progressively deteriorated under that rule. It is a sin, with that knowledge, to sit supine, and for fear of imaginary anarchy or worse, to stop action that may prevent anarchy, and it is bound, if successful, to end the heartless spoliation of a people who have deserved a better fate.

*Young India*, 23-1-'30, p. 28

### **57. NOT REALLY NON-VIOLENCE**

(From "Gandhiji and Future Role of Constructive Programme" by Pyarelal)

My eyes have now been opened. I now see that what we practised during the fight with the British under the name of non-violence, was not really non-violence. God had purposely sealed my eyes as He wanted to accomplish His great purpose through me. That purpose being accomplished, He has restored to me my sight.

*Harijan*, 6-3-'49, p. 5 at p. 7

## PART III: COWARDICE AND SECRECY—TWO SINS

### 58. HELPLESSNESS

(From "Notes")

I have a long telegram describing a daring dacoity attempted in Sukkur at 10 p.m. on the 22nd near the Police Station and in the heart of the town. The telegram adds that the bankers are feeling unsafe and that the dacoits are still un-caught. The object of the telegram no doubt is to excite public sympathy and criticism of a Government the most expensive in the world and yet failing to afford simple protection to life and property. That sympathy the citizens of Sukkur have. Criticism of the Government they may also have by the cartload. But the more relevant question is what the bankers were doing when the dacoits came. From the telegram it would appear that they more or less successfully attempted self-defence. Those who would keep the possessions cannot have too much power of self-defence. When the helpless cry of robbery comes under my notice, I think more of the weakness of the robbed than of the incapacity of the Government to protect. Law allows the right of self-defence. Human dignity demands the courage to defend oneself. It would be a training in Swaraj if the people everywhere instead of looking to the authority to defend their lives, property and honour would learn to rely upon themselves for self-defence.

*Young India*, 5-3-'25, p. 79

## 59. NO ROOM FOR COWARDICE

(From "Hindu-Muslim Unity")

My creed of non-violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for cowardice or even weakness. There is hope for a violent man to be some day non-violent, but "there is none for a coward. I have therefore said more than once in these pages that if we do not know how to defend ourselves, our women and our places of worship by the force of suffering, i.e. non-violence, we must, if we are men, be at least able to defend all these by fighting. It is unmanly to ask or expect the Government to ensure the peace between rival parties or to defend our women against ourselves. And while we remain so unmanly it is hopeless to expect Swaraj.

*Young India*, 16-6-'27, p. 196

## 60. COWARDICE WORSE THAN VIOLENCE—I

(From an address of Gandhiji to the Executive Committee of the Kathiawad Political Conference which appeared in an article of M.D. published under the title "The Decision and After—III")

I am not tired of repeating again and again that we should be non-violent in thought and word and deed. We had been saying so, but there was no emphasis on the first of these. A dissolute character is more dissolute in thought than in deed. And the same is true of violence. Our violence in word and deed is but a feeble echo of the surging violence of thought in us.

Are you prepared to go with me so far? Does all that I say carry conviction? If so, violence should be eschewed from the innermost of our thoughts. But if you cannot go with me, do go your own way. If you can reach your goal in any other way, do so by all means. You will deserve my congratulations. For I cannot in any case stand cowardice. Let no one say when I am gone that I taught the people to be cowards. If you think my ahimsa amounts to that, or leads you to that, you should reject it without hesitation. I would far rather that you died

bravely dealing a blow and receiving a blow than died in abject terror. If the ahimsa of my dream is impossible you can reject the creed rather than carry on the pretence of non-violence.

Fleeing from battle—*palayanam*—is cowardice, and unworthy of a warrior. An armed fighter is known to have sought fresh arms as soon as he loses those in his possession and they lose their efficacy. He leaves the battle to get them. A non-violent warrior knows no leaving the battle. He rushes into the mouth of *himsa*, never even once harbouring an evil thought. If this ahimsa seems to you to be impossible, let us be honest with ourselves and say so, and give it up.

For me there is no laying down arms. I cannot do so. I am trying to be the warrior of my description and, if God wills, I may be that during this life. Such a warrior can fight single-handed.

*Harijan*, 17-6-'39, p. 166

### 61. COWARDICE WORSE THAN VIOLENCE—II

(A question and answer thereto which appeared in an article "What To Do?" are reproduced below.)

**Q.** You have all along held and expressed the view that persons should observe strict non-violence even when attacked by hooligans or others. Does this hold good when women are attacked or outraged? If people are unable to follow your lead regarding, non-violence, would you advise them to die as cowards or resist aggression with violence?

**A** In a society of my imagination, outrage posited by the questioner cannot take place. But in the society in the midst of which we are living, such outrages do take place. My answer is unequivocal. A non-violent man or woman will and should die without retaliation, anger or malice, in self-defence or in defending the honour of his womenfolk. This is the highest form of bravery.

If an individual or a group of people are unable or unwilling to follow this great law of life, which is miscalled my lead, retaliation or resistance unto death is the second best, though a long way off from the first. Cowardice is impotence

worse than violence. The coward desires revenge but being afraid to die, he looks to others, may be the Government of the day, to do the work of defence for him. A coward is less than man. He does not deserve to be a member of a society of men and women. Lastly, let me add that if women had followed or would now follow my advice, every woman would protect herself without caring or waiting for aid from her brother or sister.

*Harijan, 15-9-'46, p. 312*

## 62. NOT READY FOR NON-VIOLENCE?

(Originally appeared under the title "Antidote")

After giving a graphic description of the recent unfortunate and disgraceful happenings in Calcutta, a writer asks:

"What is our duty in such circumstances? The Congress gives no clear instructions to the rank and file in such crises. Sermon on non-violence from afar are of little use. To have offered non-violent resistance would have meant allowing all property to be destroyed and every Hindu to be killed."

The Congress Working Committee has given the clearest possible lead in the last sentence of its resolution published in the newspapers. Fratricide will not abate by "intimidation and violence but by mutual understanding, friendly discussion and, if necessary, by agreed arbitration". One does not need to believe in non-violence as a creed to perceive the truth of this practical proposition. If through deliberate courage the Hindus had died to a man, that would have been deliverance of Hinduism and India and purification of Islam in this land.

As it was, a third party had to intervene in order to still mutual savagery. Neither the Muslims nor the Hindus concerned have gained by the intervention. Supposing that the Calcutta virus extends to the whole of India and British gunpowder keeps the two from stabbing one another, the British power or its substitute will be in possession of India for a long time to come. The length will be measured by the period required by the parties coming to sanity. It will come either by an exhausting mutual fight, independent of the foreign element or by one party eschewing violence in spite of heaviest odds. Successful mutual strife is obviously impossible in the present state of general ignorance of the use of modern weapons and their inaccessibility. Non-violence does not require any outside or outward training. It simply requires the will not to kill even in retaliation and the courage to face death without revenge. This is no sermon on

ahimsa but cold reason and the statement of a universal law. Given the unquenchable faith in the law, no provocation should prove too great for the exercise of forbearance. This I have described as the non-violence of the brave.

Unfortunately for us, we are strangers to the non-violence of the brave on a mass scale. Some even doubt the possibility of the exercise of non-violence by groups, much less by masses of people. They restrict its exercise to exceptional individuals. Only, mankind can have no use for it if it is; always reserved only for individuals.

Be that as it may, this much is clear that if the people are probably not ready for the exercise of non-violence of the brave, they must be ready for the use of force in self-defence. There should be no camouflage. Self-defence must be pure and simple. Then too it must never be cowardly or crude. It must, therefore, never be secret. Such is stabbing in the back and evading detection. I am conscious of the fact that we are a people unarmed and untrained in the use of arms. Opinions will differ as to whether it is good that we are in that position. There can be no denying the fact that no one needs training in the use of arms in self-defence. What is wanted for the purpose is strong arms and stronger will.

Doing injury to another is obviously violence but harbouring injury to another and yet unwillingness from cowardice to defend oneself or one's neighbour is also violence and probably worse than the first.

What then are the leaders to do? What are the new Ministers to do? They must ever seek to attain communal harmony—never under threats, ever for its own sake. I regard a Muslim or any other non-Hindu as my blood-brother, not in order to please him but because he is born of the same mother Hind as I am. He does not cease to be my brother because he may hate or disown me. I must woo him even, it may be, in spite of himself. The new Ministers must resolve never to use British troops, no matter what their hue is, not even the police trained by them. They are not our enemies. But they have been hitherto used not to help people but to keep them under the foreign yoke. They should now, as they can, be used for constructive purposes. The military are specially

qualified for such work. They are trained and expected to bring into being canvas cities in a moment. They know what it is to procure and keep clean water and make perfect sanitary arrangements. No doubt, they know how to kill and be killed in the act. The public know this part of their work too well. But it is by no means the most substantial part of their work. It is the background which should be prized, advertised and followed. The animal part of it is unhuman, the other part is essentially human and clean. Let us copy it and humanize the troops if we can. The attempt is worth making. It can only be made by those who are not deceived by the glamour that hangs round them and the awe they inspire. This is possible only when we have the courage to face death without revenge or retaliation in mind or deed.

New Delhi, 2-9-1946

*Harijan*, 8-9-'46, p. 296

### 63. VIOLENCE FAR BETTER THAN COWARDLY SUBMISSION

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Ways of Violence")

A straight line is one. Non-violence is a straight line. Lines that are not straight are many. A child who has learnt how to handle a pen can draw as many lines as he wishes. He won't draw a straight line except perhaps by chance. Several readers ask me whether in the violence "permitted" by me several things mentioned by them could be included. Strange to say all the letters received are in English! The writers should re-read my article and they will at once know why I cannot answer those questions. I am unfit probably for the simple reason that I have never practised violence. Above all I have never permitted violence. I have simply stated two grades of bravery and cowardice. The only thing lawful is non-violence. Violence can never be lawful in the sense meant here, i.e. not according to man-made law but according to the law made by Nature for man. Though violence is not lawful, when it is offered in self-defence or for the defence of the defenceless, it is an act of bravery far better than cowardly submission. The latter befits neither man nor woman. Under violence there are many stages and varieties of bravery. Every man must judge for himself. No other person can or has the right.

New Delhi, 18-10-1946

*Harijan*, 27-10-'46, p. 369

#### 64. THE SECRET WAYS OF SATAN

(Originally appeared under the title "An Advice") The following anonymous advice has been received by me:

"Mahatma,

"Listen to a woman's advice. Reject it, but ponder over it well before you reject, and pray to the Allwise fervently for wisdom and inspiration. Concentration is strength, diversion is weakness. Limit your scope of non-co-operation to only three things: foreign goods, the police service and the army. Thereby you will remove all internal differences and strengthen our cause and speed Swaraj. Confine your efforts chiefly, not wholly to the border tribes, the Sikhs, the Punjabis, the Dogras and especially the Gurkhas. Work through secret societies as history teaches, and not by flourish of trumpets. Do not threaten but strike, and strike at the root and not at the branches. May God speed you and our cause to success. –Mrs. F."

The letter is undated. It is evidently not a woman's letter. It is too unwomanly to be a woman's letter. The women of India are infinitely braver than the letter would make them out to be. The writer writes about God but is possessed with the fear of the British bayonet, and would therefore gladly make use of the Sikh and the Gurkha steel. He has ill-digested the gospel of non-co-operation. In his fearsomeness, he does not see that to exchange British brute force for any other brute force is no real remedy for the ills of India. And if it is the steel that is to decide the issue, it must be not Sikh or Gurkha steel, it must be all India steel. That is the one supreme lesson that Europe teaches. If it is brute force that is to rule, then the millions of India must learn the art of war, or must forever remain prostrate at the feet of him who wields the sword, whether he is *pardeshi* or *swadeshi*. The millions must remain 'dumb driven cattle'. Non-co-operation is an attempt to awaken the masses to a sense of their dignity and power. This can only be by enabling them to realize that they need not fear brute force, if they would but know the soul within.

The Dogras, the Sikhs, the Gurkhas, and the other martial races of India, we do want, not for the purpose of giving battle to the British soldier, but for the purpose of refraining from helping the British soldier to subjugate us. We want our military classes to realize that they only perpetuate their own and our slavery by wielding the sword at the dictation of a British officer. And that time will come when the school the writer represents has become defunct, and when the military classes have also understood the necessity of non-violence.

The writer makes me suspicious about himself when he asks us to concentrate our attention on foreign goods, the police and the army. He would thus secure internal unity by waiving all sacrifice, i.e. purification by the very classes who have hitherto led public opinion—whereas the whole battle of non-co-operation rages round these very classes. It may, for the time being, appear to have struck a discordant note, but, in fact, it will achieve real unity after the process of purification is over.

The writer has moreover missed the grand result already achieved by the absolute openness of our battle. In my opinion, the public has never expressed itself so fearlessly and openly as at present. It has almost lost the fear of the highly artificial law of sedition. When the writer talks of secret societies, he seems to talk of a bygone age. You cannot raise this great nation to its full height by the unclean methods of secrecy. We must, by boldly carrying on our campaign in the light of the blazing sun of openness, disarm the secret and demoralizing police department. Non-co-operation is nothing if it does not strike at the root. And you strike at the root when you cease to water this deadly tree of the British Government by means of open and honourable non-co-operation. The writer takes the name of God in vain, when he advocates in the same breath the secret ways of Satan.

*Young India*, 1-12-'20, p. 3

## 65. THE SIN OF SECRECY

One of the curses of India is often the sin of secrecy. For fear of an unknown consequence we talk in whispers. Nowhere has this secrecy oppressed me more than in Bengal. Everybody wishes to speak to you 'in private'. The spectacle of innocent young men looking around, before opening their lips, to see that no third party overhears their conversation has given me the greatest grief. Every stranger is suspected of belonging to the secret service. I have been warned to beware of strangers. The cup of my misery was filled when I was told that the unknown student who presided at the students' meeting belonged to the secret service department. I could recall the names of at least two prominent leaders who are suspected in high Indian circles of being spies of the Government.

I feel thankful to God that for years past I have come to regard secrecy as a sin more especially in politics. If we realized the presence of God as witness to all we say and do, we would not have anything to conceal from anybody on earth. For, we would not think unclean thoughts before our Maker, much less speak them. It is uncleanness that seeks secrecy and darkness. The tendency of human nature is to hide dirt, we do not want to see or touch dirty things; we want to put them out of sight. And so it must be with our speech. I would suggest that we should avoid even thinking thoughts we would hide from the world.

This desire for secrecy has bred cowardice amongst us and has made us dissemble our speech. The best and the quickest way of getting rid of this corroding and degrading secret service is for us to make a final effort to think everything aloud, have no privileged conversation with any soul on earth and to cease to fear the spy. We must ignore his presence and treat everyone as a friend entitled to know all our thoughts and plans. I know that I have achieved most satisfactory results from evolving the boldest of my plans in broad day light. I have never lost a minute's peace for having detectives by my side. The public may not know that I have been shadowed throughout my stay in India. That has not only not worried me but I have even taken friendly services from

these gentlemen: many have apologized for having to shadow me. As a rule what I have spoken in their presence has already been published to the world. The result is that now I do not even notice • the presence of these men and I do not know that the Government is much the wiser for having watched my movements through its secret agency. My opinion is that these agents accompany me as a matter of form or routine. They certainly never bother me. I venture to make a present of my experience to every young man in Bengal and for that matter in India. No one need think that my public position and not my openness, saves me from offensive attention. It is the simplest thing to see that the moment you cease to dread the presence of the spy and therefore refuse to treat him as such, that moment his presence ceases to offend you. Soon the Government will feel ashamed to have its secret service department or, if it does not, the secret police will be sick of an occupation which serves no use.

Non-co-operation is essentially a cleansing process. It deals with causes rather than symptoms. The detective department is a symptom of the secrecy which is the cause. Removal of secrecy brings about the full disappearance of the secret service without further effort. The Press Act is a symptom of the disease of cowardice. If we would boldly declare our intentions, the Press Act will die of inanition. The beginners will have to suffer for their so-called daring. I hear that the *Servant* of Calcutta has been served with a warning for its tenacity to take over an article from *Young India* condensing Mr. Rajgopalachari's admirable instructions to voters. I notice too that the most telling passages of my speech in Calcutta have been omitted by the Press evidently for fear of the censor. I would far rather see a complete stoppage of a newspaper if the editor cannot without fear of the consequence freely express his sentiments or publish those which he approves.

Non-co-operation while it gladly avails itself of the assistance that may be rendered by the Press, it is,—has to be— by its very nature independent of the Press. There can be no doubt that every thought we print is being printed on sufferance. As soon as its circulation takes effect, the Government for the sake

of its existence, will try to prohibit it. We may not expect this or any Government to commit suicide. It must either reform or repress.

In the ordinary course repression must precede reform under a despotic Government such as ours. The stoppage of the circulation of potent ideas that may destroy the Government or compel repentance will be the least among the weapons in its repressive armoury. We must therefore devise methods of circulating our ideas unless and until the whole Press becomes fearless, defies consequences and publishes ideas, even when it is in disagreement with them just for the purpose of securing its freedom. An editor with an original idea or an effective prescription for India's ills can easily write them out, a hundred hands can copy them, many more can read them out to thousand of listeners. I do hope therefore that non-co-operation editors, at any rate, will not refrain from expressing their thoughts for fear of the Press Act. They should regard it as sinful to keep their thoughts secret—a waste of energy to conduct a newspaper that cramps their thoughts. It is negation of one's calling for an editor to have to suppress his best thoughts.

*Young India, 22-12-'20, p. 3*

## **66. NO SECRET TO KEEP**

(From "Some Questions")

Q. Surely you are not so impatient as to start your campaign without letting the authorities know your plans and giving them an opportunity of meeting you and arresting you?

A. Those who know my past should know that I hold it to be contrary to satyagraha to do anything secretly or impatiently. My plans will be certainly sent to the Viceroy before I take any definite step. A satyagrahi has no secrets to keep from its opponent or so-called enemy.

*Young India, 20-2-'30, p. 60*

## 67. SECRECY

(From "Question Box")

Q. You should give your opinion clearly about secrecy. During the last struggle there was a great deal of secrecy to outwit the authorities.

A I am quite clear that secrecy does no good to our cause. It certainly gave joy to those who were able successfully to outwit the police. Their cleverness was undoubted. But satyagraha is more than cleverness. Secrecy takes away from its dignity. Satyagrahis have no reason to have secret books or secret funds. I am aware that my opinion has not found favour among many co-workers. But I have seen no reason to change it. I admit I was lukewarm before. Experience has taught me that I should have been firm.

*Harijan, 13-4-'40, p. 89*

## 68. NO SECRECY

(From the article "Free India Can Help Best")

Q. Now what about your plan; you are reported to have matured plans for launching some big offensive?

A. Well, I have never believed in secrecy nor do I do so now. There are certainly many plans floating in my brain. But just now I merely allow them to float in my brain. My first task is to educate the public mind in India and world opinion, in so far as I am allowed to do so. And when I have finished that process to my satisfaction, I may have to do something. That something may be very big, if the Congress is with me and the people are with me. But British authority will have a full knowledge of anything I may wish to do before I enforce it. ... Naturally' I want to carry the whole of the Congress with me if I can, as I want to carry the whole of India with me. For my conception of freedom is no narrow conception. It is co-extensive with the freedom of man in all his majesty. I shall, therefore, take no step without the fullest deliberation.

*Harijan, 7-6-'42, p. 183*

## 69. LET BOLDNESS TRIUMPH OVER TIMID CAUTION

(From "Violence v. Non-violence")

It was because not very long ago we were afraid to speak or write that we thought that our sentiments burrowed under and became foul with stench because of the absence of the fierce sun and the open air of public opinion playing upon them. Hence we had a secret revolutionary movement. Today, thank God, we seem to have outlived the evil day. We dare to think, speak and write openly, without fear, but under restraint that openness imposes upon mankind. I appeal to the members of the liberal League and those who think with them to recognize this plain fact and to appreciate the superiority of boldness over timid caution. If they desire to harness all the innumerable forces that are coming daily into being for the uplift of the nation, if they wish to become privileged participators in the throes of the new birth let them not ignore the signs of the time, let them not reject the advances of the younger generation, let them not chill their ardent hopes and aspirations but let them head this growing party of young, enthusiastic, self-sacrificing, dare-devil men. Sympathize with them, respond to the heart's throb, regulate it, for they are amenable to reason or an appeal to their high-souledness—and you have a disciplined party, obedient to the call of the country. But if they feel neglected, if they feel that the older heads will not patiently listen to their wants, will not give them a helping hand they may despair and despair may lead to desperation resulting in a catastrophic destruction. I can recall no time so magnificently suitable for leading India to the method of satyagraha—not necessarily civil disobedience, but truth and non-violence—in which there is no defeat and in which if there is any error it hurts but those who err.

*Young India, 24-3-'20, p. 3*

## PART IV: INDIVIDUAL AND MASS ACTION

### 70. WHAT CAN A SOLITARY SATYAGRAHI DO?

(From "Question Box". From a letter from Orissa)

**Q.** There is one solitary satyagrahi in one of our villages. The rest do not worry about violence or non-violence. What discipline is that single satyagrahi to undergo?

**A.** Yours is a good question. The solitary satyagrahi has to examine himself. If he has universal love and if he fulfils the conditions implied in such a state, it must find its expression in his daily conduct. He would be bound with the poorest in the village by ties of service. He would constitute himself the scavenger, the nurse, the arbitrator of disputes, and the teacher of the children of the village. Everyone, young and old, would know him; though a householder he would be leading a life of restraint; he would make no distinction between his and his neighbours' children; he would own nothing but would hold what wealth he has in trust for others, and would therefore spend out of it just sufficient for his barest needs. His needs would, as far as possible, approximate those of the poor, he would harbour no Untouchability, and would therefore inspire people of all castes and creeds to approach him with confidence.

Such is the ideal satyagrahi. Our friend will always endeavour to come up to, wherever he falls short of, the ideal, fill in the gaps in his education, will not waste a single moment. His house will be a busy hive of useful activities centering round spinning. His will be a well-ordered household.

Such a satyagrahi will not find himself single-handed for long. The village will unconsciously follow him. But whether they do or not, at a time of emergency he will, single-handed, effectively deal with it or die in the attempt. But I firmly hold that he will have converted a number of others. I may add in this connection that I had come to Sevagram as a solitary satyagrahi. Luckily or

unluckily, I could not remain alone, several from outside came and settled with me. I do not know whether any inhabitant of the village proper can be counted as a satyagrahi, but I do hope that some of them are unconsciously shaping themselves as such. Let me say that I do not fulfil all the tests I have laid down. But I should not have mentioned them, had I not been striving to put into practice all of them. My present ambition is certainly to make of Sevagram an ideal village. I know that the work is as difficult as to make of India an ideal country. But while it is possible for one man to fulfil his ambition with respect to a single village some day, one man's life-time is too short to overtake the whole of India. But if one man can produce one ideal village, he will have provided a pattern not only for the whole country, but perhaps for the whole world. More than this a seeker may not aspire after.

*Harijan*, 4-8-'40, p. 234 at p. 235

## 71. CAN HE STAND ALONE?

(From "Question Box")

*Q.* You are anxious that there should be believers in complete non-violence in every province. Is there not need then to organize a Sangh of such persons? Or are you of opinion that ahimsa is a force that enables individuals to stand alone?

A Complete non-violence needs neither the aid of speech nor of the pen. And if it does not require the help of these two means, it certainly does not stand in need of organized strength. A man or woman who is saturated with ahimsa has only to will a thing and it happens. I can picture this truth in my imagination. It is stated in the scriptures too. But my experience can only be reckoned as meagre; so meagre that I cannot ask anyone to build on it. Hence my desire to build an organization pledged to unadulterated non-violence. At the same time I believe that true believers in out and out non-violence should have the strength to stand alone. They will thus be soldiers and their own generals at the same time. If the non-violent army of my dreams can be set up, it will put an end to the existing disbelief in the power of nonviolence. Indeed the Congress will itself be converted to nonviolence.

*Harijan, 18-8-'40, p. 253*

## 72. THE STRENGTH OF A SATYAGRAHI

(From "Limitations of Satyagraha")

The fact is that satyagraha presupposes the living presence and guidance of God. The leader depends not on his own strength but on that of God. He acts as the Voice within guides him. Very often therefore what are practical politics so-called are unrealities to him, though in the end his prove to be the most practical politics.

*Young India, 2-8-'28, p. 260*

### 73. BELIEF IN GOD INDISPENSABLE FOR A SATYAGRAHI

I

(From "Gandhi Seva Sangh—IV" by M.D.)

In his inaugural address Gandhiji had said that belief in God was one of the indispensable qualifications of a satyagrahi. One of the members asked if some of the socialists and communists who did not believe in God could not be satyagrahis.

"I am afraid not. For a satyagrahi has no other stay but God, and he who has any other stay or depends on any other help cannot offer satyagraha. He may be a passive resister, non-co- operator and so on, but not a true satyagrahi. It is open to you to argue that this excludes brave comrades whereas it may include men who profess a belief in God but who in the daily lives are untrue to their profession. I am not talking of those who are untrue to their profession, I am talking of those who are prepared in the name of God to stake their all for the sake of their principle. Don't ask me again why I am enunciating this principle today and did not do so 20 years ago. I can only say that I am no prophet. I am but an erring mortal, progressing from blunder towards truth. 'What about the Buddhists and Jains, then?' someone has asked. Well, I will say that if the Buddhists and Jains raise this objection themselves, and say that they would be disqualified if such a strict rule were observed, I should say to them that I agree with them.

"But far be it from me to suggest that you should believe in the God that I believe in. May be your definition is different from mine, but your belief in that God must be your ultimate mainstay. It may be some Supreme Power or some Being even indefinable, but belief in it is indispensable. To bear all kinds of tortures without a murmur of resentment is impossible for a human being without the strength that comes from God. Only in His strength we are strong. And only those who can cast their cares and their fears on that immeasurable Power have faith in God."

*Harijan*, 3-6-39, p. 145 at p. 146

## 74. MASS ACTION

A friend having seen the wonderful manifestation of mass action sends the following extracts from an article by Sir Martin Conway in *Commerce and Finance*:

"What any generation can accomplish in faith and growth is little compared with what has been accomplished for them by the generations that have gone before. This is evident enough in the case of material possessions and the great treasure of the world's art but it is still more true for the world's ideals. It is those that are the most precious of all its belongings, and for the preservation of these it has, not individuals, however great, but crowds to thank. For let me declare again that *it is in crowds that ideals reside*. It is they that incorporate them and they that *transmit them*. An individual may invent an ideal, but unless he can get it incorporated in a crowd it is barren of effect, and dies with him. Rail against the crowd as we may for its intolerance, its pride, its fickleness, its lack of measure and all the other shortcomings of which we are only too easily aware, it yet remains true that *upon crowds our spiritual life depends*, that from them we draw our enthusiasms, and to them we owe those flames of love and passion and glory which make the life of each individual the splendid opportunity that it is.

"A crowd that has never come physically together gains greatly in vigour if it can be in whole or even in part embodied. If it can be seen it will bring to bear on outsiders that attractiveness which every embodied crowd possesses. If it can see itself it will grow hot. Hence the great political demonstrations which are sometimes organized—the huge assemblies for instance, of the Primrose League, or the mammoth meetings in Hyde Park. The people who attend them only for the most part know that speaking is going forward at certain centres. Many of them hear nothing, but that makes no difference; they see one another or rather they see the crowd and they are very liable to catch its

enthusiasm and become a part of that greater body of which those present are a representative portion.

"An even more rudimentary application of the principle of crowd-attractiveness is the organization of processions. The longer they can be made the more useful they are, and the more they attract and impose upon the outsider. Nothing would seem less likely to convert an opponent into an advocate of female suffrage than to see a number of women marching in orderly sequence along the street, even if they carry flaming inscribed banners and distribute leaflets as they go. But political organizers know the value of such effort, and are willing to spend a considerable fraction of their resources upon them. A remarkable instance of this crude method of propaganda was the procession of 'businessmen' which marched along 5th Avenue, New York to show themselves as a crowd opposed to the election of Mr. Bryan to the Presidency of the United States and to the ideas of the supporters as represented in his person. No one made any speeches. The 'businessmen' just marched along in ordered ranks and showed their mass for what it was worth. The effect produced upon public opinion was considerable. If it did not defeat the candidate, it contributed to his defeat and that not because of the individual weight and wisdom of this and the other person marching along but because of the crowd of them, all united by a common emotion of hostility to what they regarded as a mistaken and dishonourable economic theory. An English movement dates its success from the day when it can fill the Albert Hall with a shouting throng, and it is an obvious fact that one successful enthusiastic Albert Hall gathering is worth more for purposes of propaganda than a score of smaller gatherings in unimportant halls and chapels."

The use at the present moment of this article consists in the help it gives one in measuring the progress of non-violence. An idea whether good or bad can be said to have gained ground only when it strikes the imagination of masses of men. Whatever crowds do is not necessarily always good. Nor is it true to say as

some have said, that non-violence is necessarily confined to individuals. On the contrary the test of the sincerity of one's belief in non-violence lies in the measure of its acceptance by masses of men. If non-violence could not affect masses of mankind, it is a waste of effort for individuals to cultivate it. I hold it to be the greatest gift of God. And all God's gifts are the common heritage of His creation and not a monopoly of cloistered monks or nuns. They may specialize in non-violence, they may teach us its wonderful effects, but if their discoveries and their claims are sound they must be adaptable by masses. If truth be not a monopoly of the few why should non-violence, its counterpart be otherwise? My reverent study of the scriptures of the world has led me to the belief that all register emphatic and unequivocal testimony in favour of non-violence being practised by all not merely singly but collectively as well. In all humility I have often felt that having no axes to grind and having by nature a detached mind, I give a truer interpretation of the Hindu, Christian, Islamic or other scriptures. For this humble claim I anticipate the forgiveness of Sanatanists, Christians and Musalmans.

*Young India*, 24-4-'30, p. 141

## 75. ACADEMIC v. PRACTICAL

(Translated from *Navajivan* by Pyarelal)

A student writes:

"Very often you give replies to your critics which are quite correct in the academic sense; they give a sort of temporary satisfaction to the mind but in actual practice leave the riddle as unsolved as ever. Take for instance your saying, 'Only a coward fights on the strength of numbers.' It is all right in the abstract. It does for the time being bring one a sort of mental reassurance, but of what avail is it in practice? You preach your gospel of soul-force to all and sundry. But do you think that there is any chance of your Utopian advice being seriously taken by those who have not faith even in the spinning wheel and khadi? Won't your preaching be like pouring water over a duck's neck utterly futile?"

I certainly hope that my advice about soul-force is not altogether wasted though it might seem unavailing for the time being. As an English proverb says, 'Constant dropping will wear away a stone.' And it is my faith that what seems Utopian to the correspondent today will be regarded as practical tomorrow. History is replete with such instances. If the word 'soul-force' appears a meaningless term to our students today, it only shows to what an abject plight we are reduced. For is it not most tragic, that things of the spirit, eternal verities should be regarded as Utopian by our youth, and transitory makeshifts alone appeal to them as practical?

We have an ocular demonstration of the futility of mere numbers before us every day. What stronger proof of the proposition can be needed than that a nation of three hundred million Indians is today being ruled by less than one lakh Englishmen? The very sight of a lion puts to flight a thousand sheep. The reason is plain. The sheep are aware of their weakness, the lion of its strength. And the consciousness of strength in the latter overpowers the numerical strength of the former. By analogy may we not deduce that 'soul-force' or

'spirit- force' may not after all be a mere chimera or figment of imagination but a substantial reality?

I do not wish to disparage the strength of numbers. It has its use but only when it is backed by the latent spirit-force. Millions of ants can kill an elephant by together attacking it in a vulnerable place. Their sense of solidarity, consciousness of oneness of spirit in spite of the diversity of bodies, in other words their spirit-force makes the ants irresistible. Even so the moment we develop a sense of mass unity like the ants, we too shall become irresistible and shall free ourselves from our chains.

It is my firm faith that the students of our national schools, a mere handful though they may be, if they are inspired by a real spirit of sacrifice and service and a living faith in their ideals, will stand the country in far greater stead than all the students in Government educational institutions put together. That quality is more than quantity is sound theory because it is true in practice. Indeed I hold that what cannot be proved in practice cannot be sound in theory.

When Galileo declared that the earth was round like a ball and turned on its axis, he was ridiculed as a visionary and a dreamer and was greeted with abuse. But today we know that Galileo was right, and it was his opponents, who believed the earth to be stationary and flat like a dish, that were living in the cloudland of their ignorance.

Modern education tends to turn our eyes away from the spirit. The possibilities of the spirit-force or soul-force therefore do not appeal to us, and our eyes are consequently rivetted on the evanescent, transitory, material-force. Surely this is the very limit of dull unimaginativeness.

But I live in hope and patience. I have an unshakable faith in the correctness of my proposition, a faith that is based on my and my companions' experience. And every student, if only he has got the faculty of patient, dispassionate research, can experimentally prove this for himself:

1. That mere numbers are useless.

2. That all force other than soul-force is transitory and useless.

It goes without saying, that if the above propositions are correct, it should be the constant endeavour of every student to arm himself with this matchless weapon of spirit-force by dint of self-discipline and self-purification.

*Young India*, 14-11-'29, p. 376

## PART V: CONSTRUCTIVE SATYAGRAHA

### 76. CONSTRUCTIVE SATYAGRAHA AND CLEANSING SATYAGRAHA

(From "To the Subscribers and the Readers")

A word as to the policy of *Young India*. Apart from its duty of drawing attention to injustices to individuals it will devote its attention to constructive satyagraha as also sometimes cleansing satyagraha. Cleansing satyagraha is civil resistance where resistance becomes a duty to remove a persistent and degrading injustice such as the Rowlatt Act.

*Young India*, 8-10-19, p. 2

## 77. CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME AND NON-VIOLENT STRUGGLE

(Originally appeared under the title "Is It Non-co-operation?")

The argument has been advanced that with the failure (in my opinion wrongly assumed) of the boycott of titles, schools, law courts, and Councils, non-co-operation is dead. The critics see nothing of non-co-operation in the slow and unexciting khaddar programme. They forget that the fourfold boycott is like a scaffolding which is absolutely necessary till the whole structure is ready. It does not matter that the institutions, which are the symbols of the authority we seek to destroy, continue to exist so long as we do not make use of them. The fact is that we cannot erect our structure without the scaffolding of the fourfold boycott. And we must succeed if we can work the Congress organization without the aid of these institutions and even in spite of them. Moreover, let us not forget that our boycott is not fourfold, but fivefold. The fifth is by far the most important, i.e. boycott of foreign (not merely British) cloth.

The boycott is the negative, though on that account none the less useful, part of our programme. Khaddar, national schools, Panchayats, Hindu-Muslim unity, and uplift of the untouchable, the drunkard and the opium eater, is the positive part of our programme. The greater our progress in it, the greater will be the progress towards the boycott and therefore, towards Swaraj. Nature abhors a vacuum. Therefore construction must keep pace with destruction. Even if all the friends gave up their titles, and if schools, courts and Councils were entirely deserted, and being thus embarrassed the Government abdicated in our favour, and if we had no constructive work to our credit, we could not conduct Swaraj. We should be entirely helpless. I often wonder whether it is sufficiently realized that our movement is not one for mere change of personnel but for change of the system and the methods. Full khaddar programme is, therefore, to me full Swaraj. The English interest in India is selfish and in conflict with the national interest. It is anti-national, because of the illegitimate cotton interest. To boycott, therefore, foreign cloth, is to sterilize the English and all other

foreign interests. Boycott merely of British cloth may harm the British but can lead to no construction in India. Boycott of British cloth will be a jump out of the frying pan into fire. Not before the foreign piece goods trade is entirely replaced by home-spun, will the bleeding process cease. Boycott of foreign cloth, therefore, is the centre of our boycott programme. This central boycott cannot succeed until we universalize khaddar. In order to achieve the desirable end we will need to employ all our resources to the fullest extent. We shall need men, money and machinery, i.e. organization. We cannot universalize khaddar without Hindu-Muslim unity, without removing Untouchability. To make khaddar successful is to *demonstrate* our capacity for self-government. Khaddar is a people's programme for success in which all, high and low, rich and poor, Hindu and non-Hindu, must take part.

But say the sceptics, 'How can khaddar bring Swaraj? Will Englishmen then retire in our favour?' My answer is— yes and no. Yes, because Englishmen will then find that their interest must be coincident with that of India. They will then be content to remain in India as her servants, for they will have then found that they cannot *impose* their custom upon us. When, therefore, khaddar becomes successful, Englishmen's hearts will have been changed. They will regard it then as an honour to be our allies instead of regarding it as they do now their right to be our masters. My answer is 'No', if we intend to drive out Englishmen and ruin *every* English interest, legitimate or otherwise. Such is not the goal of the non-violent movement. Non-violence has its limits. It refuses to hate or generate hatred. Indeed by its very nature, it is incapable of so doing. 'But' the sceptics further argue, 'suppose the English refuse to revise their system and insist upon holding India by the sword, what can universal use of khaddar do?' In thus doubting the efficacy of khaddar, they forget that khaddar is an indispensable preparation for civil disobedience. And this, everyone admits, is an irresistible force. Without the universal adoption of khaddar, I see no chance whatsoever of universal civil, i.e. non-violent, disobedience. Any single district that can be fully organized for khaddar is, if it is also trained for suffering, ready for civil disobedience. And I have not a shadow of doubt that

even one district thus organized can make itself irresistible even though the whole might of the Government may be matched against it.

'Who shall bell the cat?' is the last question. That question is, however, irrelevant to the present inquiry. The question that I set out to answer was whether constructive programme, i.e. khaddar could be considered part of non-co-operation. I have attempted to prove that it is an integral part of non-co-operation in its positive aspect.

*Young India*, 8-5-'24, p. 153-4

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**CONSTRUCTIVE V POLITICAL**

(From "Weekly Letter" by M. D.)

One of the questions that exercised a section of the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh at Savli quite considerably was about the compatibility or otherwise of the constructive with the political programme. Did an exclusive emphasis on the one exclude the other? Was such an emphasis necessary? Were these two mutually exclusive?

Gandhiji replied to these questions at some length. "I see," he said, "that there is a tendency to believe that these programmes are mutually exclusive or antagonistic. Much of our misunderstanding arises out of this belief. The worker in the constructive field looks down upon the political programme and vice versa. But really there is no such opposition. I had thought that it was clear by now to every worker that there was no absolute division between the so-called political and the so-called constructive programmes. In our method of work there are no watertight compartments. Nevertheless I do maintain that for the sake of efficiency it is necessary for one to confine oneself to one item at a time or such items that conveniently run together. The governor of the Bank of England exercises considerable influence on the politics of England, but he never busies himself with what are called active politics. He has hardly the time to follow the debates in the House of Commons. But he is at least as important a member in the English public life as say a noted member of the House of Commons. As a general rule I would suggest that the members of the Sangh should occupy themselves with work that brings no kudos and that is ordinarily not liked by workers.

*Harijan, 28-3-'36, p. 49*

### 79. WHAT IS POLITICAL EDUCATION?

(From the summary by M. D. of Gandhiji's concluding discourse at the Gandhi Seva Sangh meeting which appeared under the title "The Concluding Discourse")

That leads me to Sjt. Thakar's question—whether introduction of the constructive programme in the villages is our goal or political education is our goal. I think it rather odd that this question should be put after 17 years' working of the programme. For me there is no political education apart from the constructive programme. If I went to the people just to win their votes, I should be guilty of the same error as I am laying at the door of our missionary friends. There is no other political education but the constructive programme which is education in itself. In South Africa I did not give any political education so called to the so-called 'coolies', but they rose to the occasion because of the solid work done in their midst. In 1921 the programme of civil disobedience was placed before the people of Bardoli, but the preliminary condition they had to satisfy was a fulfilment of the constructive programme. That programme was, to my shame and the Sardar's shame, never wholly fulfilled, but to the extent it was fulfilled, Bardoli carried on two successful satyagraha struggles. After the C.D. campaign was withdrawn what remained was the spinning wheel and other parts of the constructive programme. The Congress has to carry out that programme and finish thereby the political education of the people if it still has faith in the programme. Otherwise it should throw the programme overboard.

*Harijan*, 8-5-'37, p. 97 at p. 98

## 80. THE ONLY WAY

(From "Why")

While I was engaged in organizing and conducting the civil disobedience movement on behalf of the Congress I could not issue the three weeklies without noticing the doings of civil resisters and the general progress of the movement. That would have been to turn the weeklies into civil disobedience organs and to challenge the Government to suppress them. The Government in their turn could not but have accepted the challenge and suppressed the papers and even prosecuted me. Whilst I must always be ready to welcome imprisonment, I was not then ready to court it. Nor was it my plan to invite suppression when my avowed object was to organize strictly and only individual civil disobedience. Therefore, even at the price of sacrificing the pleasure of serving the people in various ways through the weeklies, duty demanded their stoppage. I feel that the step taken was correct in every way.

The reason for suspension now no longer exists. On the contrary, I should fail in my duty, if I did not resume publication. As I have repeatedly said I am no enemy of Britain. I have many dear and personal friends among Britishers. I cannot wish ill to Britain. My resistance to war does not carry me to the point of thwarting those who wish to take part in it. ...

If we wish to achieve Swaraj through truth and nonviolence, gradual but steady building up from the bottom upwards by constructive effort is the only way. This rules out the deliberate creation of an anarchical state for the overthrow of the established order in the hope of throwing up from within a dictator who would rule with a rod of iron and produce order out of disorder.

*Harijan, 18-1-'42, p. 4*

## 81. THE WAY TO DO IT

In one of the addresses received by me on Andhradesha, there occurs this passage:

"We are grieved to admit that we can show nothing to our credit in the way of removal of Untouchability, temperance propaganda and Hindi-*prachar*. We request your help and guidance in suggesting to us ways and means of securing the necessary capital and selfless workers for the above objects."

This is an admission of helplessness which it would be difficult to understand perhaps in any other part of the world. For I am asked not merely to show how to secure the necessary capital, but also selfless workers. The address comes from those who describe themselves your most trusted, most humble followers, members of the Town Congress Committee'. If I have any followers who are 'trusted and humble', I expect them above all to be selfless: Members of Congress Committees are unworthy to sit in a Congress Committee if they are not selfless. Of course I know that at the present moment there is an unseemly rivalry even in Congress Committees for offices. Yet every Congressman would admit that a Congress representative is nothing if he is not selfless. And if the 'salt loses its savour wherewith shall it be salted?' If my followers and these Congress Committee members are not selfless, where shall I find selfless workers for such people? The only way therefore I can show to my questioners about finding selfless workers is, 'be such workers yourselves, and then I promise that the necessary capital will follow.' Shadow invariably follows the Sun. It is men who make money. Money has never been known to make men. It may give us hirelings, but hirelings will never be able to remove Untouchability and do temperance propaganda and even real Hindi-*prachar*. Hirelings have no doubt a place in the world economy, but they come in after reform, they have never been able to initiate reform. Congressmen have therefore to carry out the triple reform.

When Untouchability has become a thing of the past, when temperance propaganda has become a popular thing and when everybody wants to learn Hindi, there will be no dearth of men who would give their services on hire and carry out the work that involves no risks.

What unfortunately I notice throughout my wanderings is that many Congressmen do not care so much for constructive work as for excitement and work that will bring them into prominence without costing them much labour, if any at all. This mentality has to be changed, before we can have a steady supply of workers. Everywhere I am surrounded by healthy-looking intelligent volunteers who spare no pains to make me comfortable and who under the impulse of service do not mind working day and night. If they could but be induced to transfer this devotion to a person who really does not need all that volume of service and who is more often than not embarrassed by such attention, to the cause which he represents, the problem is solved. Everywhere I am holding meetings of workers and I have found them to be enough for the work to be done if they will only apply themselves to it. But it is these very workers who compose addresses of the type I have mentioned and who even at these quiet meetings, ask me to produce money and men. I therefore suggest to every Congress Committee to become business-like and find out true workers, fix the scale of payment for them and set the constructive machinery going. For this, Congress Sub-committees need not look for guidance to provincial bodies or to the central body. Provincial bodies may have their provincial service or may not. They may be too heavily encumbered to attempt any such thing. Not so Taluka or Village Congress Committees. They are absolutely autonomous. There is nothing to prevent them from making collections and initiating any reform they choose. Indeed during the interesting tour in Andhra, I have noticed that in some places efficient committees have been doing work which other committees have grossly neglected.

Let Congressmen not think of 1930. The first of January 1930 is not going to witness a miracle. It would be an exact resultant of national activities during this year of grace and probation. No sudden change will come over the nation

on first of January 1930. Let individual Congressmen therefore do their little best. It is then possible for them to awaken the nation. Let them not think that one individual can make no impression upon the nation or a cause. After all causes are handled by an aggregate of individuals. Someone has to make the beginning. Let everyone therefore who understands the secret of success in any undertaking do his own duty unmindful of what the others do or do not do.

Let there be no shame about accepting remuneration. A labourer is worthy of his hire. And he is no less selfless because he accepts remuneration. As a matter of fact, a most selfless man has to give his all to the nation—body, mind and soul. And he has still .to feed himself. The nation gladly feeds such men and women and yet regards them as selfless. The difference between a voluntary worker and a hireling lies in the fact that whereas a hireling gives his service to whosoever pays his price, a national voluntary worker gives his service only to the nation for the cause he believes in and he serves it even though he might have to starve.

*Young India*, 16-5-'29, p. 164

### THE STRUGGLE ALWAYS GOES ON I

(Originally appeared under the title "Suspend Civil Disobedience")

I have had long chats with Shri Phillipose about the situation in Travancore. I have also carefully studied the resolution of the last Working Committee of the State Congress and the well-thought-out elaborate plan of action to be taken all over Travancore together with great precautions embodied in it to ensure non-violence. I have also read the telegram received by Shri Phillipose wherein he is told that if civil disobedience is further suspended, there will be much heart-burning and disappointment.

But after having weighed the pros and cons, I have come to the conclusion that it will be in the interest of the cause not to start civil disobedience on March 25 and to suspend it till I advise resumption.

In satyagraha there is no such thing as disappointment or heart-burning. The struggle always goes on in some shape or other till the goal is reached. A satyagrahi is indifferent whether it is civil disobedience or some other phase of the struggle to which he is called. Nor does he mind if, in the middle of the civil disobedience march, he is called upon to halt and do something else. He must have faith that it is all for the best. My own experience hitherto has been that each suspension has found the people better equipped for the fight and for control over forces of violence. Therefore, in advising suspension, I dismiss from my mind the fear that it may lead to desertion and disbelief. If it does, I should not feel sorry, for it would be to me a sign that the deserters did not know what satyagraha was and the movement was better without those who did not know what they were doing.

The reasons that have prompted me to tender this advice are these: If it is true that the Travancore Durbar have drafted untrained raw men as police in order to strike terror among satyagrahis, it behoves the satyagrahis not to tempt the Durbar whilst suspension is a possibility. In view of the inhumanities which have

been perpetrated in various States, I am myself thinking out a new orientation of civil disobedience. I may fail. But if I am to succeed at all, I must have the quiet which can be produced only by suspension of civil disobedience wherever I am guiding it.

This suspension gives one a chance of mobilizing public opinion in favour of the movement for liberty in Travancore. It gives also an opportunity to the Travancore Durbar to reconsider their view of satyagrahis and their demands.

The princes are themselves agitated over the tremendous awakening that has taken place among the people in the States. Suspension in Travancore and elsewhere gives them breathing time and an opportunity of thinking out their course of action free from the burden of dealing with civil resistance.

Lastly, it is wise to allow the recent Viceregal message to the Princes to work itself among them.

The satyagrahis of Travancore should know too that I have advised suspension of civil disobedience in Jaipur for similar reasons and I am likewise holding the hands of workers in other States. But I give my assurance to Travancoreans and all concerned that I shall not sit idle during suspension, nor shall I be long in coming to a final decision, assuming that in the meanwhile no relief has come to the States in which civil disobedience was going on and is under suspension.

*Harijan, 1-4-'39, p. 72*



(Originally appeared under the title "The States")

A clear understanding of the suspension of civil disobedience in the States is necessary if the people are to reap the full benefit of it. One result—not unexpected—seems to have been that some States have stiffened their attitude and are resorting to repression they had not perhaps thought of before suspension. Where this happens there is no cause for losing heart. Repression itself affords a training in Satyagraha, even as an unsought war affords a training for the soldier. Satyagrahis should discover the causes of repression. They will find that repressed people are easily frightened by the slightest show

of force and are unprepared for suffering and self-sacrifice. This is then the time for learning the first lessons of satyagraha. Those who know anything of this matchless force should teach their neighbours to bear repression not weakly and helplessly but bravely and knowingly. Thus, for example, a State declares an association illegal. The members may submit either because of fear of punishment or knowingly because they do not wish to offer civil disobedience. In the latter case, they husband their energy and develop the will to resist non-violently. Individual members of the association will still carry on activities that may not be regarded as in themselves illegal. They will also carry on constitutional agitation to secure legal recognition for their organization. And if in spite of voluntarily working within the four corners of the local laws workers are arrested or otherwise ill-treated, they would cheerfully submit to the sufferings involved. So doing they will examine themselves whether they bear any ill-will or anger towards their persecutors, they will ask themselves whether they feel the presence of God as their true Helper and Guide in their difficulties. Indeed such training if properly and persistently taken will generate in the learners a power of calm non-violent resistance which in itself will become invincible and therefore may render further effort by way of civil disobedience wholly unnecessary.

I am afraid I must plead guilty to being over-confident and hasty in launching previous civil disobedience campaigns. No harm seems to have accrued to the country because I had always my hand on the pulse of the country and thank God had no hesitation in retracing the step taken if I scented danger or discovered an error of judgment or calculation. This much harm must, however, be admitted. The people having become used to laxity about previous preparation now find it irksome to conform to the strictness in the observance of the unexciting rules of preparation. And yet they are much the most important part of satyagraha training. Potent and active non-violence cannot be cultivated unless the candidate goes through the necessary stages which require a lot of plodding. If, however, I have succeeded in showing that repression, if properly understood, evokes natural and spontaneous resistance in a satyagrahi, perhaps this knowledge will role (rule?) the constructive effort

and the waiting of their seeming insipidity. Indeed the fact that these things appear insipid betrays want of appreciation of satyagraha and the beauty and efficacy of non-violence. In other words, the spirit of satyagraha has not sunk deep and violence still lurks though unconsciously in the seeker's breast.

I hope, therefore, that repression, wherever it is resorted to, will not depress the repressed people but will accelerate the pace of the constructive effort. It is necessary so far as it is possible to convince the powers that be of our absolutely non-violent intention. Such conviction is half the battle won. In order to carry this conviction home there must be sufficient curb on our speech and writing as our actions must be non-violent beyond doubt.

*Harijan, 8-4-'39, p. 80*

### III

(From a talk at the prayer meeting in Bombay which appeared in the "Weekly Letter" of M. D.)

I am told that there is despair and depression everywhere, that there is disappointment all round as the gateway to jail is closed. People, I am told, do not know what to do. I do not know why, when there is the whole of the constructive programme of work to do. When the programme of jail going was on, there was room for hypocrisy, compulsion, violence. The present constructive programme leaves no room for these. And it leaves no room for disappointment and despair.

*Harijan, 1-6-'35, p. 121 at p. 123*

## PART VI: CLEANSING SATYAGRAHA AND ITS BRANCHES

### 83. CLEANSING SATYAGRAHA AND ITS BRANCHES

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience, Passive Resistance, Non-co-operation")

It is often my lot to answer knotty questions on all sorts of topics arising out of this great movement of national purification. A company of collegiate non-co-operators asked me to define for them the terms which I have used as heading for this note. And even at this late day, I was seriously asked whether satyagraha did not at times warrant resistance by violence, as for instance in the case of a sister whose virtue might be in danger from a desperado. I ventured to suggest that it was the completest defence without irritation, without being ruffled, to interpose oneself between the victim and the victimizer, and to face death. I added that this (for the assailant) novel method of defence would in all probability exhaust his passion and he will no longer want to ravish an innocent woman, but would want to flee from her presence for very shame and that if he did not, the act of personal bravery on the part of her brother would steel her heart for putting up an equally brave defence and resisting the lust of man turned brute for the while. And I thought I clinched my argument by saying that if, in spite of all the defence, the unexpected happened, and the physical force of the tyrant overpowered his victim, the disgrace would not be that of the woman but of her assailant and that both she and her brother who died in the attempt to defend her virtue, would stand well before the throne of Judgment. I do not warrant that my argument convinced my listener or that it would convince the reader. The world I know will go on as before. But it is well at this moment of self-examination to understand and appreciate the implications of the powerful movement of non-violence. All religions have emphasized the highest ideal, but all have more or less permitted departures as so many concessions to human weaknesses.

I now proceed to summarize the explanations I gave of the various terms. It is beyond my capacity to give accurate and terse definitions.

Satyagraha, then, is literally holding on to truth and it means, therefore, truth-force. Truth is soul or spirit. It is, therefore, known as soul-force. It excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and, therefore, not competent to punish. The word was coined in South Africa to distinguish the non-violent resistance of the Indians of South Africa from the contemporary 'passive resistance' of the suffragettes and others. It is not conceived as a weapon of the weak.

Passive resistance is used in the orthodox English sense and covers the suffragette movement as well as the resistance of the Non-conformists. Passive resistance has been conceived and is regarded as a weapon of the weak. Whilst it avoids violence, being not open to the weak, it does not exclude its use if, in the opinion of a passive resister, the occasion demands it. However, it has always been distinguished from armed resistance and its application was at one time confined to Christian martyrs.

Civil disobedience is civil breach of unmoral statutory enactments. The expression was, so far as I was aware, coined by Thoreau to signify his own resistance to the laws of a slave State. He has left a masterly treatise on the duty of civil disobedience. But Thoreau was not perhaps out and out champion of nonviolence. Probably, also, Thoreau limited his breach of statutory laws to the revenue law, i.e. payment of taxes. Whereas the term civil disobedience as practised in 1919 covered a breach of any statutory and unmoral law. It signified the resisters' outlawry in a civil, i.e. non-violent manner. He invoked the sanctions of the law and cheerfully suffered imprisonment. It is a branch of satyagraha.

Non-co-operation predominantly implies withdrawing of cooperation from the State that in the non-co-operators' view has become corrupt and excludes civil disobedience of the fierce type described above. By its very nature, non-co-operation is even open to children of understanding and can be safely practised by the masses. Civil disobedience presupposes the habit of willing obedience to

laws without fear of their sanctions. It can therefore be practised only as a last resort and by a select few in the first instance at any rate. Non-co-operation, too, like civil disobedience is a branch of satyagraha which includes all non-violent resistance for the vindication of Truth.

*Young India*, 23-3-'21, p. 89

#### 84. WHAT ARE BASIC ASSUMPTIONS?

An esteemed correspondent, who has for years been following as a student, the non-violent action of the Congress and who ultimately joined the Congress, expresses certain doubts with lucid argument. Whilst the argument is helpful to me it is unnecessary to reproduce it here. He lays down three basic assumptions and argues that India is hardly able to satisfy these assumptions under all circumstances. We may, he says, scrape through with the English because they are lovers of liberty, are few in number, and their democratic instinct, more or less developed, restrains them from lengths to which autocrats will go.

If non-violence has all these limitations, it is not of much value or it has as much value as any other remedy, including violence, may have. But I have presented it as a never failing remedy against tyranny. Limitations it has, but they are all applicable to the user and therefore under his control.

The suggested basic assumptions are:

1. "Complete unity of the people in their desire and demand for freedom;
2. Complete appreciation and assimilation of the doctrine in all its implications by the people as a whole, with consequent control over one's natural instincts for resort to violence either in revenge or as a measure of self-defence; and (this is the most important of all)
3. Implicit belief that the sight of suffering on the part of multitudes of people will melt the heart of the aggressor and induce him to desist from his course of violence."

For the application of the remedy of non-violence complete unity is not an indispensable condition. If it was, the remedy would possess no special virtue. For complete unity will bring freedom for the asking. Have I not said repeatedly in the columns of *Young India* and these columns that even a few true satyagrahis would suffice to bring us freedom? I have maintained that we would require a smaller army of satyagrahis than that of soldiers trained in modern

warfare, and the cost will be insignificant compared to the fabulous sums devoted by nations to armaments.

Nor is the second assumption necessary. Satyagraha by the vast mass of mankind will be impossible if they had all to assimilate the doctrine in all its implications. I cannot claim to have assimilated all its implications nor do I claim even to know them all. A soldier of an army does not know the whole of the military science; so also does a satyagrahi not know the whole science of satyagraha. It is enough if he trusts his commander and honestly follows his instructions and is ready to suffer unto death without bearing malice against the so-called enemy.

The third assumption has to be satisfied. I shall word it differently, but the result would be about the same.

My friend says there is no historical warrant for the third assumption. He cites Asoka as a possible exception. For my purpose, however, Asoka's instance is unnecessary. I admit that there is no historical instance to my knowledge. Hence it is that I have been obliged to claim uniqueness for the experiment. I have argued from the analogy of what we do in families or even clans. The humankind is one big family. And if the love expressed is intense enough, it must apply to all mankind. If individuals have succeeded even with savages, why should not a group of individuals succeed with a group, say, of savages? If we can succeed with the English, surely it is merely an extension of faith to believe that we are likely to succeed with less cultured or less liberally-minded nations. I hold that if we succeed with the English, with unadulterated non-violent effort, we must succeed with the others, or which is the same thing as saying that if we achieve freedom with non-violence, we shall defend it also with the same weapon. If we have not achieved that faith, our nonviolence is a mere expedient, it is alloy, not pure gold. In the first place we shall never achieve freedom with doubtful non-violence, and in the second, even if we do, we shall find ourselves wholly unprepared to defend the country against an aggressor. If we have doubt about the final efficacy of non-violence, it would be far better for the Congress to revise its policy and invite the nation to a

training in arms. A mass organization like the Congress will be untrue to its charge if, not knowing its own mind, it misled the people into a false belief. It would be an act of cowardice. As I have said before, because we cease to pin our faith to nonviolence, we do not necessarily become violent. We merely throw off the mask and be natural. It would be a perfectly dignified course to adopt. The lesson learnt during the past seventeen years will still not be thrown away.

Now I am in a position to state what, in my opinion, are basic assumptions underlying the doctrine of satyagraha:

1. There must be common honesty among satyagrahis.
2. They must render heart discipline to their commander. There should be no mental reservation.

*Harijan, 22-10-'38, p. 298*

## PART VII: NON-CO-OPERATION

### 85. IN FOOTSTEPS OF GREAT TEACHERS

(From "Neither a Saint Nor a Politician")

Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the enemy's camp and brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood. Christ drove out the money-changers from the temple of Jerusalem and drew down curses from Heaven upon the hypocrites and the Pharisees. Both were for intensely direct action. But even as Buddha and Christ chastized they showed unmistakable gentleness and love behind every act of theirs. They would not raise a finger against their enemies, but would gladly surrender themselves rather than the truth for which they lived. Buddha would have died resisting the priesthood, if the majesty of his love had not proved to be equal to the task of bending the priesthood. Christ died on the cross with a crown of thorns on his head defying the might of the whole empire. And if I raise resistance of a non-violent character I simply and humbly follow in the footsteps of the great teachers.

*Young India*, 12-5-'20, p. 2 at p. 3

## 86. PASSIVE RESISTANCE A MISNOMER

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the above title)

A correspondent from Satur writes:

" 'A passive resister shims boycott, he never embarrasses a Government.' But a non-co-operator paralyzes the Government and his whole business rests upon boycott (of councils, aided schools etc.). Could a passive resister be a non-co-operator simultaneously? The quotation is yours."

The Satur correspondent has quoted me correctly. Only he has torn the sentence from its context. The word boycott has been used in its technical sense meaning boycott, by way of punishment, of British goods as distinguished from foreign goods. I hope everyone recognizes the futility of boycott of British goods. But boycott, by way of purification of evil is not only right but obligatory. Therefore boycott of councils etc., being symbols of an evil power, is a virtue. The term passive resistance is a misnomer. I have never seen it defined. I have attempted a definition. But for the purpose of the correspondent it is enough for me to say that non-co-operation is part passive resistance. Neither embarrasses the Government. But embarrassment may result from either activity. The goal in each case is inward purification and growth. Does a man who closes his gate against an intruder embarrass the latter? Or does a drunkard who patronizes a drink shop embarrass the keeper when he withdraws his custom and turns teetotaler?

*Young India, 19-1-21, p. 19*

## 87. WHEN WITHDRAWAL OF CO-OPERATION BECOMES A MUST

(From "Political Freemasonry")

In my opinion the time has arrived when we must cease to rely upon mere petitions to Parliament for effective action. Petitions will have value, when the nation has behind it the power to enforce its will. What power then have we? When we are firmly of opinion that grave wrong has been done us and when after an appeal to the highest authority we fail to secure redress, there must be some power available to us for undoing the wrong. It is true that in the vast majority of cases, it is the duty of a subject to submit to wrongs on failure of the usual procedure, so long as they do not affect his vital being. But every nation and every individual has the right, and it is their duty, to rise against an intolerable wrong. I do not believe in armed risings. They are a remedy worse than the disease sought to be cured. They are a token of the spirit of revenge and impatience and danger. The method of violence cannot do good in the long run. Witness the effect of the armed rising of the allied powers against Germany. Have they not become even like the Germans, as the latter have been depicted to us by them?

We have a better method. Unlike that of violence it certainly involves the exercise of restraint and patience; but it requires also resoluteness of will. This method is to refuse to be party to the wrong. No tyrant has ever yet succeeded in his purpose without carrying the victim with him, it may be, as it often is, by force. Most people, choose rather to yield to the will of the tyrant than to suffer for the consequence of resistance. Hence does terrorism form part of the stock-in-trade of the tyrant. But we have instances in history where terrorism has failed to impose the terrorist's will upon his victim. India has the choice before her now. If then the acts of the Punjab Government be an insufferable wrong, if the report of Lord Hunter's committee and the two despatches be greater wrong by reason of their grievous condonation of these acts, it is clear that we must refuse to submit to this official violence. Appeal the Parliament by all means if necessary, but if the Parliament fails us and if we are worthy to

call ourselves a nation, we must refuse to uphold the Government by withdrawing co-operation from it.

*Young India*, 9-6-'20, p. 2 at p. 3

## **88. NON-CO-OPERATION WITH AN UNJUST GOVERNMENT**

(From "The Law of Suffering")

What then is the meaning of non-co-operation in terms of the law of suffering? We must voluntarily put up with the losses and inconveniences that arise from having to withdraw our support from a Government that is ruling against our will. Possession of power and riches is a crime under an unjust Government, poverty in that case is a virtue, says Thoreau. It may be that in the transition state we may make mistakes; there may be avoidable suffering. These things are preferable to national emasculation.

We must refuse to wait for the wrong to be righted till the wrong-doer has been roused to a sense of his iniquity. We must not, for fear of ourselves or others having to suffer remain participators in it. But we must combat the wrong by ceasing to assist the wrong-doer directly or indirectly.

If a father does an injustice it is the duty of his children to leave the parental roof. If the headmaster of a school conducts his school on an immoral basis, the pupils must leave the school. If the chairman of a corporation is corrupt the members thereof must wash their hands clean of his corruption by withdrawing from it; even so if a Government does a grave injustice the subject must withdraw co-operation wholly or partially sufficiently to wean the ruler from his wickedness. In each case conceived by me there is an element of suffering whether mental or physical. Without such suffering it is not possible to attain freedom.

*Young India*, 16-6-'20, p. 3 at p. 4

### 89. DID JESUS CO-OPERATE?

Dear Mr. Gandhi,

Mr. Lyle has been here and he told me that you had been enquiring kindly about me. I thank you for your kind inquiries. Of course, I have been following your activities with the greatest interest, but it grieves me to have to say that I do not and cannot approve of your non-co-operation movement. I have been praying that God may show you your mistake and that He may use you—and us all—for the glory of His Holy Name and for the real enduring welfare of the whole of India. From your many articles and speeches I have gathered that you attempt to justify your movement on the ground that if, in spite of argument and dissuasion, one's nearest and dearest even be seen pursuing a wrong course of action, one is bound to dissociate oneself from him or her lest one be charged with being an accomplice in the wrong-doing.

But surely, one fundamental doctrine of both the Christian and Hindu scriptures points to quite a different course of conduct. Both tell us of Divine Incarnations, and though these differ in some respects, yet in each case the underlying idea is that when God, who is Himself infinitely holy, saw the sin-begotten misery of men, He did not hold aloof from them but graciously stooped down and came to them to render help and to save their sin and its effects. Jesus Christ, the Holy and undefiled One, did not refuse to work along with sinful men, but, on the contrary, while loathing all evil and scathingly denouncing it even in the great ones of his time, He freely and closely associated with all men, from the Pharisee down to the hated tax-gatherer of an alien Government and the notorious\* sinner; and endeavoured, both by wise precept and loving example, to wean them from their wickedness and to win them to righteousness.

From this I gather that it is the obvious duty of all true patriots at the present time not to hold themselves aloof from a Government unfairly

denounced as "devilish" and "satanic", but to take every possible step (e.g. the encouraging of the new councils), to keep in touch with it and endeavour to bring it round to what they consider a more righteous course of conduct. I am hoping and praying that as you were led to acknowledge your mistake of last year in the matter of satyagraha, so God may open your eyes before it is too late and lead you from non-cooperation to cooperation.

You are at liberty to use these few words in any way ' you like. With kind regards.

*I am, yours sincerely,*

G. Gillespie

Rajkot,

20-11-1920

I print this letter without a word of alteration. I print it specially because it shows that in spite of ceaseless denunciation by me of the existing system of Government, I have the good fortune to retain the warm friendship of Britishers like the Rev. Gillespie. I know that he honestly believes what he says. He gives me credit for honesty of belief and purpose, yet we differ as poles asunder even in our interpretation of the Christian and the Hindu scriptures. Of the latter I can write with confidence and I make bold to assert that it is the *duty* of a Hindu to dissociate himself from the evil-doer i.e. to refrain from participating in or countenancing the evil in him. Prahlad dissociated himself from the evil done by his father. The divine Sita rejected the services tendered to her by Ravana. Bharat denounced the deeds of Kaikeyi, his mother and rejected the throne wickedly secured for him by her. I can write of the Bible only with diffidence. But my reading of it has clearly confirmed the opinion derived from a reading of the Hindu scriptures. Jesus mixed with the publicans and the sinners neither as a dependent nor as a patron. He mixed with them to serve and to convert them to a life of truthfulness and purity. But he wiped the dust off his feet of those places which did not listen to his word. I hold it to be

my duty not to countenance a son who disgraces himself by a life of shame and vice. *Enlightened non-co-operation is the expression of anguished love.* My esteemed correspondent mixes up dissociation from evil with dissociation from persons for service. Would Jesus have accepted gifts from the money changers, taken from them scholarships for his friends, and advanced loans to them to ply their nefarious traffic? Was His denunciation of hypocrites, Pharisees, and Sadducees merely in word? Or did He not actually invite the people to beware of them and shun them? But Mr. Gillespie thinks that I unfairly describe the Government to be satanic. Perhaps that alters our viewpoints. I consider that I would be less than truthful if I did not describe as satanic a Government which has been guilty of fraud, murder and wanton cruelty: which still remains unrepentant and resorts to untruth to cover its guilt. I really believe I am performing the office of a friend by denouncing in precise language the pretensions of a Government which has nothing to commend itself to the people under its charge.

*Young India, 19-1-'21, p. 23*

## 90. RENDER UNTO CAESAR

An unknown English friend has thought it worthwhile cabling to me that in launching upon civil disobedience I am going against the teaching of Jesus: 'Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's.' Another, an Indian Christian, writes from the Punjab somewhat in the same fashion and, forsaking charity pours abuse upon my devoted head for my action. He says further that whereas he considered me to be a good man formerly, he is now utterly undeceived. I can reassure this friend that civil disobedience is no new thing with me. I began to preach and practise it in 1906. His regard for me therefore was evidently from ignorance, if his present dislike of me is wise. But I have learnt from the New Testament as also from other sources, that, if one wishes to walk in the fear of God, one should be indifferent about popular praise or blame.

Now for the question. As I hold my conduct to be in utter agreement with universal religion and as I hold the New Testament teaching in great esteem, I should not like it to be justly said of me that I was going against the teaching of Jesus. 'Render unto Caesar' was quoted against me before too. I have not read into the celebrated verse the meaning that my critics have sought to put into it. Jesus evaded the direct question put to him because it was a trap. He was in no way bound to answer it. He, therefore, asked to see the coin for taxes. And then said with withering scorn, 'How can you who traffic in Caesar's coins and thus receive what to you are benefits of Caesar's rule refuse to pay taxes?' Jesus' whole preaching and practice point unmistakably to non-co-operation, which necessarily includes non-payment of taxes. Jesus never recognized man's authority as against God's. He who disregarded the whole host of priesthood, which was in those days superior to kingship, would not have hesitated to defy the might of emperors had he found it necessary. And did he not treat with supreme disdain the whole of the farcical trial through which he was made to pass?

Lastly let me warn honest friends against running into the trap of literalism. The 'letter' surely 'killeth', it is the 'spirit', that 'giveth life'. In the present case I

find no difficulty in reading into the text a satisfactory meaning. But it would matter little to me that some text should confound me, if there was no mistaking the spirit of the whole teaching of a book respected as among the world's religious scriptures.

*Young India*, 27-3-'30, p. 105

## 91. DUTY OF DISLOYALTY

There is no half-way house between active loyalty and active disloyalty. There is much truth in the late Justice Stephen's remark that a man to prove himself not guilty of disaffection must prove himself to be actively affectionate. In these days of democracy there is no such thing as active loyalty to a person. You are therefore loyal or disloyal to institutions. When therefore you are disloyal you seek not to destroy persons but institutions. The present State is an institution which, if one knows it, can never evoke loyalty. It is corrupt. "Many of its laws governing the conduct of persons are positively inhuman. Their administration is worse. Often the will of one person is the law. It may safely be said that there are as many rulers as there are districts in this country. These, called Collectors, combine in their own persons the executive as well as the judicial functions. Though their acts are supposed to be governed by laws in themselves highly defective, these rulers are often capricious and regulated by nothing but their own whims and fancies. They represent not the interests of the people but those of their foreign masters or principals. These (nearly three hundred) men form an almost secret corporation, the most powerful in the world. They are required to find a fixed minimum of revenue, they have therefore often been found to be most unscrupulous in their dealings with the people. This system of Government is confessedly based upon a merciless exploitation of unnumbered millions of the inhabitants of India. From the village headmen to their personal assistants these satraps have created a class of subordinates who, whilst they cringe before their foreign masters, in their constant dealings with the people act so irresponsibly and so harshly as to demoralize them and by a system of terrorism render them incapable of resisting corruption. It is then the duty of those who have realized the awful evil of the system of Indian Government to be disloyal to it and actively and openly to preach disloyalty. Indeed, loyalty to a State so corrupt is a sin, disloyalty a virtue.

The spectacle of three hundred million people being cowed down by living in the dread of three hundred men is demoralizing alike for the despots as for the victims. It is the duty of those who have realized the evil nature of the system however attractive some of its features may, torn from their context, appear to be, to destroy it without delay. It is their clear duty to run any risk to achieve the end.

But it must be equally clear that it would be cowardly for three hundred million people to seek to destroy the three hundred authors or administrators of the system. It is a sign of gross ignorance to devise means of destroying these administrators or their hirelings. Moreover they are but creatures of circumstances. The purest man entering the system will be affected by it and will be instrumental in propagating the evil. The remedy therefore naturally is not being enraged against the administrators and therefore hurting them but to non-co-operate with the system by withdrawing all the voluntary assistance possible and refusing all its so-called benefits. A little reflection will show that civil disobedience is a necessary part of non-co-operation. You assist an administration most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees. An evil administration never deserves such allegiance. Allegiance to it means partaking of the evil. A good man will therefore resist an evil system or administration with his whole soul. Disobedience of the laws of an evil State is therefore a duty. Violent disobedience deals with men who can be replaced. It leaves the evil itself untouched and often accentuates it. Nonviolent, i.e. civil disobedience is the only and the most successful remedy and is obligatory upon him who would dissociate himself from evil.

There is danger in civil disobedience only because it is still only a partially tried remedy and has always to be tried in an atmosphere surcharged with violence. For when tyranny is rampant much rage is generated among the victims. It remains latent because of their weakness and bursts in all its fury on the slightest pretext. Civil disobedience is a sovereign method of transmuting this undisciplined life-destroying latent energy into disciplined life-saving energy whose use ensures absolute success. The attendant risk is nothing compared to

the result promised. When the world has become familiar with its use and when it has had a series of demonstrations of its successful working, there will be less risk in civil disobedience than there is in aviation, in spite of that science having reached a high stage of development.

*Young India*, 27-3-'30, p. 108

## 92. MORAL VALUES IN NON-CO-OPERATION

(Originally appeared under the title "Moral Values")

There is an extract from the letter of an English friend. It is a pleasure to me to receive letters from English friends. I know that there are many honest Englishmen who are following the movement of non-co-operation with sympathetic attention, and would gladly help if they are clear about the moralities of non-cooperation. The letter is a typical instance.

"I understand that you are striving to establish Swaraj in India by appealing to moral force to attain which you rely upon selflessness. Permit me to observe that the idea is simply *excellent*. But, is there no fear that the means— non- co-operation—which you are adopting will fail you in the end, if applied before *every* unit acts from a purely selfless motive? When moral success is aimed at, surely the means *must* be of the same trend?

"I also earnestly look forward to the day when, not only India, but also, the whole race of men, will enjoy Swaraj on the following lines:

"The human species exists at the junction of the animal and the moral kingdoms of creation, blessed with free-will by the Creator, wherewith to adjudicate between the demands of a material frame (the human animal body) and a moral form (character), and thereby to express the image of the first Great Cause in finite form (in the latter). When every unit of the species learns to appreciate moral values in *every* thought, word and deed, by always giving preference to moral demands because they hail from a higher kingdom of creation and—to do otherwise will be to defy Omnipotence— selflessness must obviously follow. The results will be that every human being will love the other automatically and true Swaraj knit the whole family together.

"Does it not seem likely, on the other hand, that, to begin with non-co-operation will lead to the subordination of your moral goal to ulterior

and inferior material desires; and, therefore, even if you do succeed, that you will have lost the very cream of your efforts unintentionally by making fellowmen greater animals than they already are? The co-operation of selfless representatives, of a selfless nation, will sooner make a selfless Government, than non-co-operation of a nation, which strives to follow a selfless leader, before waiting *first* to learn how to conquer self!

"Kindly pause to consider these facts. Whatever you do should be for the good of the whole brotherhood of man; and moral values must *on no account* take a second place, even in an ostensible trivial instance; otherwise, the cure may be worse than the disease."

I have given the letter in full omitting an introductory sentence. I have refrained from publishing the name because I am not sure of the writer's intention regarding the publication of his name. His moral difficulty is entitled to careful consideration. In my opinion there is confusion of thought in this, statement of the case. It ever has been my purpose to show that dishonourable means cannot bring about an honourable end. What the writer may challenge and in fact does challenge is the motive of the non-co-operators in general. I confess that the motive of all non-co-operators is not love but a meaningless hatred. I call it meaningless, for the hatred of so many of the non-co-operators has no meaning in the plan of non-co-operation. A man does not sacrifice himself out of hatred. He helplessly tries to inflict an injury on his supposed enemy. In non-co-operation the result to be achieved is not infliction of punishment but the attainment of justice. The end of hatred is never justice; it is retaliation, it is blind fury. The hatred of the mob at Amritsar resulted ill the cruel murder of innocent men. But the hatred of a non-co-operator turning upon himself loses its points, purifies him and makes it possible for the object of his hatred to reform and retrace his steps. Thus a non-co-operator starting as an enemy ends by becoming a friend. What does it matter with what motive a man does the right thing. A right act is right whether done for policy or for its own sake. I recognize the danger of a thing

done from policy being abandoned, if it does not produce the desired result. But the existence of such danger is not an argument against the morality of the act itself.

The writer has suggested an impossible solution. He wants non-co-operators to be perfect beings. But he forgets that if we were perfect there would be no occasion for non-co-operation. For there would have been no co-operation with evil. Non-co-operation is an attempt to purify or perfect oneself. And the majority follow the path of purification from faith, not from knowledge. In other words selfish non-co-operationists following a selfless leader will have done well at the end, for they will realize the virtue of non-co-operation as doctrine of selflessness.

The difficulty of Englishmen lies really in believing that their rule is wholly an evil for India, i.e. it has made India worse for the English rule in everything that counts. India is poorer, in wealth, in manliness, in godliness and in her sons' power to defend themselves. It is sinful to coquet with evil. There is no meeting ground between good and evil—God and Satan. The writer asks me to pause and consider. I have done so for thirty years and have been driven to the final conclusion that English rule in its present form has proved a curse to India. Let Englishmen pause and consider what is happening before their eyes. Let them turn the searchlight inward. May they ask me to co-operate with a Government that has betrayed the Musalmans of India and stabbed humanity in the Punjab? Let them not call the Massacre of Jallianwala an error of judgment. Let them not believe the Prime Minister if and when he says that he has not committed a breach of solemn promise given to the Musalmans of India. The cause is just; the means are equally just. The motive is mixed. The struggle is being prolonged, only because the motive is not as unmixed as the means and the end.

*Young India*, 5-1-'21, p. 4

### 93. NON-RESISTANCE TRUE AND FALSE

America is the home of inter-racial conflict on a vast scale. There are earnest men and women in that land 'of enterprises who are seeking to solve the difficult problem along the lines of non-resistance. One such American friend sends me a paper called *The Inquiry* which contains an interesting discussion on the doctrine of non-resistance. It consists of instances that might possibly be grouped under non-resistance. I select three samples:

"A Chinese student related his experiences at the State University from which he was about to graduate. His reception there had been anything but friendly for the most part, although a few men had gone out of their way to befriend him, one of them even inviting the Chinese to his home for a week-end. On the other hand, a fellow student who occupied a room next to his made himself particularly obnoxious, throwing shoes against his door and indulging in other pranks. The Chinese overheard this student express horror on finding that an American had taken him home to introduce him to his mother and sister, and immediately he made up his mind that he would teach this student to respect him, not for his own sake, but for the sake of his dear motherland.

"So he went out of his way to be friendly to his neighbour. Everyday he gave him a smiling good morning, though at first he received no response. He ignored every insult, but tried to make himself pleasant and useful. When he knew his neighbour to be hard up he casually invited him to go to a movie with him. Gradually they talked together more often and found that they had several interests in common. After a while this student invited him to his home.

'We have become warm friends', concluded the Chinese. 'I have since spent many holidays and weekends at his home; and on leaving the university I shall know that one of my fellow students at least will regretfully miss me'."

\* \* \*

"The Secretary of a railroad Young Men's Christian Association brought one evening into the building twelve Danes, working on the railroad, who had no place to sleep. The English-speaking men, under the sway of racial antipathy, began to object and protested against the foreigners being brought in. Among these new' comers, however, was a skilled musician, who, while the Americans were presenting their objections to the Secretary, began to play upon the accordeon. He discoursed sweet music, which soon had its effect. The ire on the faces of the native-born Soon began to vanish; the censure died on their lips; their hearts were softened; and that night they sat up late listening to the foreigner playing.—'Peter Roberts, *The New Immigration*, The MacMillan Co., 1922, p. 300'."

\* \* \*

"There is a colony of Japanese in X, California. Several years ago some real estate agents sought to sell a considerable amount of land to other Japanese, and the white people were aroused at the thought of a great influx of these people. Meetings were held and a big sign was put up on the main boulevard which read: 'No Japanese wanted here.'

"The old resident Japanese of X, who had lived on good terms with the white people, being members of their Farmers' Association, went to the white people and after consultation finally agreed with them that a further increase in the Japanese population was not a good thing. The sign was changed to read: 'No more Japanese wanted here.'

"The person who tells this story contends that this action advanced the solidarity of the community and improved relations between the whites and the Japanese in that place, as witness the following:

"The Japanese of X, learning that the American church was in financial difficulties, offered to give a definite amount yearly for its support, in addition to carrying on their own Japanese church work."

Now the first easily comes under true non-resistance. The second is more an instance of presence of mind than non-resistance. The third, from the facts as stated, is an instance, if not of cowardice as contented by some of the

debaters, certainly of selfishness. The resident Japanese population in order to retain their earthly possessions agreed to the prohibition of further Japanese immigration. It may have been the only policy advisable. But it was not non-resistance.

Non-resistance is restraint voluntarily undertaken for the good of society. It is therefore an intensely active purifying inward force. It is often antagonistic to the material good of the non-resister. It may even mean his utter material ruin. It is rooted in internal strength never weakness. It must be consciously exercised. It therefore presupposes ability to offer physical resistance. In the last instance, therefore, the Japanese would have non-resisted, if they had left all their possessions rather than surrendered the rights of prospective immigrants. They might also have suffered death lynching without even mental retaliation and thus melted the hearts of their persecutors. It was no victory of truth that without any inconvenience to themselves, they were able to retain their property. In terms of non-resistance, their contribution to the American church in its difficulty was a bribe, by no means a token of good-will or a free gift.

The acquisition of the spirit of non-resistance is a matter of long trailing in self-denial and appreciation of the hidden forces within ourselves. It changes one's outlook upon life. It puts different values upon things and upsets previous calculations. And when once it is set in motion, its effect, if it is intensive enough, can overtake the whole universe. It is the greatest force because, it is the highest expression of the soul. All need not possess the same measure of conscious non-resistance for its full operation. It is enough for one person only to possess it, even as one general is enough to regulate and dispose of the energy of millions of soldiers who enlist under his banner even though they know not the why and wherefor of his dispositions. The monkeys of one Rama were enough to confound the innumerable host armed from head to foot of the ten-headed Ravana.

*Young India*, 23-9-'26, p. 332

#### 94. NOT A MOVEMENT OF BRAG, BLUSTER OR BLUFF

(Originally appeared under the title "The Need for Humility")

The spirit of non-violence necessarily leads to humility. Nonviolence means reliance on God, the Rock of ages. If we would seek His aid, we must approach Him with a humble and a contrite heart. Non-co-operationists may not trade upon their amazing success at the Congress. We must act, even as the mango tree which droops as it bears fruit. Its grandeur lies in its majestic lowliness. But one hears of non-co-operationists being insolent and intolerant in their behaviour towards those who differ from them. I know that they will lose all their majesty and glory, if they betray any inflation. Whilst we may not be dissatisfied with the progress made so far, we have little to our credit to make us feel proud. We have to sacrifice much more than we have done to justify pride, much less elation. Thousands who flocked to the Congress pandal, have undoubtedly given their intellectual assent to the doctrine but few have followed it out in practice. Leaving aside the pleaders, how many parents have withdrawn their children from schools? How many of those who registered their vote in favour of non-co-operation have taken to hand-spinning or discarded the use of all foreign cloth?

Non-co-operation is not a movement of brag, bluster or bluff. It is a test of our sincerity. It requires solid and silent self- sacrifice. It challenges our honesty and our capacity for national work. It is a movement that aims at translating ideas into action. And the more we do, the more we find that much more must be *done* than we had expected. And this thought of our imperfection must make us humble.

A non-co-operationist strives to compel attention and to set an example not by his violence but by his unobtrusive humility. He allows his solid action to speak for his creed. His strength lies in his reliance upon the correctness of his position. And the conviction of it grows most in his opponent when he least interposes his speech between his action and his opponent. Speech, especially when it is haughty, betrays want of confidence and it makes one's opponent

sceptical about the reality of the act itself. Humility therefore is the key to quick success. I hope that every non-co-operationist will recognize the necessity of being humble and self-restrained. It is because so little is really required to be done and because all of that little depends entirely upon ourselves that I have ventured the belief that Swaraj is attainable in less than one year.

*Young India*, 12-1-'21, p. 13

## 95. MOTIVES IMPELLING NON-CO-OPERATORS

(Originally appeared under the title "My Responsibility")

*The Servant of India* has referred me to the remarks of a Poona non-co-operator to illustrate that all non-co-operators are actuated not by love but by hate. I have never doubted it. On the contrary, I have admitted that many non-co-operators are impelled by hate, that most are impelled by a sense of justice and some few by love only. The recital of the Poona facts is followed by a rebuke. Thus the writer ends: "To enroll under the banner of love and peace the forces of hatred and violence, to believe that a simple doctrine can convert every heart into the purest gold, to persist in smoking a peaceful pipe on a stick of hay and in apparent innocence to disclaim all responsibility for the consequences, is amazing conduct even in a prophet." The rebuke, I am sorry to say, is based on three unwarranted assumptions. I have not enrolled under the banner of love and peace the forces of hatred and violence, but I have enrolled under the banner of justice all those who wish to secure it; and in doing so, as a practical reformer, I have not hesitated to take in those who I know are actuated by hatred. Even the latter are entitled to justice. Only I must see that they do not give play to their hatred. I claim that the vast majority of the haters are honourably fulfilling the compact, because they realize that non-violence is the best and the only policy for the country if it is to attain justice<sup>^</sup> and not merely to vent anger. I, therefore, do not need to believe that 'a simple doctrine can convert every heart into the purest gold.' But I do believe that practical experience is likely to change policy into creed. For I believe that people are by nature loving and peaceful. When they hate and kill, they do so against their better nature. I am not 'smoking a peaceful pipe on a stack of hay and in apparent innocence disclaiming all responsibility for the consequences!' On the contrary, as an expert miner, I am moving in a coal mine full of explosive gases with a safety lamp well protected against explosion, with a due sense of responsibility, and with the full knowledge that, in spite of the apparent safety of the lamp, the gases may, by some mysterious process, any

moment explode. If they do, I shall not shirk responsibility. I shall ask forgiveness not from avenging and indignant countrymen but from God, Who knows my motive and who knows that He has created in me a frail mortal liable to err and has yet given him the faculty to judge and act. I claim to be a soldier, and a soldier is nothing if he does not take the boldest risks. The reference to 'a prophet' is an unkind cut coming from *The Servant of India*. The writers in that journal should know that I do not claim to be a prophet. But I do claim to be a devoted servant of the country with a burning passion to assist in delivering it from the intolerable yoke which has given it a stoop which it does not even sometimes recognize.

*Young India*, 16-2-'21, p. 50

## 96. IS CONDEMNATION VIOLENCE?

(Originally appeared under the title "What Is Abuse?")

A correspondent from the United Provinces writes:

"Nowadays the atmosphere is surcharged with clamorous denunciations against the Government. Almost all have on their lips an inexhaustible fund of abuse for it. Everyone calls it wicked, uncivilized, and what not. Every one, as it were, makes it his special study how to outdo the rest in abusing the Government. Practically every speech is a mere list of invectives and imprecations. Not a single lecture but is replete with effusions and fulminations, and the fun of it is that only such a lecture is called soul-stirring. In short, the thing has come to a head. It has become a fashion as it were.

"I for my part heartily abhor this evil. Fuming and fretting, in my view, is indicative of weakness. It shows the 'total dearth of energy in doing real work on the part of the speaker, who wants to draw a veil on it by thundering forth before his audience his abusive eloquence. In my strict view of the matter no angry word, not even against the Government, should be uttered. True, we are an injured nation, and our anger is a righteous one. But should we give vent to that anger by abuse? Should we direct our energy in this channel? On the contrary should we not profitably utilize whatever amount of energy we waste in abuse in doing substantial work? Surely abusing is not doing real work, nor is it a service to the motherland.

"Violence, to me, does not mean actually assaulting and killing others, but covers also bad language. If so, I cannot see how to justify your own use of the epithets, 'satanic', 'devilish' and 'barbarous' for the Government. There is not the least shadow of doubt that these words come under violence, but that you being the apostle of nonviolence utter violence is even in dream unimaginable. "So much for abusive language. Now I take up another question. You always say that you and your

followers have, arrayed yourself against the English Government, and not against Englishmen. While you hate the system and want either to mend it or end it, you have absolutely no ill feeling towards Englishmen themselves. Clearly therefore, though you want to do away with the system, you do not desire to expel the English. If so, even those who claim to be your true followers have not fully imbibed this high principle. I may substantiate this with a typical instance. In the U.E Political Conference recently held at Agra Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, while advocating the boycott of foreign cloth,' said that if there were any who desired earnestly to expel the English from India, he was one of them, and the means he had found for achieving this was only Swadeshi. This has appeared in the Press, and I think you might have read it. Now can Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru be said to have understood your doctrine which makes us differentiate between a man and his action, so as to make it quite possible for us to condemn the man's action without bearing any ill-will towards him? Here at least I can emphatically say, that Nehruji's words can be justified in no case, but still I want to know whether you approve or disapprove of them."

In so far as non-co-operators indulge in *abuse*, it is undoubtedly violence, and a breach of the pledge of non-violence. But I must dissent from the opinion that practically every speech is a mere list of invectives and imprecations.' I assure the writer that the speeches are as full of invectives against ourselves as against the Government, and they are more full of argument in favour of non-violence, Hindu-Muslim unity and Swadeshi than of invectives. The best proof of my statement perhaps is, that the people have made such wonderful response in "all these three matters. Surely the people have not made the progress without having been effectively appealed to.

But after all what is abuse? I find, that the dictionary meaning is 'misuse, perversion, bad use'. When therefore we call a thief a thief or a rogue a rogue, we do not abuse him. A leper takes no offence being described as such. Only the man using a particular adjective must mean it and be prepared to prove it. I am therefore unable to condemn the use of adjectives in every case and on

every occasion, nor is the use of condemnatory adjectives always a sign of violence as it would be when it is used to excite violence against the person condemned. Condemnation is legitimately used when it is employed to wean the person from his bad habit or the audience from association with him. The Hindu *shastras* are full of condemnation of evil-doers. They have pronounced curses upon them. Tulsidas who was the quality of mercy personified has filled the Ramayana with adjectives against the enemies of Rama which it would be difficult to excel. Indeed the names themselves chosen for the evil-doers are significant of their qualities. Jesus did not hesitate to draw down divine wrath upon those whom he called 'a generation of vipers, hypocrites, whited sepulchres'. Buddha did not spare those who killed the innocent goats in the name of religion. Nor are the Koran or the Zend Avesta free from such use. Only all these seers and prophets had no evil intention in them. They had to describe persons and things as they were and resort to language so as to enable us to make our choice between good and evil. Having said this much, I am at one with the writer that the more sparing we are in describing the Government or the Governors, the better it is for us. There is too much passion and too much evil in ourselves to warrant the constant use of offensive language. The best use we can make of this Government is to ignore its existence and to isolate it as much as possible from our life, believing that contact with it is corrupting and degrading.

I have said repeatedly that this movement is not intended to drive out the English, it is intended to end or mend the system they have forced upon us. I have not read Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's speech referred to by the correspondent, but I know him too well to believe that he could have said what is imputed to him. I know, that he does not desire their withdrawal from wanton delight and that he will be the first man to harbour as a bosom friend every Englishman who is a lover of India and who wishes to remain as her servant indeed. Nor even in an independent India, do we contemplate prohibition against the residence of Englishmen in our midst on terms settled by the future State of our hope.

*Young India*, 17-11-'21, p. 372

## 97. CRUSADE AGAINST NON-CO-OPERATION

I have most carefully read the manifesto addressed by Sir Narayan Chandavarkar and others dissuading the people from joining; the non-co-operation movement. I had expected to find some solid argument against non-co-operation, but to my great regret I have found in it nothing but distortion (no doubt unconscious) of the great religions and history. The manifesto says that "non-co-operation is deprecated by the religious tenets and traditions of our motherland, nay, of all the religions that have saved and elevated the human race". I venture to submit that the Bhagawad Gita is a gospel of non-co-operation between forces of darkness and those of light. If it is to be literally interpreted, Arjuna representing a just cause was enjoined to engage in bloody warfare with the unjust Kauravas. Tulsidas advises the *Sant* (the good) to shun the *Asant* (the evil-doer). The Zend Avesta represents a perpetual dual between Ormuzd and Ahriman, between whom there is no compromise. To say of the Bible that it taboos non-co-operation is not to know Jesus, a prince among passive resisters, who uncompromisingly challenged the might of the Saducees and the Pharisees and for the sake of truth did not hesitate to divide sons from their parents. And what did the Prophet of Islam do? He non-co-operated in Mecca in a most active manner so long as his life was not in danger and wiped the dust of Mecca off his feet when he found that he and his followers might have uselessly to perish, and fled to Medina and returned when he was strong enough to give battle to his opponents. The duty of non-co-operation with unjust men and kings is as strictly enjoined by all the religions as is the duty of co-operation with just men and kings. Indeed most of the scriptures of the world seem even to go beyond non-co-operation and prefer violence to effeminate submission to a wrong. The Hindu religious tradition of which the manifesto speaks, clearly proves the duty of non-cooperation. Prahlad dissociated himself from his father, Meerabai from her husband, Bibhishan from his brutal brother.

The manifesto speaking of the secular aspect says, "The history of nations affords no instance to show that it (meaning non-co-operation) has, when employed, succeeded and done good." One most recent instance of brilliant success of non-cooperation is that of General Botha who boycotted Lord Milner's reformed councils and thereby procured a perfect constitution for his country. The Dukhobours of Russia offered non-co-operation, and a handful though they were, their grievances so deeply moved the civilized world that Canada offered them a home where they form a prosperous community. In India instances can be given by the dozen, in which in little principalities the *rayats* when deeply grieved by their chiefs have cut off all connection with them and bent them to their will. I know of no instance in history where well managed non-co-operation has failed.

Hitherto I have given historical instances of bloodless non-co-operation. I will not insult the intelligence of the reader by citing historical instances of non-co-operation combined with violence, but I am free to confess that there are on record as many successes as failures in violent non-co-operation. And it is because I know this fact that I have placed before the country a non-violent scheme in which, if at all worked satisfactorily, success is a certainty and in which non-response means no harm. For if even one man non-co-operates, say, by resigning some office, he has gained, not lost. That is its ethical or religious aspect. For its political result naturally it requires polymerous support. I fear therefore no disastrous result from non-co-operation save for an outbreak of violence on the part of the people whether under provocation or otherwise. I would risk violence a hundred times than risk the emasculation of a whole race.

*Young India*, 4-8-'20, p. 4

## 98. TRUE AND FALSE

To

The Editor, *Young India*

Sir,

It is three months since the Congress resolution of non-co-operation was passed but there is no adequate response from the student world! The cause of the failure is that they do not and cannot appreciate the secret of the item concerning them. They are not convinced how the boycott of colleges will paralyze the Government. And those few who have carried out that item have done so in response to the Congress call. They look upon it as a mass-movement, and if non-co-operation is to succeed, it must be brought into practice by a majority of the people.

Till now only 200 students from the Poona colleges have responded to the long and continued exhortations of the leaders and that too in order to obey the Congress mandate, but not at all to satisfy their conscience; but their expectations have failed, as the majority of the students remain aloof from the movement, as the other items of the programme are not being carried out and as this is not going to be a mass-movement. 'Now the question is, should a minority which has non-co-operated suffer for nothing and ruin their careers. With this idea many are going to return to their colleges, and, alas, they are being abused as "moral lepers" by some enthusiasts.

You will kindly throw light on all these points and dispel the clouds that are gathering round.

*I remain,*

9th March, 1921,

*Yours faithfully,*

Poona City

N. S. B.

I fear I shall be unable 'to dispel the clouds that are gathering round' but I shall try to throw light on the points raised by the correspondent. Whilst this is a mass movement everyone is expected to respond irrespective of others, because it is also a purifying movement. We leave schools or courts because it is sinful to countenance them, not because individual action can paralyze the Government. Such withdrawal on the part of many, however, does result in the paralysis of the Government. Students who withdrew merely in response to Congress call, but without inner conviction, did wrong and should rejoin their respective schools and brave the derision of their fellows. Those, however, who have seceded from conviction, must stand true even though they be a handful. One true coin is worth its full face value. A million false coins are so much dead-weight and perfectly valueless. When the few true non-co-operators have *proved* their worth the movement will automatically become a mass movement. The spirit of it pervades the masses even today. Mass-action is a matter of time. My belief is that India will be ripe by October. Those who have faith ought not to wait. I know that the students who have not withdrawn have refrained out of weakness, and not because they believe it to be wrong to leave the schools dominated by a Government which they would fain destroy.

*Young India, 23-3-'21, p. 96*

## 99. RISK OF MISUSE

(From an article which originally appeared under the title "Non- co-operation")

A correspondent whom Gandhiji describes as "a God-fearing political friend whom everybody knows", pleaded with Gandhiji among other things not to resort to non-co-operation while the British were engaged in a life and death struggle as such movement though perhaps securing some rights for India may spread hatred and strife all-round. Dealing with this objection Gandhiji commented as under:

The writer is one of the most earnest among us. He has presented one side of the picture but like all one-sided pictures this also is misleading.

Every powerful thing is liable to misuse. Opium and arsenic are most potent and useful drugs. And they lend themselves to great abuse. No one has for that reason suggested the stopping of their good use. If non-co-operation has lent itself to abuse in some cases, in many cases its wise use has proved absolutely efficacious. A thing has to be judged by its net effect. The net effect of non-violent non-co-operation has been of the greatest benefit to India. It has brought about an awakening among the masses which would probably have taken generations otherwise. It has prevented bloodshed and anarchy and on the whole improved the relations between the Britishers and ourselves. There is a better mutual understanding because there is better mutual respect than ever before. And yet our non-co-operation has been indifferently non-violent. I hold that non-co-operation is of universal use. Well applied, its use in politics can wholly displace the use of barbarous weapons of mutual destruction. The thing to do, therefore, is not to restrict its use but to extend it, care being taken that it is used in accordance with the known laws regulating its use. Risk of misuse has undoubtedly to be run. But with the increase in the knowledge of its right use, the risk can be minimized.

One safe thing about non-co-operation is that in the end its abuse recoils more upon the users than upon those against whom it is used. Its abuse is the

greatest in domestic relations because those against whom it is used are not strong enough to resist the abuse. It becomes a case of misapplied affection. Doting parents or wives are the greatest victims. These will learn wisdom when they realize that affection does not demand yielding to extortion in any form. On the contrary true affection will resist it.

The writer suggests the usual parliamentary programme with obstruction. Its futility, when it is not backed by readiness for non-co-operation and civil disobedience, has been fully demonstrated.

So far as the British are concerned I have already said that I will do nothing to embarrass them. I am straining every nerve to avoid a conflict. But they may make it inevitable. Even so, I am praying for a mode of application which will be effective and still not embarrassing in the sense of violent outbreaks throughout the country.

*Harijan, 18-5-'40, p. 132*

## 100. MY RESPONSIBILITY

(From "Some Questions")

Q. Did you not say even at Lahore that the country was not prepared for civil disobedience, especially, no-tax campaign on a mass scale?

A. I am not even now sure that it is. But it has become clear to me as never before that the unpreparedness in the sense that a non-violent atmosphere is wanting will as time goes by, very likely increase as it has been increasing all these years. Young men are impatient. I know definitely many stayed their violent designs because in 1921 the Congress had decided to offer civil disobedience. That school has been more active than before because of my repeated declarations that the country was not prepared for civil disobedience. I feel then if non-violence is an active force, as I know it is, it should work even in the face of the most violent atmosphere. One difficulty in the way was that the Congress claiming to represent the whole nation could not very well offer civil disobedience and disown responsibility for violence especially by Congressmen. I have procured discharge from that limitation by taking over the responsibility for launching on civil disobedience. I represent no one but myself and at the most those whom I may enroll for the campaign. And I propose at present to confine myself only to those who are amenable to the Ashram discipline, and have actually undergone it for some time. It is true that I may not shirk responsibility indirectly for any violence that may break out on the part of the nation and in the course of the campaign. But such responsibility will always be there and can be only a degree more than the responsibility I share with the British rulers in their sins against the nation in so far as I give my co-operation however reluctantly and ever so slightly. For instance I give my co-operation by paying taxes direct or indirect. The very salt I eat compels my voluntary co-operation. Moreover it has dawned on me never so plainly as now that if my nonviolence has suffered the greatest incarnation of violence which the British imperialistic rule is, it must suffer the crude and ineffective violence of the impatient patriots who know not that by their ineffectiveness

they are but helping that imperialistic rule and enabling it to consolidate the very thing they seek to destroy. I see now as clearly as daylight that my non-violence working as it has done against the British misrule has shaken it somewhat. Even so will it shake the counter-violence of the patriot if taking courage in both my hands I set my non-violence actively in motion, i.e. civil disobedience. I reduce the risk of the outbreak of counter-violence to a minimum by taking sole charge of the campaign. After all is said and done, however, I feel the truth of the description given to my proposal by *The Times of India*. It is indeed 'the last throw of a gambler'. I have been a 'gambler' all my life. In my passion for finding the truth and in relentlessly following out my faith in non-violence, I have counted no stake too great. In doing so I have erred, if at all, in the company of the most distinguished scientist of any age and any clime.

*Young India*, 20-2-'30, p. 60

## PART VIII: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

### 101. NON-CO-OPERATION OR CIVIL RESISTANCE?

Fear has been entertained in Government circles that the movement going on in Bardoli is one of non-co-operation. It is necessary therefore to distinguish between non-co-operation and civil resistance. Both are included in the wider term Satyagraha which covers any and every effort based on truth and non-violence. The term non-co-operation was designed to include among other things the items named in the programme of 1920 at the special session of the Congress at Calcutta and re-affirmed the same year at Nagpur with the object of attaining Swaraj. Under it no negotiation with or petition to the Government of the day was possible except for the purpose of attaining Swaraj. Whatever the Bardoli struggle may be, it clearly is not a struggle for the attainment of Swaraj. That every such awakening, every such effort as that of Bardoli brings Swaraj nearer and may bring it nearer even than any direct effort is undoubtedly true. But the struggle of Bardoli is to seek redress of a specific grievance. It ceases the moment the grievance is redressed. The method adopted in the first instance was through conventional prayer and petition. And when the conventional method failed utterly, the people of Bardoli invited Sjt. Vallabhbai Patel to lead them in civil resistance. The civil resistance does not mean even civil disobedience of the laws and rules promulgated by constituted authority. It simply means non-payment of a portion of a tax which former the aggrieved *ryots* contend has been improperly and unjustly imposed on them. This is tantamount to the repudiation by a private debtor of a part of the debt claimed by his creditor as due to him. If it is the right of a private person to refuse payment of a debt he does not admit, it is equally the right of the *ryot* to refuse to pay an imposition which he believes to be unjust. But it is not the purpose here to prove the correctness of the action of the people of Bardoli. My purpose is to distinguish between non-co-operation with attainment of Swaraj as its object and civil resistance as that of Bardoli with the redress of a specific

grievance as its object. This I hope is now made clear beyond doubt. That Sjt. Vallabhbhai and the majority of the workers under his command are confirmed non-co-operators is beside the point. The majority of those whom they represent are not. National non-co-operation is suspended. The personal creed of a non-co-operator does not preclude him from representing the cause of those who are helplessly co-operators.

*Young India*, 19-7-'28, p. 244

## **102. SATYAGRAHA NOT PREDOMINANTLY CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

(From a note by Gandhiji to an article of C. Rajagopalachari which was published under the caption "Confession of Faith")

Satyagraha is not predominantly civil disobedience put a quiet and irresistible pursuit of truth. On rarest occasion it becomes civil disobedience. But conscious and willing obedience must, in the case of a large body of workers, precede it. The Charkha which is the embodiment of willing obedience and calm persistence must therefore succeed before there is civil disobedience. It is because I am much afraid of playing with truth in even thinking of civil obedience before the necessary atmosphere has been ensured that I must insist upon the Charkha . . . even though the workers may be reduced to the number of the digits on the fingers of one hand only. We must not have violent disobedience under cover of civil disobedience. The lesson of Chauri Chaura has sunk too deep in me to be easily obliterated. . . .

*Young India*, 15-1-'25, p. 19

### 103. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE ONLY A PART OF SATYAGRAHA

(From "Limitations of Satyagraha")

Let us also appreciate the distinction between satyagraha and civil disobedience. All civil disobedience is part or branch of satyagraha, but all satyagraha is not civil disobedience. And seeing that the Nagpur friends have suspended what they were pleased to call satyagraha or civil disobedience, let me suggest for their information and that of others how satyagraha can be legitimately offered with reference to the Bengal detenus. If they will not be angry with me or laugh at me, let me commence by saying that they can offer satyagraha by developing the power of the people through Khadi, and through Khadi achieving boycott of foreign cloth. They can offer satyagraha by becoming precursors of Hindu-Muslim unity, by allowing their heads to be broken whenever there is a quarrel between the two, and whilst there is no active quarrel in their parts by performing silent acts of service to those of the opposite faith to theirs. If such constructive methods are too flat for them, and if they will be satisfied by nothing less than civil disobedience in spite of the violence of thought, word and deed raging round us, I suggest the following prescription of individual civil disobedience, which even one man can offer, not indeed in the hope of securing immediate release of detenus, but certainly in the hope of the individual sacrifice ultimately eventuating in such release. Let a batch, or only one person, say from Nagpur, march on foot to the Government House in Calcutta, and if a march is irksome or impossible then let him, her or them beg enough money for train fare from friends, and having reached Calcutta let only one satyagrahi march to the Government House and walk on to the point where he or she is stopped. There let him or her stop and demand the release of detenus or his or her own arrest. To preserve intact the civil nature of this disobedience the satyagrahi must be wholly unarmed, and in spite of insults, kicks or worse must meekly stand the ground, and be arrested without the slightest opposition. He may carry his own food in his pocket, a bottleful of water, take his Gita, the Koran, the Bible, the Zend Avesta or the

Grantha Sahib, as the case may be, and his *takli*. If there are many such real satyagrahis, they will certainly transform the atmosphere in an immensely short time, even as one gentle shower transforms the plains of India into a beautiful green carpet in one single day.

The question will be legitimately asked, 'If you really mean what you say, why don't you take the lead, never mind whether any one follows you are not?' My answer is: I do not regard myself as pure enough to undertake such a heroic mission. I am trying every moment of my life to attain the requisite purity of thought, word and deed. As it is, I confess that I am swayed by many passions. Anger wells up in my breast when I see or hear about what I consider to be misdeeds. All I can humbly claim for myself is that I can keep these passions and moods under fair subjection, and prevent them from gaining mastery over me. But the standard of purity that I want, for any such heroic measure is not to have such passions at all and yet to hate the wrong. When I feel that I have become incapable even of thinking evil and I hold it to be possible for every God-fearing man to attain that state, I shall wait for no man's advice, and even at the risk of being called the maddest of men, I shall not hesitate to knock at the Viceregal gate or go wherever God leads me, and demand what is due to this country which is being ground to dust today.

Meanwhile let no man mock at satyagraha. Let no man parody it. If it is at all possible, leave satyagraha alone, and the whole field is open for unchecked action. On a chartless sea in which there is no lighthouse a captain dares whither he wills. But a captain who knowing the existence of a lighthouse and its position, sails anyhow, or takes no precaution from knowing the light-house from deceiving stars, will be considered unfit for his post. If the reader can bear with me, let him understand that I claim to be the keeper of the lighthouse called satyagraha in the otherwise chartless sea of Indian politics. And, therefore, it is that I have suggested, that those who make for satyagraha will do well to go to its keeper. But I know that I have no patent rights in satyagraha. I can, therefore, merely rely upon the indulgence of fellow-workers for recognition of my office.

*Young India*, 14-7-27, p. 228

### 104. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

Civil disobedience was on the lips of every one of the members of the All-India Congress Committee. Not having really ever tried it, every one appeared to be enamoured of it from a mistaken belief in it as a sovereign remedy for our present-day ills. I feel sure that it can be made such if we can produce the necessary atmosphere for it. For individuals there always is that atmosphere except when their civil disobedience is certain to lead to bloodshed. I discovered this exception during the satyagraha days. But even so a call may come which one dare not neglect cost it what it may. I can clearly see the time coming to me when I *must* refuse obedience to every single State-made law, even though there may be a certainty of bloodshed. When neglect of the call means a denial of God, civil disobedience becomes a peremptory duty.

Mass civil disobedience stands on a different footing. It can only be tried in a calm atmosphere. It must be the calmness of strength not weakness, of knowledge not ignorance. Individual civil disobedience may be and often is vicarious. Mass civil disobedience may be and often is selfish in the sense that individuals expect personal gain from their disobedience. Thus in South Africa, Kallenbach and Polak offered vicarious civil disobedience. They had nothing to gain. Thousands offered it because they expected personal gain also in the shape say of the removal of the annual poll-tax levied upon ex-indentured men and their wives and grown-up children. It is sufficient in mass civil disobedience if the resisters understand the working of the doctrine.

It was in a practically uninhabited tract of country that I was arrested in South Africa when I was marching into prohibited area with over two to three thousand men and some women. The company included several Pathans and others who were able-bodied men. It was the greatest testimony of merit the Government of South Africa gave to the movement. They knew that we were as harmless as we were determined. It was easy enough for that body of men to cut to pieces those who arrested me. It would have not only been the most cowardly thing to do but it would have been a treacherous breach of their own

pledge, and it would have meant ruin to the struggle for freedom and the forcible deportation of every Indian from South Africa. But the men were no rabble. They were disciplined soldiers and all the better for being unarmed. Though I was torn from them, they did not disperse, nor did they turn back. They marched on to their destination till they were every one of them arrested and imprisoned. So far as I am aware, this was an instance of discipline and non-violence for which there is no parallel in history. Without such restraint I see no hope of successful mass civil disobedience here.

We must dismiss the idea of overawing the Government by huge demonstrations every time someone is arrested. On the contrary we must treat arrest as the normal condition of the life of a non-co-operator. For we must seek arrest and imprisonment, as the soldier who goes to battle seeks death. We expect to bear down the opposition of the Government by courting and not by avoiding imprisonment, even though it be by showing our supposed readiness to be arrested and imprisoned *en masse*. Civil disobedience then emphatically means our desire to surrender to a single unarmed policeman. Our triumph consists in thousands being led to the prisons like lambs to the slaughter house. If the lambs of the world had been willingly led, they would have long ago saved themselves from the "butcher's knife. Our triumph consists again in being imprisoned for no wrong whatsoever. The greater our innocence, the greater our strength and the swifter our victory.

As it is, this Government is cowardly, we are afraid of imprisonment. The Government takes advantages of our fear of gaols. If only our men and women welcome gaols as health-resorts, we will cease to worry about the dear ones put in gaols which our countrymen in South Africa used to nickname His Majesty's Hotels.

We have too long been mentally disobedient to the laws of the State and have too often surreptitiously evaded them, to be fit all of a sudden for civil disobedience. Disobedience to be civil has to be open and non-violent.

Complete civil disobedience is a state of peaceful rebellion refusal to obey every single State-made law. It is certainly more dangerous than an armed

rebellion. For it can never be put down if the civil resisters are prepared to face extreme hardships. It is based upon an implicit belief in the absolute efficiency of innocent suffering. By noiselessly going to prison a civil resister ensures a calm atmosphere. The wrong-doer wearies of wrong-doing in the absence of resistance. All pleasure is lost when the victim betrays no resistance. A full grasp of the conditions of successful civil resistance is necessary at least on the part of the representatives of the people before we can launch out on an enterprise of such magnitude. The quickest remedies are always fraught with the greatest danger and require the utmost skill in handling them. It is my firm conviction that if we bring about a successful boycott of foreign cloth, we shall have produced an atmosphere that would enable us to inaugurate civil disobedience on a scale that no Government can resist. I would therefore urge patience and determined concentration on Swadeshi upon those who are impatient to embark on mass civil disobedience.

*Young India*, 4-8-'21, p. 244

### 105. CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE—THE LIVING WATER OF LIFE

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Civil Disobedience")

We dare not pin our faith solely to civil disobedience. It is like the use of a knife to be used most sparingly if at all. A man who cuts away without ceasing cuts at the very root and finds himself without the substance he was trying to reach by cutting off the superficial hard crust. The use of civil disobedience will be healthy, necessary and effective only if we otherwise conform to the laws of all growth. We must therefore give its full and therefore greater value to the adjective 'civil' than to 'disobedience'. Disobedience without civility, discipline, discrimination, non-violence is certain destruction. Disobedience combined with love is the living water of life. Civil disobedience is a beautiful variant to signify growth, it is not discordance which spells death.

*Young India*, 5-1-22, p. 1 at p. o

### 106. DELAYING OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

(Originally appeared in "Question Box" under the title "Danger of Delay")

Q. You say you will not launch civil disobedience till Congressmen are fully trained in non-violence and disciplined. That is right. But in the meantime the country is being bled white. Increased railway fares, duty on sugar, the reduction of sugarcane prices are only a few instances in point. Is it right to delay the struggle till our best workers are picked off one by one, and thus lose the fight without 'striking a blow'?

A I can cite far more telling instances than you have given for justifying civil disobedience. But civil disobedience is not being delayed for want of justification. It is being delayed for want of preparation. I should be a stupid general if I began to fight in spite of my knowledge that my resources are poor. If the leaders are picked off by the Government without just cause, it would mean an invitation to the Congress to fight. I would not answer the invitation if I were not ready. The leaders' being picked off can do the country no harm. For we know that disciplined jail-going is itself a part of the struggle. Moreover the imprisonment of leaders will test our strength as an organization. A non-violent organization implies the equal education and therefore equal fitness of all units. That we have not arrived at that stage shows our ignorance of the working of non-violence.

*Harijan, 20-4-'40, p. 93*

### 107. PLEA FOR IMMEDIATE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

(Originally appeared under the title "Not Yet")

The reader will find in another column Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia's plea for immediate civil disobedience. I endorse his prescription for ensuring world peace. For enforcing the acceptance of his prescription he would have immediate civil disobedience. Here I must join: issue. If Dr. Lohia subscribes to my conception of the working of non-violence, he will at once admit that the present is no atmosphere for influencing the Britisher in the right direction through civil disobedience. Dr. Lohia agrees that the British Government should not be embarrassed. I fear that any step towards direct action is bound to cause them embarrassment. If I start now, the whole purpose of civil disobedience will be defeated.

I would unhesitatingly declare civil disobedience if the country was demonstrably non-violent and disciplined. But unfortunately we have many groups outside the Congress who believe in neither non-violence nor civil disobedience. In the Congress itself there are all shades of opinion about the efficacy of non-violence. Congressmen who believe in the application of non-violence for the defence of India can be counted on the finger-tips. Though we have made great strides towards nonviolence, we have not arrived at a stage when we can hope to be unconquerable. Any false step at the present time may end in the loss of the great moral prestige the Congress has gained. We have sufficiently demonstrated that the Congress has done with imperialism, and that it will not be satisfied with anything less than the unfettered right of self-determination.

If the British Government will not *suo motu* declare India as a free country having the right to determine her own status and constitution, I am of opinion that we should wait till the heat of the battle in the heart of the Allied countries subsides and the future is clearer than it is. We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin. That is not the way of non-violence.

But we shall have many opportunities of demonstrating our power if we really have it. We can make it felt at the time of peace which must come whichever party wins.

Have we got the power? Is India at ease without having up-to-date arms? Does not India feel helpless without the ability to defend herself against aggression? Do even Congressmen feel secure? Or do they not feel that for some years to come at any rate India will have to be helped by Britain or some other power? If such is our unfortunate plight, how can we hope to make an effective contribution towards an honourable peace after the war or universal disarmament? We must first demonstrate the efficacy of non-violence of the strong in our own country before we can expect to influence the tremendously armed powers of the West.

But many Congressmen are playing at non-violence. They think in terms of civil disobedience anyhow meaning the filling of jails. This is a childish interpretation of the great force that civil disobedience is. I must continue to repeat, even though it may cause nausea, that prison-going without the backing of honest constructive effort and goodwill in the heart for the wrong-doer is violence and therefore forbidden in satyagraha. Force generated by non-violence is infinitely greater than the force of all the arms invented by man's ingenuity. Non-violence, therefore, is the decisive factor in civil disobedience. At this the most critical moment in India's history, I will not play with the force whose hidden possibilities I have been humbly trying to explore now for nearly half a century. Fortunately in the last resort I have myself to fall back upon. I have been told that people cannot be nonviolent overnight. I have never contended they can. But I have held that by proper training they can be, if they have the will. Active non-violence is necessary for those who will offer civil disobedience, but the will and proper training are enough for the people to cooperate with those who are chosen for civil disobedience. The constructive work prescribed by the Congress is the proper training. Given the preparation the Congress will make perhaps the most effective contribution toward ending the war in the right way. Disarmament of India though compulsory in origin, if

it is voluntarily adopted by the nation as a virtue and if India makes a declaration that she will not defend herself with arms, can materially influence the European situation. Those, therefore, who wish to see India realize her destiny through nonviolence should devote every ounce of their energy towards the fulfilment of the constructive programme in right earnest without any thought of civil disobedience.

Sevagram, 28-5-'40

*Harijan*, 1-6-'40, p. 148

### 108. NON-PAYMENT OF TAXES—I

(From "Notes")

I observe a desire in some places to precipitate mass civil disobedience by suspending payment of taxes. But I would urge the greatest caution before embarking upon the dangerous adventure. We must not be indifferent about violence, and we must make sure of masses exercising self-control whilst they are witnesses to the confiscation of their crops and cattle or forfeiture of their holdings. I know that withholding of payment of taxes is one of the quickest methods of overthrowing a Government. I am equally sure that we have not yet evolved that degree of strength and discipline which are necessary for conducting a successful campaign of non-payment of taxes. Not a single *tehsil* in India is yet ready, except perhaps Bardoli and to a lesser degree Anand. More than fifty per cent of the population of such *tehsil* has to rid itself of the curse of Untouchability, must be dressed in *Khadi* manufactured in the *tehsil*, must be non-violent in thought, word and deed, and must be living in perfect friendliness with all whether co-operators or non-co-operators. Non-payment of taxes without the necessary discipline will be an act of unpardonable madness. Instead of leading to Swaraj, it is likely to lead to no-raj. I must, therefore, repeat the caution I have so often uttered that mass civil disobedience ought not to be tried in the first instance, except under my personal supervision and certainly never without the fulfilment of the I conditions laid down at Delhi.

*Young India*, 19-1-'22, p. 42

### 109. NON-PAYMENT OF TAXES—II

The idea of non-payment of taxes is in the air. The Andhras have made us more familiar with the cry than any other part of India. Whilst the Congress has given provincial autonomy to every province I have ventured to warn the provinces against embarking upon a non-payment campaign till I had tried the experiment myself in some area under my own supervision. I abide by that warning. I must also draw attention to the fact that we are not to start offensive civil disobedience till the 31st instant, or if it is sooner till the Malaviya Conference Committee knows the result of its negotiations and knows that the proposed Round Table Conference is not to come off. Therefore any suspension of taxes at the present moment can only be regarded as temporary holding back pending the result of the negotiations carried on by that committee. But 31st January will be soon upon us. And it is necessary to consider the question of non-payment of taxes in all its bearings.

On this subject, a friend who is in deep sympathy with the national movement and who is a fairly accurate student of it, thus expresses his apprehensions:

"I have often thought to what extent the non-violent non-co-operation movement transgresses the religious limits, when it embarks on civil disobedience in the form of non-payment of taxes. I look upon the non-violent non-cooperation as essentially a spiritual movement. I know Mr. Gandhi does not think it otherwise. Will not the programme of the non-payment of taxes transgress the religious limit and lead to violence and bring into the movement people who are not as yet saturated with the principle of nonviolence? Is not Mr. Gandhi holding out, however unconsciously, a material bait for his spiritual movement by which he means to conquer the Government? Recent events have shown that the temper of violence and the belief in violence are not eliminated from our character in the mass. And therefore it would be a leap in the dark fraught with disastrous consequences to carry out the programme of civil disobedience in the form of non-payment of taxes. I am therefore most

anxious that Mr. Gandhi should not begin civil disobedience in this form as yet."

The validity of the objection lies in the statement that the non-payment campaign will bring into the movement people, who are not as yet saturated with the principle of non-violence. This is very true and because it is true, non-payment does 'hold out a material bait'. It follows, therefore, that we must not resort to non-payment because of the possibility of a ready response. The readiness is a fatal temptation. Such non-payment will not be civil or non-violent, but it will be criminal or fraught with the greatest possibility of violence. Let us remember the experience of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru when the peasants, after they had taken the pledge of non-violence told him that if he advised them to do violence, they would be certainly ready to do so. Not until the peasantry is trained to understand the reason and the virtue of *civil* non-payment and is prepared to look with calm resignation upon the confiscation (which can only be temporary) of their holdings and the forced sale of their cattle and other belongings, may they be advised to withhold payment of taxes. They must be told what happened in holy Palestine. The Arabs who were fined were surrounded by soldiers. Aeroplanes were hovering overhead. And the sturdy men were dispossessed of their cattle. The latter were impounded and left without fodder and even water. When the Arabs, stupefied and rendered helpless, brought the fine and additional penalty, as if to mock them, they had their dead and dying cattle returned to them. Worse things can and certainly will happen in India. Are the Indian peasantry prepared to remain absolutely non-violent and see their cattle taken away from them to die of hunger and thirst? I know that such things have already happened in Andhra Desh. If the peasantry in general knowingly and deliberately remain peaceful even in such trying circumstances, they are nearly ready for nonpayment.

I say, 'nearly ready', for non-payment is intended to transfer the power from the bureaucracy into our hands. It is therefore not enough that the peasantry remain non-violent. Non-violence is certainly nine-tenths of the battle, but it is not all. The peasantry may remain non-violent but may not treat the

untouchables as their brethren; they may not regard Hindus, Musalmans, Christians, Jews, Parsis, as the case may be, their brethren; they may not have learnt the economic and the moral value of the Charkha and the khaddar. If they have not, they cannot gain Swaraj. They will not do all these things after Swaraj, if they will not do them now. They must be taught to know that the practice of these national virtues means Swaraj.

Thus civil non-payment of taxes is a privilege capable of being exercised only after rigorous training. And even as *civil* disobedience is difficult in the case of a habitual offender against the laws of the State, so is *civil* non-payment difficult for those who have hitherto been in the habit of withholding payment of taxes on the slightest pretext. Civil non-payment of taxes is indeed the last stage in non-co-operation. We must not resort to it till we have tried the other forms of civil disobedience. And it will be the height of unwisdom to experiment with non-payment in large or many areas in the beginning stages.

I hear the talk even of refusing payment of rent to Zamindars. It must not be forgotten that we are not non-co-operating with Zamindars, whether Indian or foreign. We are engaged in a fight with one big Zamindar—the bureaucracy—which has made of us and the Zamindars themselves serfs. We must try to bring round the Zamindars to our side, and isolate the big Zamindar. But if they will not come to us, we must be patient with them. We may not even proclaim a social boycott against them. That is to say, we may not refuse social service such as *dhobi*, barber etc. to them. In areas under permanent settlement therefore there can be no non-payment campaign except in respect of cesses that might be payable directly to the Government. But the mention of Zamindars merely shows the difficulties that beset us in the pursuit of no-tax campaign. All things considered therefore, it is my deliberate opinion that the no-tax movement for the objects of the Congress should be for the time being left to me, meanwhile workers can develop their own districts along constructive lines. They can discover various other methods of offering mass civil disobedience and then as the people become purified and enlightened, lead them on to nonpayment.

As for the Andhras where preparations on an intensive scale have already been made, I do not wish to damp the ardour of the workers. If they are satisfied that the people in the selected areas fulfil all the tests laid down at Delhi, and that they are capable of endless suffering without retaliation, I have nothing to say but to pronounce 'God bless the brave Andhras'. They must know that the responsibility will be entirely theirs for any mishap that may occur. They will not be blamed by anybody if they do not take up the no-tax movement.

*Young India*, 26-1-'22, p. 57

### **110. REQUISITE CONDITIONS**

(From "Notes")

Those only can take up civil disobedience, who believe in willing obedience even to irksome laws imposed by the State so long as they do not hurt their conscience or religion, and are prepared equally willingly to suffer the penalty of civil disobedience. Disobedience to be civil has to be absolutely nonviolent, the underlying principle being the winning over of the opponent by suffering, i.e. love.

*Young India*, 3-11-'21, p. 345 at p. 346

### **111. A CONFESSION**

(From a paragraph in "Notes" which appeared under the title "Unrepentant")

Whilst there is yet time I had better make another confession. I am so proud of my performance at Bardoli that there is every prospect of my repeating it. That clean confession made at a most critical moment did me a world of good. It purified me and I verily believe that it did as much good to the cause. That confession and retracing of our steps gave an object-lesson in nonviolence as nothing else could have. I am therefore likely to repeat Bardoli as often as the occasion arises and that I shall do even at the risk of finding myself in a minority of one. I should be an unfit servant of the nation if I hesitated to tell the truth and do it for fear of losing popularity. What will it be worth when I have lost the only thing for which I live?

*Young India*, 17-4-'24, p. 131 at p. 132

## PART IX: CIVIL V. CRIMINAL DISOBEDIENCE

### 112. WHEN IS DISOBEDIENCE CIVIL?

(From "Contempt of Court")

Disobedience to be civil must be sincere, respectful, restrained, never defiant, must be based upon some well- understood principle, must not be capricious and above all must have no ill-will or hatred behind it.

*Young India*, 24-3-'20, p. 3 at p. 4

### 113. CIVIL v. CRIMINAL

When a man wilfully breaks his own laws, the disobedience becomes criminal. For he commits the breach not against himself but against someone else, and not only escapes punishment for the breach for there is none provided against himself by the maker of laws, but he avoids also the inconvenience caused by their observance. What is true of the individual is true of the corporation. At the present moment one observes this criminal breach by the Government of its own laws throughout India. Sections of the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code are being freely abused. And because non-co-operators refrain from questioning orders issued by officials, bare-faced illegalities are being committed by them with impunity. We have seen this in Bulandshahr, in Chittagong, all over Sindh, and nowhere so systematically and so deliberately as in the Madras Presidency. Mr. Yakub Hassan has pointed out with great justification that his arrest and conviction are contrary to the spirit of the Viceregal pledge. Indeed, it is against not only the spirit of Lord Reading's pledge but it is, against the letter even of his predecessor's communique in which it was declared in solemn tones that so long as non-co-operation remained non-violent there would be no repression. No one dare accuse Mr. Yakub Hassan of having incited to violence in his Tanjore address before an audience of picked representatives. Nor was any violence done in the Tanjore

district as a result of his speech. The Magistrate in the case of Mr. Iyer of the *Deshabhaktan* actually admitted that there was not a trace of violence in the writing that was impeached and that it actually contained exhortations to non-violence. Mr. Ramaswami Iyengar, leading pleader of Coimbatore has been arrested for a spirited letter to the *Hindu* though there was no violence in it. And so have Dr. Varadarajalu and Mr. Gopalakrishnayyah been arrested for their speeches and writings, although it is known that they not only do not incite to violence but that theirs is actually a restraining influence in the face of provocation. Is it any wonder if one infers from this campaign of repression an intention on the part of the Government to invite violence? In not one of these cases I have mentioned has there been any outbreak of violence as a result of the speeches and writings concerned. And so we see that the Government is guilty of criminal breach of its own laws. And what legal remedy has the afflicted individual against the Government? There is certainly no sanction provided against the Government in law when it prostitutes the law itself to its own base ends. When therefore a Government thus becomes lawless in an organized manner, civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty and is the only remedy open specially to those who had no hand in the making of the Government or its laws. Another remedy there certainly is, and that is armed revolt. Civil disobedience is a complete, effective and bloodless substitute. And it is as well that by exemplary restraint and discipline in the way of submission to unjust and even illegal orders we have created the necessary atmosphere for civil disobedience. For thereby on the one hand the tyrannical nature of the Government has been made more manifest and on the other by willing obedience we have fitted ourselves for civil disobedience.

It is equally as well that civil disobedience is being confined even now to the smallest area possible. It must be admitted that it is an abnormal state, even as a corrupt and unpopular Government should be in civilized society like disease an abnormal state. Therefore only when a citizen has disciplined himself in the art of voluntary obedience to the State laws is he justified on rare occasions deliberately but non-violently to disobey them, and expose himself to the penalty of the breach. If then we are to achieve the maximum result in the

minimum of time, whilst fiercest disobedience is going on in a limited area perfect submission to the laws must be yielded in all the other parts so as to test the nation's capacity for voluntary obedience and for understanding the virtue of civil disobedience. Any unauthorized outbreak of disobedience, therefore, in any part of India will most certainly damage the cause and will betray an unpardonable ignorance of the principles of civil disobedience.

We must expect the Government to take the strictest measures to suppress this impending defiance of authority, for on it depends its very existence. Its instinct of self-preservation alone will actuate measures of repression adequate for suppression. And if it fails, the Government of necessity disappears. That is, it either bends to the national will or it is dissolved. The greatest danger lies in violence breaking out anywhere by reason of provocation. But it would be wrong and unmanly to invite the sternest measures and then to be incensed against them, apart from the fact that it will be a breach of our solemn pledge of nonviolence. I may be arrested, thousands who take part in the peaceful revolt may also be arrested, imprisoned, even tortured. The rest of India must not lose its head. When the proper time comes, the rest of India may respond by undertaking civil disobedience and inviting arrests, imprisonments and tortures. It is the sacrifice of the innocent we want to make. That alone will appear pleasing to God. And therefore on the eve of the great battle the nation is embarking upon, my earnest exhortation to every non-co-operator is to fit himself for civil disobedience by fulfilling to the letter and in the spirit the conditions laid down at Delhi, and to ensure non-violence everywhere. Let us not be satisfied that we remain non-violent individually. We boast that non-co-operation has become universal in India. We boast that we have acquired sufficient influence even over the unruly masses to restrain them from violence. Let us prove true to our claim.

*Young India*, 17-11-'21, p. 376

#### **114. WHEN IS CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE REALLY CIVIL?**

(An extract from an article which originally appeared under the title "Civil Disobedience" is given below.)

Now civil disobedience, if it is really civil must appear so even to the opponent. He must feel that the resistance is not intended to do him any harm. At the present moment the average Englishman thinks that non-violence is merely a cloak... I protest with all the strength at my command that, so far as I am concerned, I have no desire whatsoever to embarrass the British, especially at a time when it is a question of life and death with them. All I want the Congress to do through civil disobedience is to deny the British Government the moral influence which the Congress co-operation would give. The material resources of India and her man-power are already being exploited by the British Government by reason of their control of the whole of this sub-continent.

*Harijan, 27-4-1940, p. 104*

#### **115. AGGRESSIVE v. DEFENSIVE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Aggressive v. Defensive")

It is now necessary to understand the exact distinction between aggressive civil disobedience and defensive. Aggressive, assertive or offensive civil disobedience is non-violent, wilful disobedience of laws of the State whose breach does not involve moral turpitude and which is undertaken as a symbol of revolt against the State. Thus disregard of laws relating to revenue or regulation of personal conduct for the convenience of the State, although such laws in themselves inflict no hardship and do not require to be altered, would be assertive, aggressive or offensive civil disobedience.

Defensive civil disobedience, on the other hand, is involuntary or reluctant non-violent disobedience of such laws as are in themselves bad and obedience to which would be inconsistent with one's self-respect or human dignity. Thus formation of volunteer corps for peaceful purposes, holding of public meetings

for like purposes, publication of articles not contemplating or inciting to violence in spite of prohibitory orders, is defensive civil disobedience. And so is conducting of peaceful picketing undertaken with a view to wean people from things or institutions picketed in spite of orders to the contrary. The fulfilment of the conditions mentioned above is as necessary for defensive civil disobedience as for offensive civil disobedience.

*Young India*, 9-2-'22, p. 81 at p. 85

### **116. CAUTION AGAINST AGGRESSIVE CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

(Originally appeared in "Notes" under the title "Caution about Civil Disobedience")

Writing of his own District Lala Shyamlal says, "The District Magistrate here does not believe in making arrests unless there is apprehension of a breach of the peace. The result is that our volunteers are having their own way. No foreign cloth is being imported. No liquor contract has been sold." Lala Shyamlal then inquires whether in the districts where no arrests are made people should go out of their way to court arrest. I thought that I had made the position absolutely clear in previous issues. Whilst we may do nothing to avoid arrest in the ordinary course of our duty, we must not go outside our beat in order to compel arrest. That would be either aggressive civil disobedience or criminal disobedience. The latter is out of question. The former, i.e. aggressive civil disobedience is a right to be exercised when necessary and when we are thoroughly ready, and is also a duty we must discharge if we are ready and circumstances require a performance of it. But aggressive civil disobedience whether mass or individual is a most dangerous weapon though also most effective among all the peaceful weapons at our disposal. I am myself satisfied that the country as a whole is not ready for this form of self-assertion. We have to go through much greater and stricter discipline. We have to understand the exact, I was almost going to say, the spiritual value of obedience to laws and discipline which may be irksome and even repugnant to us. Assertive civil disobedience is a right that accrues to us only after severe *tapasya* through which we have not yet gone. Any premature resort to assertive civil

disobedience therefore may precipitate a crisis we neither anticipate nor want, and which we must avoid by every means we can think of. The least therefore that we must do is to await the result of the experiment I personally wish to conduct. It is a new thing and surely simple prudence requires us to watch that experiment. Indeed if aggressive civil disobedience whether mass or individual is attempted in other parts of India, it is likely to embarrass me and damage the country's cause. I invite the attention of all non-co-operators to the resolution of the Working Committee which now makes it incumbent upon all the Congress organizations to refrain from aggressive civil disobedience except with my express consent and so far as I can see the only exception I am likely to make will be in favour of a group of 100 villages in Andhradesh. But even there I have informed St. Konda Venkatapayya that if it is at all possible for him to avoid taking the offensive I would appreciate it and that he would resort to it only if he found that retracing would be demoralizing and if humanly speaking he was certain of non-violence being observed throughout Andhradesh and also certain that the other conditions laid down by the Congress were strictly fulfilled. I have a suspicion that in many parts of India the condition about the hand-spun Khadi is not being strictly carried out and that we are not yet everywhere cured of the disease of Untouchability. In my opinion the ability to go to jail is of far less consequence than ability and the readiness to observe in their fullness the conditions about Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Parsi-Christian unity, about Untouchability and hand-spun Khadi. Without a due fulfilment of these conditions, we shall find that all our going to jail is bravado and so much wasted effort. Self-purification is the main consideration in seeking the prison. Embarrassment of the Government is a secondary consideration. It is my unalterable conviction that even though the Government may not feel embarrassed in any way whatsoever by the incarceration or even execution of an innocent, unknown but a purified person, such incarceration will be the end of that Government. Even a single lamp dispells the deepest darkness. Non-co-operation is not allopathic treatment, it is homoeopathic. The patient does not taste the drops given to him. He is sometimes even incredulous, but if the homoeopaths are to be trusted, the tasteless drops or the tiny pills of

homoeopathy are far more potent than ounce doses or choking pills of allopathy. I assure the reader that the effect of purifying non-co-operation is more certain than the effect of homoeopathic medicine. I do wish, therefore, that everywhere non-co-operators will insist upon due fulfilment of all the conditions of civil disobedience. One may be a lawyer, title- holder, even a councillor and yet properly eligible for civil disobedience if he is sincerely non-violent in thought, word and deed, wears hand-spun Khadi as a sacred duty, shuns Untouchability as an intolerable evil and believes in the unity of all races and classes in India, as for all time essential for the well- being and the attainment, as also retention, of Swaraj.

*Young India*, 9-2-'22, p. 81 at p. 84

### 117. THE CRIME OF CHAURI CHAURA

God has been abundantly kind to me. He has warned me the third time that there is not as yet in India that truthful and nonviolent atmosphere which and which alone can justify mass disobedience which can be at all described as civil which means gentle, truthful, humble, knowing, wilful yet loving, never criminal and hateful.

He warned me in 1919 when the Rowlatt Act agitation was started. Ahmedabad, Viramgam and Kheda erred; Amritsar and Kasur erred. I retraced my steps, called it a Himalayan miscalculation, humbled myself before God and man, and stopped not merely mass civil disobedience but even my own which I knew was intended to be civil and non-violent.

The next time it was through the events of Bombay that God gave a terrific warning. He made me eye-witness of the deeds of Bombay mob on 17th November. The mob acted in the interest of non-co-operation. I announced my intention to stop the mass civil disobedience which was to be immediately started in Bardoli. The humiliation was greater than in 1919, but it did me good. I am sure that the nation gained by the stopping. India stood for truth and non-violence by the suspension.

But the bitterest humiliation was still to come. Madras did give the warning, but I heeded it not. But God spoke clearly through Chauri Chaura. I understood that the constables who were so brutally hacked to death had given much provocation. They had even gone back upon the word just given by the Inspector that they would not be molested, but when the procession had passed the stragglers were interfered with and abused by the constables. The former cried out for help. The mob returned. The constables opened fire. The little ammunition they had was- exhausted and they retired to the Thana for safety. The mob, my informant tells me, therefore set fire to the Thana. The self-imprisoned constables had to come out for dear life and as they did so, they were hacked to pieces and the mangled remains were thrown into the raging flames.

It is claimed that no non-co-operation volunteer had a hand in the brutality and that the mob had not only the immediate provocation but they had also general knowledge of the highhanded tyranny of the police in that district. No provocation can possibly justify the brutal murder of men who had been rendered defenceless and who had virtually thrown themselves on the mercy of the mob. And when India claims to be non-violent and hopes to mount the throne of Liberty through non-violent means, mob-violence even in answer to grave provocation is a bad augury. Suppose the 'non-violent' disobedience of Bardoli was permitted by God to succeed, the Government had abdicated in favour of the victors of Bardoli, who would control the unruly element that must be expected to perpetrate inhumanity upon due provocation? Non-violent attainment of self-government presupposes a nonviolent control over the violent elements in the country. Nonviolent non-co-operators can only succeed when they have succeeded in attaining control over the hooligans of India, in other words, when the latter also have learnt patriotically or religiously to refrain from their violent activities, at least whilst the campaign of non-co-operation is going on. The tragedy at Chauri Chaura, therefore, roused me thoroughly.

'But what about your manifesto to the Viceroy and your rejoinder to his reply?' spoke the voice of Satan. It was the bitterest cup of humiliation to drink. 'Surely it is cowardly to withdraw the next day after pompous threats to the Government and promises to the people of Bardoli.' Thus Satan's invitation was to deny Truth and therefore Religion, to deny God Himself. I put my doubts and troubles before the Working Committee and other associates whom I found near me. They did not all agree with me at first. Some of them probably do not even now agree with me. But never has a man been blessed, perhaps, with colleagues and associates so considerate and forgiving as I have. They understood my difficulty and patiently followed my argument. The result is before the public in the shape of the resolutions of the Working Committee. The drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously

sound, and I venture to assure the doubters that the country will have gained by my humiliation and confession of error.

The only virtue I want to claim is truth and non-violence. I lay no claim to superhuman powers. I want none. I wear the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of my fellow beings wears and am therefore as liable to err as any. My services have many limitations but God has up to now blessed them in spite of the imperfections.

For, confession of error is like a broom that sweeps away dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before. I feel stronger for my confession. And the cause must prosper for the retracing. Never has man reached his destination by persistence in deviation from the straight path.

It has been urged that Chauri Chaura cannot affect Bardoli. There is danger, it is argued, only if Bardoli is weak enough to be swayed by Chauri Chaura and is betrayed into violence. I have no doubt whatsoever on that account. The people of Bardoli are in my opinion the most peaceful in India. But Bardoli is but a speck on the map of India. Its effort cannot succeed unless there is perfect co-operation from the other parts. Bardoli's disobedience will be civil only when the other parts of India remain nonviolent. Just as the addition of a grain of arsenic to a pot of milk renders it unfit as food so will the civility of Bardoli prove unacceptable by the addition of the deadly poison from Chauri Chaura. The latter represents India as much as Bardoli.

Chauri Chaura is after all an aggravated symptom. I have never imagined that there has been no violence, mental or physical, in the places where repression is going on. Only I have believed, I still believe and the pages of *Young India* amply prove, that the repression is out of all proportion to the insignificant popular violence in the areas of repression. The determined holding of meetings in prohibited areas I do not call violence. The violence I am referring to is the throwing of brickbats or intimidation and coercion practised in stray cases. As a matter of fact in civil disobedience there should be no excitement. Civil disobedience is a preparation for mute suffering. Its effect is marvellous though unperceived and gentle. But I regarded certain amount of excitement as

inevitable, certain amount of unintended violence even pardonable, i.e. I did not consider civil disobedience impossible in somewhat imperfect conditions. Under perfect conditions disobedience when civil is hardly felt. But the present movement is admittedly a dangerous experiment under fairly adverse conditions.

The tragedy of Chauri Chaura is really the index finger. It shows the way India may easily go, if drastic precautions be not taken. If we are not to evolve violence out of non-violence, it is quite clear that we must hastily retrace our steps and re-establish an atmosphere of peace, rearrange our programme and not think of starting mass civil disobedience until we are sure of peace being retained in spite of mass civil disobedience being started and in spite of Government provocation. We must be sure of unauthorized portions not starting mass civil disobedience.

As it is, the Congress organization is still imperfect and its instructions are still perfunctorily carried out. We have not established Congress Committees in every one of the villages. Where we have, they are not perfectly amenable to our instructions. We have not probably more than one crore of members on the roll. We are in the middle of February, yet not many have paid the annual four annas subscription for the current year. Volunteers are indifferently enrolled. They do not conform to all the conditions of their pledge. They do not even wear hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar. All the Hindu volunteers have not yet purged themselves of the sin of Untouchability. All are not free from the taint of violence. Not by their imprisonment are we going to win Swaraj or serve the holy cause of the Khilafat or attain the ability to stop payment to faithless servants. Some of us err in spite of ourselves. But some others among us sin wilfully. They join volunteer corps well knowing that they are not and do not intend to remain nonviolent. We are thus untruthful even as we hold the Government to be untruthful. We dare not enter the kingdom of Liberty with mere hp homage to truth and non-violence.

Suspension of mass civil disobedience and subsidence of excitement are necessary for further progress, indeed indispensable to prevent further

retrogression. I hope, therefore, that by suspension every Congressman or woman will not only not feel disappointed but he or she will feel relieved of the burden of unreality and of national sin.

Let the opponent glory in our humiliation or so-called defeat. It is better to be charged with cowardice and weakness than to be guilty of denial of our oath and sin against God. It is million times better to *appear* untrue before the world than *to be* untrue to ourselves.

And so, for me the suspension of mass civil disobedience and other minor activities that were calculated to keep up excitement is not enough penance for my having been the instrument, howsoever involuntary, of the brutal violence by the people at Chauri Chaura.

I must undergo personal cleansing, I must become a fitter instrument able to register the slightest variation in the moral atmosphere about me. My prayers must have much deeper truth and humility about them than they evidence. And for me there is nothing so helpful and cleansing as a fast accompanied by the necessary mental co-operation.

I know that the mental attitude is everything. Just as a prayer may be merely a mechanical intonation as of a bird, so may a fast be a mere mechanical torture of the flesh. Such mechanical contrivances are valueless for the purpose intended. Again, just as a mechanical chant may result in the modulation of voice, a mechanical fast may result in purifying the body. Neither will touch the soul within.

But a fast undertaken for fuller self-expression, for attainment of the spirit's supremacy over the flesh, is a most powerful factor in one's evolution. After deep consideration, therefore, I am imposing on myself a five days' continuous fast permitting myself water. It commenced on Sunday evening, it ends on Friday evening. This is the least I must do.

I have taken into consideration the All-India Congress Committee meeting in front of me. I have in mind the anxious pain even the five days' fast will cause many friends; but I can no longer postpone the penance nor lessen it.

I urge co-workers not to copy my example. The motive in their case will be lacking. They are not the originators of civil disobedience. I am in the unhappy position of a surgeon proved skillless to deal with an admittedly dangerous case. I must either abdicate or acquire greater skill. Whilst the personal penance is not only necessary but obligatory on me, the exemplary self-restraint prescribed by the Working Committee is surely sufficient penance for everyone else. It is no small penance and if sincerely carried out, it can become infinitely more real and better than fasting. What can be richer and more fruitful than a greater fulfilment of the vow of non-violence in thought, word and deed or the spread of that spirit? It will be more than food for me during the week to observe that comrades are all silently and without idle discussion, engaged in fulfilling the constructive programme sketched by the Working Committee, in enlisting Congress members after making sure that they understand the Congress creed of truth and non-violence for the attainment of Swaraj, in daily and religiously spinning for a fixed time, in introducing the wheel of prosperity and freedom in every home, in visiting 'untouchable' homes and finding out their wants, in inducing national schools to receive 'untouchable' children, in organizing social service specially designed to find a common platform for every variety of man and woman, and in visiting the homes which the drink curse is desolating, in establishing real Panchayats and in organizing national schools on a proper footing. The workers will be better engaged in these activities than in fasting. I hope, therefore, that no one will join me in fasting, either through false sympathy or an ignorant conception of the spiritual value of fasting.

All fasting and all penance must as far as possible be secret. But my fasting is both a penance and a punishment, and a punishment has to be public. It is penance for me and punishment for those whom I try to serve, for whom I love to live and would equally love to die. They have unintentionally sinned against the laws of the Congress though they were sympathizers if not actually connected with it. Probably they hacked the constables—their countrymen and fellow beings—with my name on their lips. The only way love punishes is by suffering. I cannot even wish them to be arrested. But I would let them know that I would suffer for their breach of the Congress creed. I would advise those

who feel guilty and repentant to hand themselves voluntarily to the Government for punishment and make a clean confession. I hope that the workers in the Gorakhpur district will leave no stone unturned to find out the evil-doers and urge them to deliver themselves into custody. But whether the murderers accept my advice or not, I would like them to know that they have seriously interfered with Swaraj operations, that in being the cause of the postponement of the movement in Bardoli, they have injured the very cause they probably intended to serve. I would like them to know, too, that this movement is not a cloak or a preparation for violence. I would, at any rate, suffer every humiliation, every torture, absolute ostracism and death itself to prevent the movement from becoming violent or a precursor of violence. I make my penance public also because I am now denying myself the opportunity of sharing their lot with the prisoners. The immediate issue has again shifted. We can no longer press for the withdrawal of notifications or discharge of prisoners. They and we must suffer for the crime of Chauri Chaura. The incident proves, whether we wish it or no, the unity of life. All, including even the administrators, must suffer. Chauri Chaura must stiffen the Government, must still further corrupt the police and the reprisals that will follow must further demoralize the people. The suspension and the penance will take us back to the position we occupied before the tragedy. By strict discipline and purification we regain the moral confidence required for demanding the withdrawal of notifications and the discharge of prisoners.

If we learn the full lesson of the tragedy, we can turn the curse into a blessing. By becoming truthful and non-violent, both in spirit and deed and by making the Swadeshi, i.e. the khaddar programme complete, we can establish full Swaraj and redress the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs without a single person having to Offer civil disobedience.

*Young India*, 16-2-'22, p. 102

### 118. THE ONLY TYRANT I ACCEPT

(Originally appeared under the title "The All-India Congress Committee' )

The session just past of the All-India Congress Committee was in some respects more memorable than the Congress. There is so much under-current of violence, both conscious and unconscious that I was actually and literally praying for a disastrous defeat. I have always been in a minority. The reader does not know that in South Africa, I started with practical unanimity, reached a minority of sixty-four and even sixteen and went up again to a huge majority. The best and the most solid work was done in the wilderness of minority.

I know that the only thing that the Government dread is this huge majority I seem to command. They little know that I dread it even more than they. I have become literally sick of the adoration of the unthinking multitude. I would feel certain of my ground, if I was spat upon by them. Then there would be no need of confession of Himalayan and other miscalculations, no retracing, no re-arranging.

But it was not to be.

A friend warned me against exploiting my 'dictatorship'. He little knew that I had never once used it, if only because the legal occasion had not yet risen for its use. The 'dictatorship' accrues to me only when the ordinary Congress machinery is rendered unworkable by the Government.

Far from my consciously or unconsciously exploiting my 'dictatorship' I have begun to wonder if I am not unconsciously allowing myself to be 'exploited'. I confess that I have a dread of it as I never had before. My only safety lies in my shamelessness. I have warned my friends of the Committee that I am incorrigible. I shall continue to confess blunders each time the people commit them. The only tyrant I accept in this world is the 'still small voice' within. And even though I have to face the prospect of a minority of one, I humbly believe I have the courage to be in such a hopeless minority. That to me is the only truthful position.

But I am a sadder and I hope a wiser man today. I see that our non-violence is skin deep. We are burning with indignation. The Government is feeding it by its insensate acts. It seems almost as if the Government wants to see this land covered with murder, arson and rapine, in order to be able once more to claim exclusive ability to put them down.

This non-violence therefore seems to be due merely to our helplessness. It almost appears as if we are nursing in our bosoms the desire to take revenge the first time we get the opportunity.

Can true voluntary non-violence come out of this seeming forced non-violence of the weak? Is it not a futile experiment I am conducting? What if, when the fury bursts, not a man, woman or child is safe and every man's hand is raised against his fellow being? Of what avail is it then if I fast myself to death in the event of such a catastrophe coming to pass?

What is the alternative? To he and say that what I know to be evil, is good? To say that true and voluntary co-operation will come out of false and forced co-operation is to say that light will result from darkness.

Co-operation with the Government is as much a weakness and a sin as alliance with suspended violence.

The difficulty is almost insurmountable. Hence with the growing knowledge of the fact that this non-violence is merely superficial, I must continually make mistakes and retrace, even as a man wading his way through a tractless forest must continually stop, retrace, stumble, be hurt and even bleed.

I was prepared for a certain amount of depression, disappointment and resentment but I confess I was totally unprepared for the hurricane of opposition. It became clear to me that the workers were in no mood to do any serious work of construction. The constructive programme lent no enchantment. They were not a social reform association. They could not wrest power from the Government by such humdrum reform work. They wanted to deliver 'non-violent' blows! All this appeared so thoroughly unreal. They would not stop to think that even if they could defeat the Government by a childish

display of rage, they could not conduct the government of the country for a single day without serious and laborious organization and construction.

We must not go to gaol as Mahomed Ali would say, 'in a false issue'. It is not *any* imprisonment that will lead to Swaraj'. It is not *every* disobedience that will file us with the spirit of obedience and discipline. Jails are no gate-ways to liberty for the confirmed criminal. They are temples of liberty only for those who are innocence personified. The execution of Socrates made immortality a living reality for us,—not so the execution of countless murderers. There is no warrant for supposing that we can steal Swaraj by the imprisonment of thousands of nominally nonviolent men with hatred, ill-will and violence raging in their breasts.

It would be otherwise if we were fighting with aims, giving and receiving blow for blow. The imprisonment of those who may be caught intimidating, assaulting and murdering will certainly embarrass the Government and when they are tired, they would as elsewhere yield. But such is not our fight today. Let us be truthful. If it is through 'show of force' that we wish to gain Swaraj, let us drop non-violence and offer such violence as we may. It would be a manly, honest and sober attitude—an attitude the world has been used to for ages past. No one can then accuse us of the terrible charge of hypocrisy.

But the majority will not listen to me. In spite of all my warnings and passionate plea for rejecting my resolution, if they did not believe in non-violence as indispensable for the attainment of our goal, they accepted it without a single material change. I would ask them therefore to realize their responsibility. They are now bound not to rush to civil disobedience but to settle down to the quiet work of construction. I would urge them to be indifferent to the clamour for immediate action. The immediate action is not courting imprisonment, nor even free speech and free association or free pen, but self-purification, introspection, quiet organization. We have lost our foothold. If we do not take care, we are likely to be drowned in the waters whose depth we do not know.

It is no use thinking of the prisoners. When I heard of Chauri Chaura I sacrificed them as the first penitential act. They have gone to jail to be released only by the strength of the people, indeed the hope was the Swaraj Parliament's first act would be to open the prison gates. God had decreed otherwise. We who are outside have tried and failed. The prisoners can now only gain by serving the full term of their imprisonment. Those who went under false pretences, or under any misapprehension or under a mistaken understanding of the movement can come out by apologizing and by petitioning. The movement will be all the stronger for the purging. The stoutest heart will rejoice in the opportunity of unexpectedly greater suffering. Though thousands of Russians have 'rotted' in the Russian prisons for years and years, that unhappy people are not yet free. Liberty is a jilt most difficult to woo and please. We have shown the power of suffering. But we have not suffered enough. If the people in general keep passively non-violent and if only a few are actively, honestly and knowingly non-violent in intent, word and deed, we can reach the goal in quickest time with the least suffering. But we shall indefinitely postpone the attainment, if we send to prison men who harbour violence in their breasts.

Therefore the duty of the majority in their respective provinces is to face taunts, insults and if need be depletion in their ranks but determinedly to pursue their goal without swerving an inch. The authorities mistaking our suspension for weakness may resort to still greater oppression. We should submit to it. We should even abandon defensive civil disobedience and concentrate all our energy on the tasteless but health-giving economic and social reform. We should bend down on our knees and assure the moderates that they need fear no harm from us. We should assure the Zamindars that we have no ill-will against them.

The average Englishman is haughty, he does not understand us, he considers himself to be a superior being. He thinks that he is born to rule us. He relies upon his forts or his gun to protect himself. He despises us. He wants to compel co-operation, i.e. slavery. Even him we have to conquer, not by bending the knee, but remaining aloof from him, but at the same time not hating him or

hurting him. It is cowardly to molest him. If we simply refuse to regard ourselves as his slaves and pay homage to him, we have done our duty. A mouse can only shun the cat. He cannot treat with her till she has filed the points of her claws and teeth. At the same time we must show every attention to those few Englishmen who are trying to cure themselves and fellow Englishmen of the disease of race superiority.

The minority has different ideals. It does not believe in the programme. Is it not right and patriotic for them to form a new party and a new organization? They will then truly educate the country. Those who do not believe in the creed should surely retire from the Congress. Even a national organization must have a creed. One, for instance, who does not believe in Swaraj has no place in the Congress. I submit that even so has one who does not believe in 'peaceful and legitimate means' no place in the Congress. A Congressman may not believe in non-co-operation and still remain in it but he cannot believe in violence and untruth and still be a Congressman. I was therefore deeply hurt when I found opposition to the note in the resolution about the creed and still more when I found opposition to my paraphrase of the two adjectives 'peaceful' and 'legitimate' into 'non-violent' and 'truthful' respectively. I had reasons for the paraphrase. I was seriously told that the creed did not insist upon non-violence and truth as the indispensable means for the attainment of Swaraj. I agreed to remove the paraphrase in order to avoid a painful discussion but I felt that truth was stabbed.

I am sure that those who raised this opposition are as patriotic as I claim to be, they are as eager for Swaraj as every other Congressman. But I do say that the patriotic spirit demands their loyal and strict adherence to non-violence and truth and that if they do not believe in them they should retire from the Congress organization.

Is it not national economy to let all the ideals be sharply defined and to work independently of one another? That then which is most popular will win the day. If we are going to evolve the real spirit of democracy, we shall not do so by obstruction but by abstention.

The session of the All-India Congress Committee was a forcible demonstration of the fact that we are retarding the country's progress towards Swaraj and not the Government. Every mistake of the Government helps. Every neglect of duty on our part hinders.

*Young India*, 2-3-'22, p. 135

### **119. BREAKING OR SCALING FENCES NOT CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

(From "Vaikom Satyagraha")

If we are satyagrahis, we dare not scale or break fences. Breaking or scaling fences will certainly bring about imprisonment but the breaking will not be civil disobedience. It will be essentially incivil and criminal.

*Young India*, 1-5-'24, p. 144

### **120. DAMAGE TO PROPERTY**

(From "Question Box")

Q. You know that many Congressmen openly preached that there was no violence in damaging property, i.e. destroying rails, burning *thanas* when they are not occupied, cutting telegraph poles, burning post boxes, etc.

A I have never been able to understand this reasoning. It is pure violence. Satyagraha is self-suffering and not inflicting suffering on others. There is surely often more violence in burning a man's property than doing him physical injury. Have not so-called satyagrahis preferred imprisonment to fines or confiscation of their property? Well has one of my critics said that I have succeeded in teaching disruptive disobedience till at last it has come home to roost, but that I have signally failed in teaching people the very difficult art of non-violence. He has also said that in my haste I have put the cart before the horse and therefore all my talk of civil disobedience is folly if not worse. I am not able to give a satisfactory reply to this criticism. I am but a poor mortal. I believe in my experiment and in my utmost sincerity. But it may be that the only fitting epitaph after my death will be "He tried but signally failed."

Sevagram, 7-4-1940 *Harijan*, 13-4-'40, p. 89

## 121. A POINTER FOR THE FUTURE

(By Pyarelal)

"How is the cutting of telegraphic wires contrary to the principle of ahimsa," a friend asked Gandhiji sometime back.

The question is typical of many that have been put to Gandhiji since his release. Another friend who saw him some time after he left the Aga Khan Palace posed to him the problem thus: "There are two schools of thought amongst our youth today. One school holds and openly says that as a programme of action ahimsa is played out. It has done its work which was to awaken the masses and has set the stage for the final struggle for independence. In this struggle force of arms cannot be excluded. The other school while professing belief in ahimsa says that there is room for modification and further elaboration in its technique. They aver that the next phase of our struggle would be characterized by organized sabotage on an extensive scale." Gandhiji questioned the statement that sabotage could be part of the non-violent programme or that it was derivable from the principle of ahimsa as he understood it. The friend however persisted that sabotage had come to stay whether one liked it or not. "Irresponsible prophesying leads to nowhere," cut short Gandhiji. "The real question is where we stand, what *our* attitude towards it is going to be."

The friend put before Gandhiji some of his doubts. Was destruction of Government property violence? "You say that nobody has a right to destroy any property not his own. If so, is not Government property mine? I hold it is mine and I may destroy it."

"There is a double fallacy involved in your argument," replied Gandhiji. In the first place, conceding that Government property is national property—which today it is not— I may not destroy it because I am dissatisfied with the Government. But even a national Government will be unable to carry on for a day if everybody claimed the right to destroy bridges, communications, roads,

etc. because he disapproved of some of its activities. Moreover, the evil resides not in bridges, roads, etc. which are inanimate objects but in men. It is the latter who need to be tackled. The destruction of bridges etc. by means of explosives does not touch this evil but only provokes a worse evil in the place of the one it seeks to end. "I agree," rejoined the friend, "that the evil is within ourselves, not in the bridge which can be used for a good purpose as well as an evil one. I also agree that its blowing up provokes counter violence of a worse type. But it may be necessary from a strategic point of view for the success of the movement and in order to prevent demoralization."

"It is an old argument," replied Gandhiji. "One used to hear it in old days in defence of terrorism. Sabotage is a form of violence. People have realized the futility of physical violence but some people apparently think that it may be successfully practised in its modified form as sabotage. It is my conviction that the whole mass of people would not have risen to the height of courage and fearlessness that they have but for the working of full non-violence. How it works we do not yet fully know. But the fact remains that under non-violence we have progressed from strength to strength even through our apparent failures and setbacks. On the other hand terrorism resulted in demoralization. Haste leads to Waste."

"We have found," rejoined the friend, "that a person who has had a schooling in violent activity comes nearer to true nonviolence than one who has had no such experience."

"That can be true only in the sense that having tried violence again and again he has realized its futility. That is all. Would you maintain also that a person who has had a taste of vice is nearer to virtue than the one who had none? For that is what your argument amounts to."

The discussion then turned upon secrecy. The friend in question argued that whilst individual secrecy created a fear complex and was, therefore, an evil, organized secrecy might be useful. "It is no secrecy if the person concerned is boldly prepared to face the consequences of his action. He resorts to secrecy in

order to achieve his object. He can refuse to take any part in subsequent interrogations during his trial. He need not make a false statement."

But Gandhiji was adamant. "No secret organization, however big, could do any good." Secrecy aims at building a wall of protection round you. Ahimsa disdains all such protection. It functions in the open, and in the face of odds, the heaviest conceivable. We have to organize for action a vast people that have been crushed under the heel of unspeakable tyranny for centuries. They cannot be organized by any other than open truthful means. I have grown up from youth to 76 years in abhorrence of secrecy. There must be no watering down of the ideal. Unless we cling to the formula in its fullness, we shall not make any headway.

"I know we have not always lived up to our ideal. There have been grave lapses. Had our instruments been less imperfect, we would have been nearer our goal. But in spite of our temporizing with our ideal, non-violence has worked like a silent leaven among the dumb millions. That does not mean that we can afford to go on like this for ever. We cannot remain static. We must move forward or we shall slide back."

"Are you of opinion then," asked the friend, "that the August revolution caused a setback in the struggle for independence; that all the heroism and courage which our people showed in the Course of it was useless?"

"No," replied Gandhiji. "I do not say that. In the historical process, the country will be found to have advanced towards freedom through every form of struggle, even through the August upheaval. All that I have said is that the progress would have been much greater if we had shown the non-violent bravery of my conception. In this sense the sabotage activity has retarded the country's freedom. I have the highest admiration for the courage, patriotism and spirit of self-sacrifice of people, say, like Jayaprakash Narayan. But Jayaprakash cannot be my ideal. If I had to give a medal for heroism, it would go not to him but to his wife who, though simple and unlearned in politics, typifies in her person the power of satyagraha in its purest form before which even Jayaprakash has to bow. What I have said about the August upheaval is

not by way of judgment upon the past—I have consistently refused to condemn it—but as a guidance for the future."

"Our people," said the friend finally, "have faith in non-violence but they do not know how to make it dynamic. What is the reason for this failure?"

"By hammering away at it through painful years," replied Gandhiji, "people have begun to see that there is a potency in non-violence, but they have not seen it in all its fullness and beauty. If they had responded to all the steps that had to be taken for the effective organization of non-violence and carried out in their fullness the various items of the eighteen-fold constructive programme, our movement would have taken us to our goal. But today our minds are confused because our faith in constructive work is so weak. I know, one must push forth undaunted by difficulties."

On the train to Madura,

Saturday, 2-2-1946

*Harijan*, 10-2-'46, p. 1

## PART X: SATYAGRAHA UNDER CRITICAL TRIALS

### 122. A DEPLORABLE INCIDENT

As Sardar Vallabhbhai was leaving Sevagram the other day he told me of a dacoity in a home in Kheda District. Armed dacoits entered the house, belaboured the inmates, and escaped with the loot. The story was heart-rending. What should I do under similar circumstances, I thought to myself. What should Congressmen do in the circumstances was the next thought; and since then the train of thought arising from the dacoity has taken possession of me. The Congress has been working continuously since 1920 under the policy of non-violence. The province of Gujarat has also had the advantage of a leader of the Sardar's calibre. And yet daring dacoities can take place. How far then can Congress influence be said to have penetrated? People imagine that, if the British Government were to cease to function today, it would be the non-violent Congressmen who would automatically take over. But it is not so. I have been working to this end for the last twenty years, but my dream has not materialized. For the Congress has not had a living faith in the very means which it adopted in 1920. Therefore the non-violence of the Congress has really been non-violence of the weak. But Governments can only be run by the strong. And a non-violent Government can only be run by those who believe that non-violence is the mightiest force on earth. If we had had this strength, there would be no Hindu-Muslim riots, there would be no robbers or dacoits. Some might say that for such strength you need either a Jesus or a Buddha. But this is not so. Neither Jesus nor Buddha tried non-violence in the political sphere, or it would be truer to say that the present day type of politics did not exist in their day. The Congress experiment is, therefore, a new one. The tragedy is that Congressmen have not tried it with full faith, full understanding and sincerity. If they had had these three essential qualities, the Congress would today have been far taller than it is. But I may not cry over spilt milk. I refer to the past only in order to guide us in the present. Even if we wake up now, the game is

ours; if we do not, we shall surely lose. Power invariably elects to go into the hands of the strong. That strength may be physical or of the heart, or, if we do not fight shy of the word, of the spirit. Strength of the heart connotes soul-force. If today we decide that we should try to get power by force of arms, we shall have to undo all the work of twenty years among the masses. We shall have to spend a considerable time in giving people a contrary training. We cannot afford to give the required time at this critical juncture. It is certain that today whoever has any strength of any kind will use it for seizing power. It is my firm conviction that, if Congressmen are to get power, it should only be through nonviolence or soul-force.

We have neither time nor material to do new work even in this line. When we have so far employed non-violence as a weapon of the weak, how can we all of a sudden expect to convert it into a weapon of the strong? But in spite of this I feel that at the present moment this experiment alone is feasible and proper for us. There is no risk involved in it. Even less failure in it takes the form of success because, even if the people are not able to go the whole length in the experiment, they cannot possibly be led into a ditch. By following the way of physical force they may not only be proved cowards, but in attempting to follow an untrodden path thousands may also be destroyed.

It is then the duty of Congressmen to seek out dacoits and robbers. They should try to understand and convert them. Such workers cannot be had for the asking; but Congressmen should know that this work is just as important as it is fraught with risk, and a certain number of them have to devote themselves to it.

The second thing requisite is that we should prepare such workers as would, under difficult circumstances, stand up to dacoits and, whilst trying to check or convert them from their evil ways, be prepared to suffer hurt, or even death. Perhaps few workers will be forthcoming for this task too, but peace brigades throughout the country are a definite necessity. Or else in times of chaos Congressmen will lose all the reputation they have so far gained.

Thirdly, the rich should ponder well as to what is their duty today. They who employ mercenaries to guard their wealth may find those very guardians turning on them. The moneyed classes have got to learn how to fight either with arms or with the weapon of non-violence. For those who wish to follow the latter way the best and most effective *mantram* is: तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथा । (Enjoy thy wealth by renouncing it.) Expanded it means: "Earn your crores by all means. But understand that your wealth is not yours; it belongs to the people. Take what you require for your legitimate needs, and use the remainder for society." This truth has hitherto not been acted upon; but if the moneyed classes do not even act on it in these times, of stress, they will remain the slaves of their riches and passions and consequently of those who overpower them.

But I have visions that the end of this war will mean also the end of the rule of capital. I see coming the day of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of nonviolence. Let it be remembered that physical force is transitory even as the body is transitory. But the power of the spirit is permanent, even as the spirit is everlasting.

Sevagram, 25-1-1942

*Harijan*, 1-2-'42, p. 20

### 123. A CHALLENGE

I have before me three letters rebuking me for not going to Sindh to face the Hurs personally. Two are friendly. The third comes from a critic who has no faith in non-violence. His letter demands an answer. Its main part runs as follows:

"I am deeply interested in your writings and in the effect that they make upon the minds of the ignorant masses and your blind followers. I would therefore feel obliged if you enlighten me on the following points, especially because point Nos. 3 and 4 raise novel and fundamental issues about non-violence.

"You have been training a number of satyagrahis in your Ashram and they must have had the advantage of your supervision and instructions. You have been proclaiming that violence could be effectively met by non-violent means. Japan is now attacking India in the East and Hurs are creating trouble in the West. Is this not then the long-awaited opportunity when you can practise what you have so long preached?

"Instead of doing that you are contenting yourself by writing articles in the *Harijan*. Imagine Hitler or Stalin, without sending their armies to the front lines, writing such articles in *Pravda* or such other paper. Instead of asking the Sindh M.L.A.s to resign and go to the Hurs, why should you not send a 'company' of your trained satyagrahis and try the luck of your doctrine?

"Is it not the duty and business of a satyagrahi to go and meet the danger where it exists and threatens the country? Or is it your case that your satyagrahis will meet it only when it reaches the Ashram and not before? If so, is not your doctrine a doctrine of inaction?"

I have no doubt that if I could have gone to Sindh, I might have been able to do something. I have done such things before, not without success. But I am too

old for such mission. What little energy I have, I am storing up for what promises to be the last fight of my life.

I have not conceived my mission to be that of a knight-errant wandering everywhere to deliver people from difficult situations. My humble occupation has been to show people how they can solve their own difficulties. So far as Sindh is concerned, I maintain that my advice was perfect. It was clearly Congressmen's duty to proceed to the infested areas and spend themselves in the effort to convert the Hurs to the way of peace. Indeed they could have used arms if they had no faith in nonviolence. They should have resigned from the Congress to free themselves from the obligation to observe non-violence. If we are to be fit for independence, we have to learn the art of self-defence either non-violently or violently. Every citizen should consider himself liable to render help to his neighbour in distress.

If I had adopted the role my critic has suggested, I would have helped people to become parasites. Therefore it is well that I have not trained myself to defend others. I shall be satisfied if at my death it could be said of me that I have devoted the best part of my life to showing the way to become self-reliant and cultivate the capacity to defend oneself under every conceivable circumstance.

My correspondent has committed the grave error of thinking that my mission is to deliver people from calamities. That is an arrogation only claimed by dictators. But no dictator has ever succeeded in proving the claim.

Indeed If I could say, as the correspondent thinks I could, that if the menaces of the kind described by him face the Ashram, it will give a good account of itself, I should be quite content and feel that my mission was wholly successful. But I can lay no such claim. The Ashram at Sevagram is only so-called. The visitors gave it the name and it has passed current. The Ashram is a medley of people come together for different purposes. There are hardly half a dozen permanent residents having a common ideal. How these few will discharge themselves when the test comes remains to be seen.

The fact is that non-violence does not work in the same way as violence. It works in the opposite way. An armed man naturally relies upon his arms. A man

who is intentionally unarmed relies upon the unseen force called God by poets, but called the unknown by scientists. But that which is unknown is not necessarily non-existent. God is the Force among all forces known and unknown. Non-violence without reliance upon that Force is poor stuff to be thrown in the dust.

I hope now my critic realizes the error underlying his question and that he sees also that the doctrine that has guided my life is not one of inaction but of the highest action. His question should really have been put thus:

How is it that, in spite of your work in India for over 22 years, there are not sufficient satyagrahis who can cope with external and internal menaces? My answer then would be that twenty-two years are nothing in the training of a nation for the development of non-violent strength. That is not to say that a large number of persons will not show that strength on due occasion. That occasion seems to have come now. This war puts civilian on his mettle no less than the military man, non-violent no less than the violent.

Sevagram, 18-6-1942

*Harijan*, 28-6-'42, p. 201

## 124. SATYAGRAHA IN FACE OF HOOLIGANISM

A friend has gently posed the question as to what a satyagrahi should do to prevent looting by *goondas*. If he had understood the secret of satyagraha he would not have put it.

To lay down one's life, even alone, for what considers to be right, is the very core of satyagraha. More, no man can do. If a man is armed with a sword he might lop off a few heads but ultimately he must surrender to superior force or else die fighting. The sword of the satyagrahi is love and the unshakable firmness that comes from it. He will regard as brothers the hundreds of *goondas* that confront him and instead of trying to kill them he will choose to die at their hands and thereby live.

This is straight and simple. But how can a solitary satyagrahi succeed in the midst of a huge

population? Hundreds of hooligans were let loose on the city of Bombay for arson and loot. A solitary satyagrahi will be like a drop in the ocean. Thus argues the correspondent.

My reply is that a satyagrahi may never run away from danger, irrespective of whether he is alone or in the company of many. He will have fully performed his duty if he dies fighting. The same holds good in armed warfare. It applies with greater force in satyagraha. Moreover the sacrifice of one will evoke the sacrifice of many and may possibly produce big results. There is always this possibility. But one must scrupulously avoid the temptation of a desire for results.

I believe that every man and woman should learn the art of self-defence in this age. This is done through arms in the West. Every adult man is conscripted for army training for a definite period. The training for satyagraha is meant for all, irrespective of age or sex. The more important part of the training here is mental, not physical. There can be no compulsion in mental training. The

surrounding atmosphere no doubt acts on the mind but that cannot justify compulsion.

It follows that shopkeepers, traders, mill-hands, labourers, farmers, clerks, in short, everyone ought to consider it his or her duty to get the necessary training in satyagraha.

Satyagraha is always superior to armed resistance. This can only be effectively proved by demonstration, not by arguments. It is the weapon that adorns the strong. It can never adorn the weak. By weak is meant the weak in mind and spirit, not in body. That limitation is a quality to be prized and not a defect to be deplored.

One ought also to understand one of its other limitations. It can never be used to defend a wrong cause.

Satyagraha brigades can be organized in every village and in every block of buildings in the cities. Each brigade should be composed of those persons who are well known to the organizers. In this respect satyagraha differs from armed defence. For the latter the State impresses the service of everybody. For a satyagraha brigade only those are eligible who believe in ahimsa and *satya*. Therefore, an intimate knowledge of the persons enlisted is necessary for the organizers.

*Harijan*, 17-3-'46, p. 45

## 125. HONOURABLE MEANS OF DYING

(From "Question Box")

Q. Will you please explain more fully your dictum that "a person who would die rather than go through inhuman tortures would find honourable means of dying"? Do you endorse suicide in such cases? Or do you suggest that mere intense will to die will result in death?

A. I would not rule out suicide in such cases as a means of escape from torture—not for the pain of it, but for showing the tyrant that his torture would not bend the suicide. Tyrants have prevented suicide for the purpose of the pleasure tortures give them. But I do not regard suicide as necessarily an honourable means of dying. Of course, the most honourable means would be the intense longing to die, so intense as to induce death for the mere will. But this is given to one in a billion. What I had in mind when I wrote the paragraph was a variety of struggles of the prisoners with the warders in which resistance though non-violent must end in death. Thus supposing that A compels B to crawl on his belly, resistance can be carried to the breaking point. Every form of such resistance unto death I would count as honourable. This resistance can be offered by the weakest as well as the strongest—by the weakest perhaps more effectively, certainly more expeditiously. The indispensable condition is the possession of a stout heart and an iron will. I am not writing theory. My opinion is based on personal experience and that of others who have been under my observation. A very weak woman could not be bent under the cruel will of her imperious husband. Youngsters frail in body have successfully defied the orders of hard school-masters or heartless parents. The crux of the question is whether there is real readiness, nay will to die. The will most assuredly point the way.

*Harijan, 26-7-'42, p. 238*

## PART XI: NON-VIOLENT ANSWER TO WAR AND AGGRESSION

### 126. MY ATTITUDE TOWARDS WAR

Rev. B. de Ligt has written in a French journal called *Evolution* a long open letter to me. He has favoured me with a translation of it. The open letter strongly criticizes my participation in the Boer War and then the Great War of 1914 and invites me to explain my conduct in the light of ahimsa. Other friends too have put the same question. I have attempted to give the explanation more than once in these columns.

There is no defence for my conduct weighed only in the scales of ahimsa. I draw no distinction between those who wield the weapons of destruction and those who do red-cross work. Both participate in war and advance its cause. Both are guilty of the crime of war. But even after introspection during all these years, I feel that in the circumstances in which I found myself I was bound to adopt the course I did both during the Boer War and the Great European War and for that matter the so-called Zulu 'Rebellion' of Natal in 1906.

Life is governed by a multitude of forces. It would be smooth sailing, if one could determine the course of one's actions only by one general principle whose application at a given moment was too obvious to need even a moment's reflection. But I cannot recall a single act which could be so easily determined.

Being a confirmed war resister I have never given myself training in the use of destructive weapons in spite of opportunities to take such training. It was perhaps thus that I escaped direct destruction of human life. But so long as I lived under a system of Government based on force and voluntarily partook of the many facilities and privileges it created for me, I was bound to help the Government to the extent of my ability when it was engaged in a war unless I non-co-operated with that Government and renounced to the utmost of my capacity the privileges it offered me.

Let me take an illustration. I am a member of an institution which holds a few acres of land and whose crops are in imminent peril from monkeys. I believe in the sacredness of all life and hence I regard it as a breach of ahimsa to inflict any injury on the monkeys. But I do not hesitate to instigate and direct an attack on the monkeys in order to save the crops. I would like to avoid this evil. I can avoid it by leaving or breaking up the institution. I do not do so because I do not expect to be able to find a society where there will be no agriculture and therefore no destruction of some life. In fear and trembling, in humility and penance, I therefore participate in the injury inflicted on the monkeys, hoping someday to find a way out.

Even so did I participate in the three acts of war. I could not, it would be madness for me to sever my connection with the Society to which I belong. And on those three occasions I had no thought of non-co-operating with the British Government. My Position regarding that Government is totally different today and hence I should not voluntarily participate in its wars and I should risk imprisonment and even the gallows if I was forced to take up arms or otherwise take part in its military operations.

But that still does not solve the riddle. If there was a national Government, whilst I should not take any direct part in any war I can conceive occasions when it would be my duty to vote for the military training of those who wish to take it. For I know that all its members do not believe in non-violence to the extent I do. It is not possible to make a person or a society nonviolent by compulsion.

Non-violence works in a most mysterious manner. Often a man's actions defy analysis in terms of non-violence; equally often his actions may wear the appearance of violence when he is absolutely non-violent in the highest sense of the term and is subsequently found so to be. All I can then claim for my conduct is that it was, in the instances cited, actuated in the interest of non-violence. There was no thought of sordid national or other interest. I do not believe in the promotion of national or other interest at the sacrifice of some other interest.

I may not carry my argument any further. Language at best is a poor vehicle for expressing one's thoughts in full. For me non-violence is not a mere philosophical principle. It is the rule and the breath of my life. I know I fail often, sometimes consciously, more often unconsciously. It is a matter not of the intellect but of the heart. True guidance comes by constant waiting upon God, by utmost humility, self-abnegation, by being ever ready to sacrifice one's self. Its practice requires fearlessness and courage of the highest order. I am painfully aware of my failings.

But the light within me is steady and clear. There is no escape for any of us save through truth and non-violence. I know that war is wrong, is an unmitigated evil. I know too that it has got to go. I firmly believe that freedom won through bloodshed or fraud is no freedom. Would that all the acts alleged against me were found to be wholly indefensible rather than that by any act of mine non-violence was held to be compromised or that I was ever thought to be in favour of violence or untruth in any shape or form. Not violence, not untruth but non-violence, Truth is the law of our being.

*Young India*, 13-9-'28, p. 308

## 127. THEN AND NOW

(From "Weekly Letter" by C. E. A.)

The first question put to Gandhiji was "What would be your attitude towards a political war of independence?" "I would decline to take part in it," replied Gandhiji, "just as I would refuse to support the British Government in any war that it might engage in tomorrow." "But in South Africa you supported an alien Government in its war against the Boers," observed the friend, "although at that time it was oppressing the Indians; again in 1914 you supported the British Government in its war against Germany. How is the situation altered since then that you should refuse to support your own country in a war of independence?" "The situation today", replied Gandhiji, "is radically different for me from what it was at the time of the Boer War or the war in 1914. On both the occasions I was a believer in the Empire. I thought that in spite of its lapses the sum total of its activity was beneficial to the world. And though I was against war at that time as I am now, I had no status or strength to refuse to participate in war. I suppressed my private judgment in favour of the duty of an ordinary citizen. My position is wholly different now. I have become by force of circumstances a teacher of nonviolence. I claim to enforce my teaching in my own life to the best of my ability and I feel that I have the strength to resist war in my own person."

"Then you would not support a national militia?" "I would support the formation of a militia under Swaraj," explained Gandhiji, "if only because I realized that people cannot be made non-violent by compulsion. Today I am teaching the people how to meet a national crisis by non-violent means. But it is one thing to adopt non-violence for a specific purpose in a time of crisis, and quite another thing to advocate its adoption by all for all time as a philosophy of life. Not that I consider such adoption to be impossible. But I lack the strength for such a mission. I may not therefore resist the formation of a national militia. Only I cannot join it myself. I feel quite clearly within me that a militia is unnecessary but I have not the word that would carry conviction to others."

*Young India*, 10-1-'29, p. 10

## 128. SUPERSTITIONS DIE HARD

Mr. Henry Eaton writes from California:

"I am not a British sympathizer. My ancestors fought to liberate themselves from the British in 1776. But as far as I can see from what I read in the papers it would be more harmful than beneficial if Britain got out of India. I do not mean to infer that India could not govern herself, although I cannot see but that such an attempt would be very arduous at the present time. But if Britain gets out of India, who is going to keep the Russians or any other nation out? Certainly India from all I can learn of her, has no adequate army to protect herself.

"But perhaps you would prefer Russian masters to English. Russia is waiting there at the Khyber pass. Russia understands the East, her people are a mingling of the occidental and the oriental. But Russia has Western culture. Any relation India could have with her would have to be subordinate. Personally I am not antagonistic to Russia, her war against capitalism is the great hope of Western civilization. Here in America, our greatest capitalist, Henry Ford realizes the inevitability of an equitable distribution of wealth. But Russia as master of India does not particularly appeal to me. With Russia as master India would lose her identity as a culture. With England India has always retained that identity.

"Perhaps you do not fear the Russian menace as much as we of the Western world. In America many of us are sure that once Britain is out of India, Russia will step in. We cannot visualize the India of the present, the India with her caste system and her primitive methods of manufacture and agriculture, defending herself against Western invasion...

"By birth and heritage I am a citizen of the United States of America, but I take such a personal interest in the affairs of the world that I like to think of myself in my little way as a citizen of the world. At the

university I attend here in California, the question of India often arises. The general sympathies are with you against the British, however as I myself can understand the present situation in India it seems that of the two evils British control in India is the lesser. The other evil as I have already tried to explain is Russian domination. But what we all want to know is how you feel about the matter."

This letter betrays two superstitions. One of them is that India is unfit to govern herself because she cannot defend herself and is torn with internal dissensions. The writer gratuitously assumes that if Britain withdraws Russia is ready to pounce upon India. This is an insult to Russia. Is Russia's one business to rule over those peoples who are not ruled by Britain? And if Russia has such nefarious designs upon India, does not the writer see that the same power that will oust the British from domination is bound to prevent any other domination? If the control is handed to India's representatives by agreement, there must be some condition whereby Britain will guarantee protection from foreign aggression as a penance for her conscious or unconscious neglect during all these past years to fit India for defending herself.

Personally, even under agreement, I should rely more upon the capacity of the nation to offer civil resistance to any aggressor as it did last year with partial success in the case of the British occupier. Complete success awaits complete assimilation of nonviolence in thought, word and deed by the nation. An ocular demonstration of the success of nation-wide satyagraha must be a prelude to its worldwide acceptance and hence as a natural corollary to the admission of the futility of armament. The only antidote to armament which is the visible symbol of violence is satyagraha the visible symbol of non-violence. But the writer is also oppressed by the fear of our dissensions. In the first place they are grossly exaggerated in transmission to the West. In the second place, they are hardened during foreign control. Imperial rule means *divide et impera*. They must therefore melt with the withdrawal of the frigid foreign rule and the introduction of the warmth-giving sunshine of real freedom.

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When India becomes self-supporting, self-reliant and proof against temptations and exploitation, she will cease to be the object of greedy attraction for any power in the West or the East and will then feel secure without having to carry the burden of expensive armament. Her internal economy will be India's strongest bulwark against aggression.

*Young India*, 2-7-'31, p. 160

### 129. THE PERMANENT HISTORY OF MAN

(Originally appeared under the title "Suppose Germany Wins")

"Suppose Germany wins with India not having entered the war, would Hitler leave India alone? Certainly not my dear Mr. Gandhi, he will have a greater say in India than what Britain has now. The difference is this. You can fight the Englishman, but you cannot fight the German once he puts his foot on India's soil. Civil disobedience is the terror of the Englishman, it is the daily bread of the Nazi."

This is a question extracted from a very long and earnest letter from an English correspondent from South Africa. The first fallacy is that India is assumed not to have entered the war when to all intents and purposes she is in the war in spite of the powerful protest of the Congress. She is so much in the War that Great Britain is effectively using all the available fighting material which her generals have brought into being and trained, and is drawing all the money she can. Politically-minded Indians have never been trained except for doing the rulers' clerical work. They are certainly holding themselves aloof until certain obviously necessary conditions are fulfilled. I do not see how they can be blamed for demanding the very liberty in defence of which the Allied Powers are said to be fighting. What Indians can do even if their demand is accepted is to give their moral weight to the struggle. This the rulers evidently do not care for. It cannot, in their opinion, turn the scales in their favour. Moral values do not count when each party swears by its material and physical resources. The Congress, with all the will in the world to defeat Nazism, cannot thrust its help on Great Britain which evidently does not want it or about which it is at least indifferent. If, therefore, Great Britain suffers defeat, it will not be for want of Congress co-operation but for causes over which the Congress can have no control.

If the Nazis come to India, the Congress will give them the same fight that it has given Great Britain. I do not underrate the power of satyagraha as the questioner does. But that is pure speculation. Imperialism has kept its grip on

India for more than 150 years. If it is overthrown by a worse type of rule, the Congress can have the negative satisfaction of knowing that no other 'ism' can possibly last beyond a few years even if it establishes a foothold in India. That is as I read the Congress mind. Personally I think the end of this giant war will be what happened in the fabled Mahabharata War. The Mahabharata has been aptly described by a Travancorian as the Permanent History of Man. What is described in that great epic is happening today before our very eyes. The warring nations are destroying themselves with such fury and ferocity that the end will be mutual exhaustion. The victor will share the fate that waited the surviving Pandavas. The mighty warrior Arjuna was looted in broad daylight by a petty robber. And out of this holocaust must arise a new order for which the exploited millions of toilers have so long thirsted. The prayers of peace-lovers cannot go in vain. Satyagraha is itself an unmistakable mute prayer of an agonized soul.

Sevagram, 10-2-1942

*Harijan*, 15-2-'42, p. 40

### 130. DESIRABILITY OF EXODUS

A correspondent asks for my detailed views on the exodus that I have advised from the cities of all who are not wanted there and all who are unfit or unwilling to stay there. No one is obliged to stay in against his will. In the event of bombardment, it is clear that non-combatants can only be a burden in every way. Successful defence against a powerful enemy requires exclusive concentration on holding the enemy at bay. The defenders' attention must not be divided. This is from the military point of view.

But we have war resisters too, either humanitarian or political. They may not stay unless their object is merely to cause embarrassment for the sake of it. I hope there are none such. They should, therefore, be out of the cities. Then there are those who do not know what to do in the event of bombardment. They should all evacuate. As the reader will see, my opinion has little to do with my war resistance. For in this case and up to a point military necessity and duty of war resisters demand the same action.

If I could convert any city or all cities wholly, including the combatants of yesterday, I should welcome the invading host and try to convert even them or challenge them to do their worst, without offering retaliation. But no such good luck awaits me. If the cities were converted, all India including the rulers would be converted and there would be peace in India and peace in the world. But that must remain a day-dream yet a while. Only I won't be moved from my position by being told that the Jap or the Nazi is not the same man as the Englishman. I draw no such fundamental distinction between man and man. But I must not detain the reader on the speculative side of the matter-of-fact question that faces us.

Assuming then that all who should or a part of them have evacuated the cities and have gone to the villages or are about to go, what should they do? They must go with the village mind to live the village life as much as possible. They may not reproduce city conditions and build temporary palaces. They should go to the villages in a spirit of service, study their economic and other conditions,

and ameliorate them not by giving alms but by giving the villagers work of a permanent nature. In other words, they should work the constructive programme among the villagers. Thus they will identify themselves with the villagers and become a kind of co-operative society with an ordered programme of economic, social, hygienic and political reconstruction.

The greatest problem the new-comers will have to tackle will be to deal with loot and dacoities. It will tax their resources to the utmost. The non-violent way is there. If that is not clear to them, with the co-operation of the villagers they should organize themselves for armed defence against robbers and dacoits. We have too long looked to the Government to do this elementary work for us, not excluding even the reclamation of castes called criminal tribes. The Government cannot do much, if anything at all, at this critical time. The work has perforce to be done by the evacuees violently, non-violently or both ways.

Sevagram, 10-3-1942

*Harijan*, 15-3-'42, p. 76

### 131. NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE TO EXTERNAL AGGRESSION

Japan is knocking at our gates. What are we to do in a nonviolent way? If we were a free country, things could be done non-violently to prevent the Japanese from entering the country. As it is, non-violent resistance could commence the moment they effected a landing. Thus non-violent resisters would refuse them any help, even water. For it is no part of their duty to help anyone to steal their country. But if a Japanese had missed his way and was dying of thirst and sought help as a human being, a nonviolent resister, who may not regard anyone as his enemy, would give water to the thirsty one. Suppose the Japanese compel resisters to give them water, the resisters must die in the act of resistance. It is conceivable that they will exterminate all resisters. The underlying belief in such non-violent resistance is that the aggressor will, in time, be mentally and even physically tired of killing non-violent resisters. He will begin to search what this new (for him) force is which refuses co-operation without seeking to hurt, and will probably desist from further slaughter. But the resisters may find that the Japanese are utterly heartless and that they do not care how many they kill. The non-violent resisters will have won the day inasmuch as they will have preferred extermination to submission.

But things will not happen quite so simply as I have put them. There are at least four parties in the country. First the British and the army that they have brought into being. The Japanese declare that they have no designs upon India. Their quarrel is only with the British. In this they are assisted by some Indians who are in Japan. It is difficult to guess how many, but there must be a fairly large number who believe in the declaration of the Japanese and think that they will deliver the country from the British yoke and retire. Even if the worst happens, their fatigue of the British yoke is so great that they would even welcome the Japanese yoke for a change. This is the second party. The third are the neutrals, who though not nonviolent will help neither the British nor the Japanese.

The fourth and last are non-violent resisters. If they are only a few, their resistance will be ineffective except as an example for the future. Such resisters will calmly die wherever they are but will not bend the knee before the aggressor. They will not be deceived by promises. They do not seek deliverance from the British yoke through the help of a third party. They believe implicitly in their own way of fighting and no other. Their fight is on behalf of the dumb millions who do not perhaps know that there is such a thing as deliverance. They have neither hatred for the British nor love for the Japanese. They wish well to both as to all others. They would like both to do what is right. They believe that non-violence alone will lead men to do right under all circumstances. Therefore, if for want of enough companions non-violent resisters cannot reach the goal, they will not give up their way but pursue it to death.

The task before the votaries of non-violence is very difficult. But no difficulty can baffle men who have faith in their mission.

This is going to be a long drawn out agony. Let non-violent resisters not make impossible attempts. Their powers are limited. A resister in Kerala is not physically responsible for the defence of Assam which is just now in imminent danger. If Assam is non-violently inclined, it is well able to take care of itself. If it is not, no party of non-violent resisters from Kerala can help it or any other province. Kerala can help Assam etc. by demonstrating its non-violence in Kerala itself. The Japanese army, if it gets a foothold in India, will not stop at Assam. In order to defeat the British, it has to overrun the whole country. The British will fight every inch of the ground. Loss of India will probably be admission of complete defeat for them. But whether it is so or not, it is quite clear that Japan will not rest till India is wholly in her hands. Hence non-violent resisters must remain at their posts wherever they are.

One thing has to be made clear. Where the British army is actually engaging the 'enemy', it would be perhaps improper for direct resistance to function. It will not be non-violent resistance when it is mixed with, or allies itself to, violence.

Let me therefore reiterate what I have said so often. The best preparation for, and even the expression of non-violence lies in the determined pursuit of the constructive programme. Anyone who believes that without the backing of the constructive programme he will show non-violent strength when the testing time comes will fail miserably. It will be, like the attempt of a striving unarmed man to match his physical strength against a fully fed and panoplied soldier, foredoomed to failure. He who has no belief in the constructive programme has, in my opinion, no concrete feeling for the starved millions. He who is devoid of that feeling cannot fight non-violently. In actual practice the expansion of my non-violence has kept exact pace with that of my identification with starved humanity. I am still far from the nonviolence of my conception, for am I not still far away from the identification of my conception with dumb humanity?

On the train to Wardha, 5-4-1942

*Harijan*, 12-4-'42, p. 112\*

### 132. NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE TO ARMED INVASION

(From "The Bombay Interview" by M. D.).

Q. There is a report about some new scheme that you want to propound in one of your *Harijan* articles about non-violent non-co-operation if any invader came to India. Could you give us an idea?

A It is wrong. I have no plan in mind. If I had, I should give it to you. But I think nothing more need be added when I have said that there should be unadulterated non-violent non-cooperation and if the whole of India responded and unanimously offered it, I should show that without shedding a single drop of blood Japanese arms—or any combination of arms—can be sterilized. That involves the determination of India not to give quarter on any point whatsoever and to be ready to risk loss of several million lives. But I would consider that cost very cheap and victory won at that cost glorious. That India may not be ready to pay that price may be true. I hope it is not true, but some such price must be paid by any country that wants to retain its independence. After all, the sacrifice made by the Russians and the Chinese is enormous, and they are ready to risk all. The same could be said of the other countries also, whether aggressors or defenders. The cost is enormous. Therefore, in the non-violent technique I am asking India to risk no more than other countries are risking and which India would have to risk even if she offered armed resistance.

"But," promptly came the question, "unadulterated non-violent non-co-operation has not been successful against Great Britain. How will it succeed against a new aggressor?"

"I combat the statement altogether. Nobody has yet told me that non-violent non-co-operation, unadulterated, has not succeeded. It has not been offered, it is true. Therefore, you can say that what has not been offered hitherto is not likely to be offered suddenly when India faces the Japanese arms. I can only hope that, in the face of danger, India would be readier to offer non-violent non-co-operation. Perhaps India is accustomed to British rule for so many years

that the Indian mind or India's masses do not feel the pinch so much as the advent of a new power would be felt. But your question is well put. It is possible that India may not be able to offer non-violent non-co-operation. But a similar question may be put regarding armed resistance. Several attempts have been made and they have not succeeded. Therefore, it will not succeed against the Japanese. That leads us to the absurd conclusion that India will never be ready for gaining independence, and seeing that I cannot subscribe to any such proposition, I must try again and again till India is ready to respond to the call of non-violent non-co-operation. But if India does not respond to that call, then India must respond to the call of some leader or some organization, wedded to violence. For instance, the Hindu Mahasabha is trying to rouse the Hindu mind for an armed conflict. It remains to be seen whether that attempt succeeds. I for one do not believe it will succeed."

*Harijan, 24-5-'42, p. 166 at p. 167*

### 133. SCORCHED EARTH

#### I

The Russian technique of scorched earth has staggered humanity, but humanity has been powerless to do anything except applaud the amazing sacrifice and bravery that counted "no cost too great to circumvent the enemy. I have shared the amazement with the admirers but not their admiration.

We like to imitate what we admire. Now that the prospect faces us, are we able to contemplate with equanimity, or feel the glow of bravery and sacrifice at the prospect of India's earth being scorched and everything destroyed in order that the enemy's march may be hampered?

As a war resister my answer can only be one. I see neither bravery nor sacrifice in destroying life or property for offence or defence. I would far rather leave, if I must, my crops and homestead for the enemy to use than destroy them for the sake of preventing their use by him. There is reason, sacrifice and even bravery in so leaving my homestead and crops, if I do so not out of fear but because I refuse to regard anyone as my enemy –that is, out of humanitarian motive.

But in India's case there is, too, a practical consideration. Unlike Russia, India's masses have no national instinct developed in the sense that Russia's have. India is not fighting. Her conquerors are. Supposing that the conquerors are worsted and the Japanese come, the inarticulate masses will not even notice the change for the time being or for a long time. The intelligentsia are divided on the issue of the war. The motive here is irrelevant. India's soldiers are in no sense a national army. They are soldiers because it is their profession. They will as soon fight under the Japanese or any other provided they are paid for fighting. In these circumstances the policy of scorched earth would be a wholly indefensible act.

It is therefore a matter for satisfaction that Indian opinion is being expressed against the policy of scorched earth. I know nothing of the requirements of the

military, but they can never be allowed to supersede national or humanitarian considerations which the nation may have accepted. The military must thus be an arm of the dominant civil power, not its substitute. The Government of India will considerably ease the situation and allay anxiety by declaring in unequivocal terms that they will not apply, if the occasion ever arise, the scorched earth policy to India, especial regard being had to her peculiar position.

Sevagram, 16-3-1942

*Harijan*, 22-3-'42, p. 88

II

(Originally appeared under the title "Scorched Earth")

Thus writes a correspondent on my article "Scorched Earth" in *Harijan*:

"In your article headed "Scorched Earth" appearing in *Harijan* of the 22nd March you say as follows:

'As a war resister my answer can only be one. I see neither bravery nor sacrifice in destroying life or property for offence or defence. I would far rather leave, if I must, my crops and homestead for the enemy to use than destroy them for the sake of preventing their use by him. There is reason, sacrifice and even bravery in so leaving my homestead and crops, if I do so not out of fear but because I refuse to regard anyone as my enemy –that is, out of a humanitarian motive.'

"Firstly, although I do not approve of the violence which characterized Russia's resistance, I am of the view that there is great bravery and sacrifice in the scorched earth policy which they are adopting to resist the invader, I cannot, therefore, understand your saying that there is neither bravery nor sacrifice in destroying property for defence. Secondly, although you ask people to resist the invader, you would prefer them to leave their crops and homestead for the invader to use, not out of fear but out of a humanitarian motive. I cannot understand how this can be reconciled with your teaching of resistance to evil. I think that

non-violent resistance to the invader demands it of me that I should prevent anything which will be of use to him, such as crops, homesteads etc. from falling into his hands even if this means sacrificing my life. May I request you to clarify this subject because it is of vital importance that people should know how they should offer non-violent resistance to the invader?"

Surely the meaning is plain. There is no bravery in my poisoning my well or filling it in so that my brother who is at war with me may not use the water. Let us assume that I am fighting him in the orthodox manner. Nor is there sacrifice in it, for it does not purify me, and sacrifice, as its root meaning implies, presupposes purity. Such destruction may be likened to cutting one's nose to spite one's face. Warriors of old had wholesome laws of war. Among the excluded things were poisoning wells and destroying food crops. But I do claim that there are bravery and sacrifice in my leaving my wells, crops and homestead intact, bravery in that I deliberately run the risk of the enemy feeding himself at my expense and pursuing me, and sacrifice in that the sentiment of leaving something for the enemy purifies and ennobles me.

My questioner has missed the conditional expression "if I must". I have imagined a state of things in which I am not prepared just now to die and therefore I want to retreat in an orderly manner in the hope of resisting under other and better auspices. The thing to consider here is not resistance but non-destruction of food crops and the like. Resistance, violent or nonviolent, has to be well thought out. Thoughtless resistance will be regarded as bravado in military parlance, and violence or folly in the language of non-violence. Retreat itself is often a plan of resistance and may be a precursor of great bravery and sacrifice. Every retreat is not cowardice which implies fear to die. Of course a brave man would more often die in violently or non-violently resisting the aggressor in the latter's attempt to oust him from his property, but he will be no less brave if wisdom dictates present retreat.

Sevagram, 7-4-1942

*Harijan*, 12-4-'42, p. 109

III

(Originally appeared "Scorched Earth Policy Again")

Thus writes a correspondent:

"The controversy on the scorched earth policy has had reference to what the people have to do when their fields are touched by the 'enemy'. That may or may not happen. But what about the destruction that is going on of crops, wells, tanks, houses, boats, cycles etc. in the name of preparation for war. The people are summarily driven out of their villages and houses in cities^ If you will suffer this destruction, then how can you oppose destruction to prevent destruction?"

This is a very difficult question. The destruction that is going on is certain. The destruction that the enemy may work or which the receding portion of the population affected may have to do is problematical. And, in any case, such destruction will be nothing, even if it overtook us, compared to the crores already drained from the country for warding off a threatened danger. Money taken through taxation has not been felt so keenly as is the direct deprivation of thousands of homesteads as in Feni. No promise of compensation can be any comfort-for the dispossession of the present tenements. To the poor people it is like taking away their bodies. The dispossession of the country boats is almost like that of the tenements. To deprive the people in East Bengal of their boats is like cutting off a vital limb. I wrote almost in defence of the procedure adopted by the authorities in Feni. I have polite but angry protests against my endorsements. The correspondents tell me that I know nothing of the conditions of life in East Bengal. I cannot plead guilty to the charge. Only I felt that people must be asked to resign themselves to the inevitable. Later information from Feni compels a revision of the attitude I had adopted. I had assumed considerate action by the authorities in the face of the impending danger. But I must defer final judgment. The authorities are reported to be carrying on an investigation. I hope it will be comprehensive.

Certain risks have to be taken even when danger overtakes us. Thus people cannot be asked or advised to starve or die of thirst for fear of the Japanese

helping themselves to the people's provision of water. They may fight them to prevent their use, but they must risk their loss and not die before their death in order to prevent their use by the Japanese forces.

It is time I came to the last and the most vital part of the question. As an out and out war resister, is it my duty to ask the affected people to resist, non-violently of course, the deprivation of their holdings including boats? But my very non-violence, has deterred me from offering opposition to the point of embarrassment. Whether embarrassment through opposition in Feni would have been avoidable or not is a question of fact on which I cannot yet pronounce opinion. I would hesitate up to the last moment. I can only hope that the authorities will find a way whereby they can avoid distress such as has been caused in Feni.

Sevagram, 27-4-1942

*Harijan*, 3-5-'42, p. 140

#### IV

(From the feature—"The Bombay Interview")

Q. Would you advise non-violent non-co-operation against scorched earth policy? Would you resist the attempt to destroy sources of food and water?

A Yes. A time may come when I would certainly advise it, for I think it is ruinous, suicidal, and unnecessary—whether India believes in non-violent non-co-operation or in violence. And the Russian and Chinese examples make no appeal to me. If some other country resorts to methods which I consider to be inhuman, I may not follow them. If the enemy comes and helps himself to crops, I may be obliged to leave, because I cannot or care not to defend them. I must resign myself to it. And there is a good example for us. A passage was quoted to me from the Islamic literature. The Khalifs issued definite instructions to the armies of Islam that they should not destroy the utility services, that they should not harness the aged and women and children; and I do not know that the arms of Islam suffered any disaster because the armies obeyed those instructions.

Q. But what about factories especially factories for the manufacture of munitions?

A. Suppose there are factories for grinding wheat or pressing oil-seeds I should not destroy them. But munitions factories, yes; for I would not tolerate munitions factories in a free India if I had my way. Textile factories I would not destroy and I would resist all such destruction. However, it is a question of prudence.

*Harijan*, 24-5-1942, p. 166 at p. 167

### 134. IF THEY COME

(From "Question Box')

Q. (1) If the Japs come, how are we to resist them non-violently?

(2) What are we to do if we fall into their hands?

A. (1) These questions come from Andhradesha where the people rightly or wrongly feel that the attack is imminent. My answer has already been given in these columns. Neither food nor shelter is to be given nor are any dealings to be established with them. They should be made to feel that they are not wanted. But of course things are not going to happen as smoothly as the question implies. It is a superstition to think that they will come as friendlies. No attacking party has ever done so. It spreads fire and brimstone among the populace. It forces things from people.

If the people cannot resist fierce attack and are afraid of death, they should evacuate the infested place in order to deny compulsory service to the enemy.

(2) If unfortunately some people are captured or fall into the enemy's hands, they are likely to be shot if they do not obey orders, e.g. render forced labour. If the captives face death cheerfully, their task is done. They have saved their own and their country's honour. They could have done nothing more if they had offered violent resistance, save perhaps taking a few Japanese lives and inviting terrible reprisals.

The thing becomes complicated when you are captured alive and subjected to unthinkable tortures to compel submission. You will neither submit to torture nor to the orders of the enemy. In the act of resistance you will probably die and escape humiliation. But it is said that death is prevented to let the victim go through the agony of tortures and to serve as an example to others. I however think that a person who would die rather than go through inhuman tortures would find honourable means of dying.

Sevagram, 3-6-'42,

*Harijan*, 14-6-1942, p. 189

### 135. AN APPROPRIATE QUESTION

I take the following from the *Hindu*:

"*The Manchester Guardian*, in an editorial commenting on the Wardha resolution, says that the resolution suggested that if Britain would immediately withdraw, India would help her and the Allies to 'resist aggression'. In India, as here, it is being asked what is meant by 'resistance'. Would it be armed resistance or would it be resistance of the kind which Mr. Gandhi has always advocated—non-violent non-cooperation? The text of the resolution ought to settle the question, but it does not. Pandit Nehru and some other Congress leaders have said that they themselves believe in offering armed resistance, provided that Britain makes the necessary political concessions. But Mr. Gandhi's belief is that Indians would most effectively 'resist' Japan and any other aggressor by pure non-violence. How is Britain to know what sort of 'resistance' the proposed Indian Government would organize, concludes the *Manchester Guardian*."

This is a good question. But who can speak for the proposed Indian Government? It must be clear that it won't be Congress Government; nor will it be Hindu Mahasabha Government, nor Muslim League Government. It will be all-India Government. It will be a Government not backed by any military power unless the so-called military classes seize the opportunity and overawe the populace and declare themselves the Government as Franco has done. If they play the game then the proposed Government would be a Government though provisional in the first instance, broad-based upon the will of the people. Let us assume that the military minded persons being without the backing of the powerful British arms will think wise not to seize power. The popular Government to be must represent Parsis, Jews, Indian Christians, Muslims and Hindus not as separate religious groups but as Indians. The vast majority won't be believers in nonviolence. The Congress does not believe in non-violence as a creed. Very few go to the extreme length I do as the

*Manchester Guardian* properly puts it. The Maulana and Pandit Nehru 'believe in offering armed resistance'. And I may add so do many Congressmen. Therefore, whether in the country as a whole or in the Congress I shall be in a hopeless minority. But for me even if I find myself in a minority of oiie my course is clear. My nonviolence is on its trial. I hope I shall come out unscathed through the ordeal. My faith in its efficacy is unflinching. If I could turn India, Great Britain, America and the rest of the world including the Axis Powers in the direction of non-violence I should do so. But that feat mere human effort cannot accomplish. That is in God's hands. For me 'I can but do or die'. Surely the *Manchester Guardian* does not fear the real article, genuine non-violence. Nobody does nor need!

*Harijan*, 9-8-'42, p. 261

### 136. WHAT IS THE LAW?

'Confused' writes:

"I grant that Italy, Germany and Japan have lost their power, but is the loss due to their faith in violence, as you would say, or is it due to their exhaustion brought about by fortunes of war? Will you hold that Britain, Russia and America have been successful because of their nonviolence?"

Thus argues a correspondent whom I have paraphrased without diminishing the force of his argument. The questioner has failed to perceive that in the writing quoted by him, I have said nothing about the so-called victorious Powers. But I have said elsewhere that their victory is an empty boast if they do not learn the lesson while there is time and do not shape their life in accordance with the law of non-violence. I believe wholly in the truth that "those who take the sword will perish by the sword". There is no doubt that the victors employed the same means as the vanquished. There was only a question of degree. The victorious parties already seem to be on the verge of quarrelling among themselves. If another war has not already begun, it is because no one is ready to enter upon it. After all men are not machines. They cannot be continually fighting without being reduced to a state of beasts. One has to hope, for the sake of humanity, that they will do some hard thinking and discover the truth that the common man of whom the world is composed gains nothing by cutting his fellowman's throat and that the fruits of peace are infinitely superior to those of war. Ingenuity employed in devising methods of destruction lowers, whereas when employed in devising ways of building it befits mankind.

New Delhi, 5-4-1946

*Harijan*, 14-4-'46, p. 89