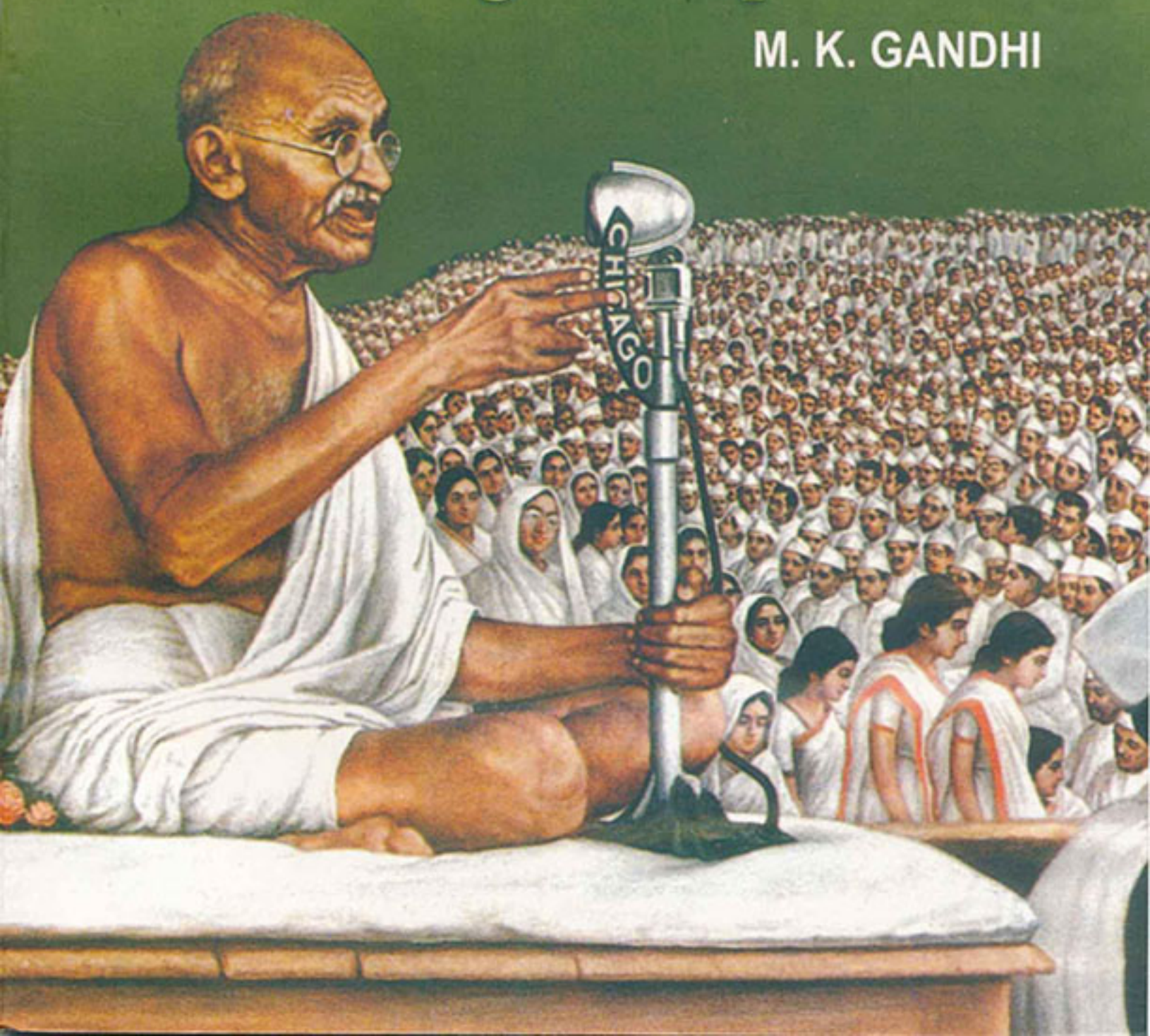




# Gandhiji Expects

M. K. GANDHI



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What the Father of the Nation expected of People's Representatives

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

A characteristic of Gandhiji's way of dealing with public questions can easily be noticed. He had no particular ideology or dogma from which his conclusions followed. His aim was to apply the two fundamental principles of truth and non-violence to public affairs. Naturally, therefore, he dealt with problems and questions as they came up before him.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that Gandhiji trained Congressmen in his method for getting swaraj established as also to run the administration under swaraj when power was seared for the people.

That came about initially in 1937 and subsequently fully in 1947.

Gandhiji's fundamental principle of the governance of India was that those responsible for it had always to bear in mind that they had to run the government of a poor country and primarily in the interest of the poor and backward classes of India. How that could be done was propounded by him ever since he returned to India in 1915. When, therefore, Congressmen went into power in 1937 and afterwards he brought to their notice the responsibility that they had undertaken.

This is a collection of his articles and speeches dealing with the various duties that devolved upon Congressmen and others as administrators and rulers.

Gandhiji never gave orders nor did he believe that he had any authority over Congressmen. He always appealed to the best in them and hoped that his appeal would not go in vain.

This collection represents his expectations regarding the governance of India. They come handy at the present juncture when the fundamentals are nearly being lost sight of and politicians and public men appear to act from mixed motives.

It is hoped this collection will bring home to those who are responsible for running the administration of the country their duty and what the Father of the Nation expected of them.

2-10-'65

*The councillors want their fares and extras, the ministers their salaries, the lawyers their fees, the suitors their decrees, the parents such education for their boys as would give them status in the present life, the millionaires want facilities for multiplying their millions and the rest their unmanly peace. The whole revolves beautifully round the central corporation It is a giddy dance from which no one cares to free himself and so, as the speed increases, the exhilaration is the greater. But it is a death dance and the exhilaration is induced by the rapid heart beat of a patient who is about to expire.*

*Young India, 9-3-1922, p. 148*

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*Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him.*

*Will he gain anything by it ? Will it restore him control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and . . . self melting away.*

*Mahatma Gandhi The Last Phase, Vol. 2 (1958), p. 65*

## 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.

M. K. GANDHI

*Harijan, 29-4-'33 p. 2*

## SECTION I : INTRODUCTORY

## CHAPTER I

### MAGNA CHARTA

#### I. The Constitution of Free India

I shall strive for a constitution, which will release India from all thralldom and patronage, and give her, if need be,- the right to sin. I shall work for an India, in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class or low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability, or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men. Since we shall be at peace with all the rest of the world, neither exploiting, nor being exploited, we should have the smallest army imaginable. All interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected, whether foreign or indigenous. Personally, I hate distinction between foreign and indigenous. This is the India of my dreams. ... I shall be satisfied with nothing less.

- Y.I., 10-9-'31, p. 255

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#### II. Under Swaraj Government

There is no place under Swaraj government for gambling, drinking and immorality or for class hatred.

The rich will use their riches wisely and usefully, and not squander them in increasing their pomp and worldly pleasures. It should not happen that a handful of rich people should live in jewelled palaces and the millions in miserable hovels devoid of sunlight or ventilation. ... In non-violent Swaraj there can be no encroachment upon just rights; contrariwise, no one can possess unjust rights. In a well-organized State, usurpation should be an impossibility and it should be unnecessary to resort to force for dispossessing a usurper.

### III. Weapons to Evolve True Democracy

India is trying to evolve true democracy, i.e. without violence. Our weapons are those of satyagraha expressed through the charkha, the village industries, primary education through handicrafts, removal of untouchability, communal harmony, prohibition and non-violent organization of labour as in Ahmedabad. These mean mass effort and mass education. We have big agencies for conducting these activities. They are purely voluntary, and their only sanction is service of the lowliest.

- H., 18-5-'40, p. 129



## CHAPTER 2

### PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT

By Swaraj, I mean the government of India by the consent of the people ascertained by the vote of the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the State and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters. . . .

- *Y.I.*, 29-1-'25, p. 40

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My Swaraj is the parliamentary government of India in the modern sense of the term for the time being.

- *Y.I.*, 29-12-'20, p. 6

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Today my corporate activity is undoubtedly devoted to the attainment of parliamentary swaraj, in accordance with the wishes of the people of India.

- *Hind Swaraj* (1961), p. 17

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Without parliamentary government, we should be nowhere. . . .

What then would our parliament do? When we have it, we would have a right to commit blunders and to correct them. In the early stages, we are bound to make blunders. . . . The history of the Commons is a history of blunders. Man, says an Arabian proverb, is error personified. Freedom to err and the duty of correcting errors is one definition of swaraj. And such swaraj lies in parliament. That parliament we need to-day. We are fitted for it to-day.

- *Natesan*, pp. 406-08

## SECTION II: LEGISLATURES

## CHAPTER 3

### GOING TO LEGISLATURES

The boycott of the legislatures, let me tell you, is not an eternal principle like that of truth or nonviolence. My opposition to them has considerably lessened, but that does not mean that I am going back on my former position. The question is purely one of strategy, and I can only say what is most needed at a particular time. Am I the non-co-operator I was in 1920 ? Yes, I am the same non-co-operator. But it is forgotten that I was a co-operator too in the sense that I non-co-operated for co-operation, and even then I said that if I could carry the country forward by co-operation I should co-operate. I have now advised going to the legislatures not to offer co-operation but to demand co-operation. . . .

If fighting for the legislatures meant a sacrifice of truth and non-violence, democracy would- not be worth a moment's purchase. The voice of the people is the voice of God, and it is the voice of 300 million that we have to represent. Is it not possible to do so with truth and non-violence? The voice of those who are not the representatives of the people, who are not the servants of the people will be different, but not of those who claim to be the servants of the 300 millions.

A vast number of our people have secured the right to vote — nearly one-third of those who can vote. The elections gave us an opportunity of carrying the whole Congress Programme to them. If that was so, were the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh to stand aloof? We are pledged to the constructive programme no doubt, but are we not then bound to see that those who go there in our name also carry out the constructive programme? Remember that no political programme can stand without the constructive programme. The whole of that programme is a symbol of truth and non-violence, and it is the prime function of the members of the Gandhi Seva Sangh to see that it does not suffer in any way.

Mind, it is not that I am asking you to permit your members to go to the legislatures as a necessary evil. It may be a duty. The legislatures are today WE the representatives of the people. We have to carry out our truth and non-violence there. I have withdrawn from the Congress for reasons special to me and in order to help the Congress all the more. All my time and energy are dedicated to it so long as it swears by the programme of 1920 based on truth and non-violence.

But how, it is asked, may we go to institutions to which we have been opposed? The legislatures of to-day are different from the old. We do not want to destroy them; we want to destroy the system which they are created to work.

We go there, if we do, not to sacrifice truth and non-violence but in order to vindicate them. Today the Congress has had to spend a few lakhs on elections. When we have become an irresistible power in the land, we should have to spend not a single pie. But the fact is that we generally only talk of the constructive programme. What have we really achieved until now? How many experts in khadi science have we got to-day? If we had carried out the constructive programme to the full, there would have been no other party but the Congress party in any province.

But let me tell you that all that I have said does not mean that all of you should now begin thinking of the legislatures. Not only not all, but no one of the Sangh will attempt to go to the legislatures. What I mean to say is no one will shirk it, should an occasion arise. It does not need legal acumen to be able to go there. Bravery and steadfast faith in the constructive programme are all that is needed. If you went there, I should expect you to ply your *taklis* there, to work for prohibition and for the constructive programme. But there should be no scramble for power. That will mean our undoing. Only those will go as are asked by the Gandhi Seva Sangh to go. I do not deny that legislatures are a great temptation, almost like liquor booths. They hold out opportunities to self-seekers and job-hunters. But no Congressman, no member of the Gandhi Seva Sangh can go with that sordid object. The Congress leader will compel attention to the programme and will not permit the slightest tampering with it.

Men thus pledged will go there out of a sense of duty and not as a necessary evil. We have, if we can, to fill all the eleven assemblies with such men, true as steel and pledged to serve and with no axes to grind.

- *H.*, 1-5-'37, pp. 89-90



## CHAPTER 4

### LEGISLATURES AND CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

His (Kishorelal's) doubt and fear are that the parliamentary programme always rouses passions and makes one forget himself and so one naturally forgets truth and non-violence. ... I grant that the parliamentary programme is likely to rouse one's passions and exposes one to great temptations. But shall we shirk it just because of this reason? Should we not resist them ? . . .

Our programme is one and one only – the constructive programme, for therein lies Swaraj. But we sacrifice not an iota of truth and non-violence in going to the legislatures. There too we want to help constructive work. I tell you, if we had been plying the wheel intelligently we should have had Swaraj and should not have had to go to the legislatures. We have played with the wheel so far, not plied it intelligently. Now if we want to do so, we have to be intimately associated with the representatives of the three crore voters. It does not mean that we should therefore all go to the legislatures or allow all those of us to go as want to go there. This means that we do not throw the doors of the Sangh open to all the members of the legislatures. We open them only for those who are pledged to the constructive programme and without whom the Congress should have to lose an assembly seat. ... We want if possible to fill legislatures with all charkha-believers.

In making room for the parliamentary programme we are advancing a step further in the direction of non-violence. . . . Truth and non-violence are no cloistered virtues but applicable as much in the forum and the legislatures as in the market place. Your faith is going to be put to a severe trial, but you will not shirk it merely because it will be a severe trial. . . .

The whole of the constructive programme— including hand-spinning and hand-weaving, Hindu- Muslim unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition—is in pursuit of truth and non-violence. If there can be any interest for us in going to the legislatures, it can be only for this reason and for nothing else. Truth and

non-violence are both the means and the end, and given the right type of men the legislatures can be the means of achieving the concrete pursuit of truth and non-violence. If they cannot be that, it will be our fault and not theirs. If we have a real hold on the masses, the legislatures are bound to be that and nothing else.

- *H.*, 8-5-'37, pp. 97-98

## CHAPTER 5

### THE LURE OF LEGISLATURES

I believe that some Congressmen ought to seek election in the legislatures or other elected bodies. In the past I did not hold this view. I had hoped that the boycott of legislatures would be complete. That was not to be. Moreover, times have changed. Swaraj seems to be near. Under the circumstances it is necessary that Congress should contest every seat in the legislatures. The attraction should never be the honour that a seat in a legislature is said to give. The desire and opportunity for service can be the only incentive for a Congressman. Congress should have, and has, such prestige that a Congress candidate is irresistible even where a particular seat is contested. Moreover, those that are not selected by the Board should not feel hurt. On the contrary they should feel happy that they are left free to render more useful service. But the painful fact is that those who are not selected by the Board do feel hurt.

The Congress should not have to spend money on the elections. Nominees of a popular organization should be elected without any effort on the latter's part. Conveyance arrangements for poor voters should be made by their well-to-do neighbours. For instance, if the voters from X have to go to Y, the railway fare from X to Y for the poor voters should be paid by the well-to-do people of X. That is the distinguishing feature of a well organized, non-violent, popular organization. An organization which looks to money for everything can never serve the masses. If money could bring Success in a popular contest, the British Government which can and does spend most lavishly should be the most popular body in India. The facts are that even Government servants drawing fat salaries do not, in their heart of hearts, want the British Government.

Let us examine the utility value of legislatures. The legislatures can expose the Government, but that is the least service. He who can tell the people why they become victims of the Government in spite of knowing its faults and can teach them how to stand up against Government wrongs renders a real service. The

members cannot do this essential service, for their business is to make people look to them for the redress of wrongs.

The other use of legislatures is to prevent undesirable legislation and bring in laws which are useful for the public, so that as much help as possible can be given to the constructive programme.

Legislatures are supposed to carry out the popular will. For the moment eloquence may be of some use in these bodies. Ultimately that will not be the need. Experts with practical knowledge and those who can give to these few their support will be required. In an organization which exists for the sake of service and which has boycotted titles and other such paltry things, the sentiment that to be selected as candidates for the legislatures is a mark of honour is harmful. If such a sentiment takes root, it will bring down the name of the Congress and finally prove its ruin.

If Congressmen are to be reduced to such degradation, who will put flesh and blood into India's millions of skeletons? On whom will India and the world rely?

- H., 17-12-'46, p. 13

## CHAPTER 6

### THE CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

The Working Committee has emphasized the necessity of the members of the legislatures and other workers taking the constructive programme of 1920 to the three crore villagers between whom and their representatives a direct contact has been established. The representatives may if they choose neglect them, or give them some paltry or even substantial relief from financial burdens; but they cannot give them self-confidence, dignity, and the power of continuously bettering their own position unless they will interest them in the fourfold constructive programme, i.e. universal production and use of khadi through universal hand-spinning, Hindu-Muslim or rather communal unity, promotion of total prohibition by propaganda among those who are addicted to the drink habit, and removal by Hindus of untouchability root and branch.

It was announced in 1920 and 1921 from a thousand platforms that attainment of swaraj by the non-violent method was impossible without these four things. I hold that it is not less true to-day.

It is one thing to improve the economic condition of the masses by State regulation of taxation, and wholly another for them to feel that they have bettered their condition by their own sole personal effort. Now this they can only do through hand-spinning and other village handicrafts.

Similarly it is one thing to regulate communal conduct by means of pacts between leaders, voluntary or imposed by the State; it is wholly different for the masses to respect one another's religious and outward observances. This cannot be done unless the legislators and workers would go out among the villagers and teach them mutual toleration.

Again it is one thing to impose, as we must, prohibition by law, and another to sustain it by willing obedience to it. It is a defeatist armchair mentality which says that it cannot work without an expensive and elaborate system of espionage. Surely, if the workers went out to the villagers and demonstrated



the evil of drink wherever it is prevalent, and if research scholars found out the causes of alcoholism, and proper knowledge was imparted to the people, prohibition should not only prove inexpensive but profitable. This is a work essentially for women to handle.

Lastly, we may banish by statute, as we must, the evil consequences of untouchability. But we cannot have real independence unless people banish the touch-me-not spirit from their hearts. The masses cannot act as one man or with one mind unless they eradicate untouchability from their hearts.

Thus this and the three other items are a matter of true mass education. And it has become imperatively necessary now that three crores of men and women have rightly or wrongly power put into their hands. However hedged in it is, Congressmen and others who want the suffrages of these voters have it in their hands either to educate the three crores or mankind along the right lines or the wrong. It would be the wrong line to neglect them altogether in matters which most vitally concern them.

- *H.*, 17-8-'47, p. 284

### **SECTION III : MEMBERS OF LEGISLATURES**

## CHAPTER 7

### A DRAFT DECLARATION

Shri Brijlal Nehru sends for publication the following draft declaration:

"Draft declaration to be signed by all members of the Public Service in India, Civil or Military, and by all candidates for the Service, whether Central, Provincial or Local, and by all applicants for other profitable jobs under these Governments and the members of the legislatures including the Constituent Assembly.

I hereby solemnly declare that

1. I am a subject of the Union of India to which I pledge my loyalty in all circumstances.
2. I repudiate the theory that the Hindus and the Muslims are two separate Nations and hold the view that all the people of India, to whatever race or religion they may belong, are parts of one Nation.
3. I shall so conduct myself in all my actions and speech as to strengthen this idea of One Nationality of all the inhabitants of this ancient and sacred land.
4. If at any time I am found guilty of a breach of this declaration, I shall render myself liable to removal from any office or post of profit that I may be holding at the time."

The wording may admit of improvement. But the spirit behind is surely admirable and worthy of adoption if we are to get out of unhealthy growth in the body politic.

- H., 17-8-'47, p. 284

## CHAPTER 8

### MEMBERS OF ASSEMBLY

A Congressman who is a member of an Assembly, no matter what office he occupies there, is subject to the discipline of the Congress and has to carry out its instructions from time to time.

In my opinion Congressmen who are members of Assemblies, whether as mere members or Ministers or Speakers, have in every act of theirs to bear in mind the fact that they have, in virtue of the Congress Constitution, to conform to truth and non-violence. Thus the conduct of a Congressman in an Assembly would have to be that of strictest honesty and courtesy in dealing with his opponents. He will not resort to shady politics, will not hit below the belt, will never take a mean, advantage of his adversary. The greater his position in the Assembly, the greater is his responsibility in these matters. A member in the Assembly no doubt represents his constituency and his party but also represents the whole of his province. A Minister no doubt advances his own party but never at the expense of the nation as a whole. Indeed he advances the Congress only so far as he advances the nation. For he knows that if he has no sword to give battle to the foreign ruler, he has it not to give battle to his adversary inside the nation itself. And since the Assembly is the place where all communities meet together willy-nilly, it is the place where by winning over his opponents he expects to forge sanctions which can be made irresistible. All the problems that affect the body politic including communal unity can be solved if the Assembly is regarded not merely in terms of the Government of India Act but as an instrument to be used for solving questions which representatives of different communities composing the nation can be expected to solve if they had unrestricted powers. And the Government of India Act does not prevent the use of the Assemblies for solving the many problems which are outside its scope but which are necessary for national progress.

Looked at from the point of view here suggested, the Speaker's position assumes very high importance, greater than that of the Prime Minister. For he

has to discharge the functions of a judge while he occupies the chair. He has to give impartial and just rulings. He has to enforce decorum and laws of courtesy between members. He has to be calm in the midst of storms. He has opportunities of winning over opponents which no other member of the House can possibly have.

Now if a Speaker outside the House ceases to be impartial and indulges in party polemics, he cannot possibly carry the weight he would if he observed impartiality and calmness everywhere. I claim that if a Speaker cultivates the habit of uniform impartiality outside his own very limited sphere, he will enhance the Congress prestige. He can, if he realizes the unique opportunity his office gives him, pave the way for the solution of the Hindu-Muslim tangle as also many others. Thus in my opinion the Speaker, if he has to be that not only inside but outside the House, must be a first class Congressman. As a man too he has to have a character without reproach. He must be able, fearless, naturally just, and above all truthful and non-violent in thought, word and deed. Then he may stand on any platform he likes.

- *H.*, 16-7-'38, p. 164



## CHAPTER 9

### VIGILANCE OF THE ASSEMBLY

To all intents and purposes there seems to be no cause for the internment of Pitabas Babu. The Bengal Government is responsible to the people. The order could not have been passed over their heads by the Governor.

They cannot enforce the Defence of India Act in an arbitrary manner. They must justify to the public every action they take. The Assembly, if it is to justify its existence, has to keep itself informed of the reasons for the acts of the responsible executive.

- *H.*, 1-3-'42, p. 61

## CHAPTER 10

### CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY NO BED OF ROSES

This is no time for dalliance or ease. I told Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that he must wear the crown of thorns for the sake of the nation and he has agreed. The Constituent Assembly is going to be no bed of roses for you but only a bed of thorns. You may not shirk it.

That does not mean that everybody should want to go into it. Only those should go there who are especially fitted for the task by virtue of their legal training or special talent. It is not a prize to be sought as a reward for sacrifices, but a duty to be faced even like mounting the gallows or sacrifice of one's all at the altar of service.

There is another reason why you should join the Constituent Assembly. If you asked me whether in the event of your rejecting the proposed Constituent Assembly or the Constituent Assembly failing to materialize, I would advise the people to launch civil disobedience, individual or mass, or undertake a fast myself, my reply is 'No'. I believe in walking alone. I came alone in this world, I have walked alone in the valley of the shadow of death and I shall quit alone when the time comes. I know I am quite capable of launching satyagraha even if I am all alone. I have done so before. But this is no occasion for a fast or civil disobedience. I regard the Constituent Assembly as the substitute of satyagraha. It is constructive satyagraha.

- H., 21-7-'46, p. 227

## SECTION IV : REMUNERATION OF M.L.A.'S

## CHAPTER 11

### CONGRESS M.L.A.'S AND REMUNERATION

An M.L.A. from U.P. writes a letter which I abridge as follows:

"In U. P. we are getting Rs. 75 a month. During the two and half years in which the Congress was in power the Assembly sessions were sometimes concluded in six days, at others they lasted for some months. In addition, there were meetings of select, special and regular committees. Some of these are still working and constitute a heavy demand on our time. Moreover, no one knows when the Assembly may be summoned again. Touring in our constituencies entails an expenditure of Rs. 200 a year. There are cases in which the constituencies are more than 200 miles away from Lucknow. Taking an average of three tours in a year, a member has to spend six weeks for this purpose. While at Lucknow, every member has to entertain people from his constituency. He also pays Rs. 4 per month to the Congress Legislature Party and the Provincial Congress Committee. In these circumstances business or professional life has to be sacrificed, and it is clear that unless a member has private means he is totally unable to give whole-time work without some remuneration. This question has come up many times before the U. P. M. L. A.'s. Many of us feel that either the allowance should be raised or the poor among us will have to go out, leaving the field to the rich. You were pained to know that some of the Assembly members were using the allowance for their own use; but I have put before you another side of the picture so that you may guide us. It must also be remembered that many of us borrowed money to fight elections under order of the Congress.

"The second point to which I wanted to draw your attention is the question of corruption in the Congress ranks. Along with other causes, the lure of M. L. A.-ship is a very strong one for the average Congress worker and often leads to underhand methods in the attempt to displace the sitting member. It would be a good thing if it were understood that members who have acquitted themselves well will be renominated. Such a policy would ensure a trained body of workers for legislative work. Members will further realize that constructive work outside the legislatures is also required of them.

"The third point on which I will humbly request you to enlighten us is the strong trend, even among important Congressmen, towards Western, modes of living, thought and culture. In spite of putting on khadi many of them are absolutely strangers to their own culture, and to them all light comes from the West."

The letter leaves me unconvinced, so far as the remuneration is concerned. Of course, there will be hard cases everywhere. But hard cases make bad law. It should be remembered that the Assemblies are not Congress monopolies. Many parties are represented on them. Congress convenience cannot be the sole consideration. My correspondent assumes that every member devotes his whole time to the national service with special regard to legislative activity. This means that the legislators become professional politicians and the legislatures become their special preserves. If I had my way, I would manage these things through the parties. I know that the question bristles with difficulties and requires a thorough and quiet discussion. But the point I have raised is quite small. Why should the members draw anything while the Assemblies are in virtual suspension? If a census were taken, it would be found that many members were not earning before what they are earning as legislators. It is a dangerous thing to make legislatures a means of earning more than one's market price. Let the responsible men in the provinces put their heads together and come to a decision worthy of the Congress and the cause they represent.

The question raised by the correspondent as to making the present members permanent incumbents is beyond me. I have no experience in this matter. It is one for the Working Committee to probe.

As to the habit of looking to the West for light, I can give little guidance if the whole of my life has not provided any. Light used to go out from the East. If the Eastern reservoir has become empty, naturally the East will have to borrow from the West. I wonder if light, if it is light and not a miasma, can ever be exhausted. As a boy I learnt that it grew with the giving. Anyway I have acted in that belief and have, therefore, traded on the ancestral capital. It has never failed me. This, however, does not mean that I must act like a frog in the well. There is nothing to prevent me from profiting by the light that may come from the West. Only, I must take care that I am not overpowered by the glamour of the West. I must not mistake the glamour for true light. The latter gives life, the former brings death.

- H., 13-1-'40, p. 414



## CHAPTER 12

### SALARY OF M.L.A.'S

Q. The monthly salary of an M.L.A. is Rs. 200/-. He is a mofussil member and, as such, is entitled to a daily allowance of Rs. 15/- when the Assembly is in session. Besides that, he may draw a conveyance of Rs. 2/8/- for any day on which he attends the meeting of the Assembly. Moreover, he is entitled to 'travelling allowance' for his journey from the usual place of residence to the City at the rate of one and a half times first class fare but he cannot draw 'travelling allowance' and 'daily allowance' for the same day.

1. (a) Should such a person as a representative and servant of the poor draw the salary?

(b) Would he be absolved from the wrong if he gave the whole amount to the local Congress Committee or the institution under which he is working for constructive work?

(c) If so, would it not mean that the end justifies the means?

2. He will have to live in the city when the Assembly is in session and has to incur some other expenditure for discharging his duties and responsibilities as an M.L.A.

(a) In the circumstances, may he, consistently with his ideal, draw the daily allowance to meet the expenses?

(b) If so, and if it be not permissible to draw a part of it, should he draw the whole of it and give the balance to the institution under which he is working?

(c) In that case, may he, consistently with his ideal, spend the balance or part thereof for his family, which will have otherwise to depend upon the charity of friends to make the two ends meet?

3. (a) Should he draw the conveyance allowance (meant for his conveyance inside the city for attending meetings) when the daily allowance will be more than sufficient to cover all his expenses including the conveyance?

(b) Should he avail of costly conveyance for attending meetings, if he usually travels in tram cars and buses ?

4. If such a member travels third class on principle, what should he do regarding drawing 'mileage allowance' if it is not permissible to draw at lower rate than one and a half first class fares ?

A. In my opinion, the salary and allowances drawn by the gentlemen of the various Assemblies are out of all proportion to the services they render to the country. The scales fixed are on the English pattern, not at all compatible with the income of this country – the poorest in the world. Therefore, the answer I suggest is that the Ministers should, with the consent of the Assemblies, reduce the whole scale in accordance with requirements and, in the meantime, either the amount taken should be handed to the party to which the member belongs, drawing what the party has fixed or, if that be "not possible, drawing what his conscience thinks just for himself and his family and devoting the balance to some item of the constructive programme or some such public activity. The money allowed has to be drawn but ' nobody is obliged to use it for oneself except to the extent needed. No question here arises of and justifying the means.

- H., 2-6-'46, p. 157

## SECTION V : WARNING TO M.L.A.'S

## CHAPTER 13

### A TRAGIC PHENOMENON

My post contains so many letters from persons who want to be in the Constituent Assembly that it frightens me into the suspicion that, if these letters are an indication of the general feeling, the intelligentsia is more anxious about personal aggrandizement than about India's Independence. And if I, though I have no connection with the applications of candidates for elections, receive so many letters, how many more must the members of the Working Committee be receiving? These correspondents should know that I take no interest in these elections, I do not attend meetings at which these applications are considered and that I often only know from newspapers who have been elected. It is on rare occasions that my advice is sought as to the choice to be made. But I write this more to draw attention to the disease of which these applications are a sign than to warn my correspondents against building any expectation of my intervention. It is wrong to think communally in such elections, it is wrong to think that anyone is good enough for the Constituent Assembly, it is altogether wrong to think that the election carries any honour with it, it is a post of service if one is fitted for the labours and, lastly, it is wrong to regard the post as one for making a few rupees while the Assembly lasts. The Constituent Assembly should have such members only who know something about constitutions all the world over, above all, about the constitution that India's genius demands. It is debasing to think that true service consists in getting a seat in the Assembly. True service lies outside. The field of service outside is limitless. In the fight for Independence, the Assembly, like the one in course of formation, has a place. Nevertheless, it is a very small place and that too if we use it wisely and well; certainly not, if there is a scramble for a seat in it. The scramble warrants the fear that it may become a hunting ground for place-seekers. I am free to confess that a Constituent Assembly is the logical outcome of parliamentary activity. The labours of the late Desha- bandhu Chittaranjan Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru

opened my eyes to the fact that the parliamentary programme had a place in the national activity for Independence. I strove hard against it. It is certainly inconsistent with pure non-co-operation. But pure non-co-operation never held the field. What came into being also waned. Had there been universal non-co-operation of the non-violent type in the Congress ranks, there would have been no parliamentary programme. Non-violent non-co-operation with evil means co-operation with all that is good. Therefore, non-violent non-co-operation with a foreign government necessarily means an indigenous government based on non-violence. Had there been such complete non-co-operation, there would be swaraj today based on non-violence. But this never happened. In the circumstances it would have been vain to struggle against what the nation had been familiar with and from which it could not be completely weaned. The parliamentary step having been taken, it would have been improper to boycott the present effort. But that does not, can never mean that there should be indecent competition for filling the seats in it. Let us recognize the limitations.

- *H.*, 28-7-'46, pp. 237-38

## CHAPTER 14

### TAKE CARE OF PENNIES

I have discovered honourable members of Assemblies using most expensive embossed note paper even for private use. So far as I know, office stationery cannot be used for private purposes such as writing to friends or relatives or for letters from members of Assemblies to constituents outside matters of public business. So far as I know, this is a universal objection in every part of the world.

But for this poor country my objection goes deeper. The stationery I refer to is too expensive for us. Englishmen belonging to the most expensive country in the world and who had to flourish on the awe they could inspire in us introduced expensive and massive buildings for offices and bungalows require for their upkeep an army of servants and hangers-on. If we copy their style and habits we will be ruined ourselves and carry the country in this ruin. And what was tolerated<sup>1</sup> in the case of the conquerors will not be tolerated in ours. There is, too, paper shortage. I am of opinion, therefore, that all these expensive habits should be given up. Hand-made paper with ordinary printed letter-heads in Nagari and Urdu should be used. The embossed stationery already printed can easily be cut up and put to better use, and should not be used up under cover of economy. Surely, village products cannot be made to wait till the expensive and possibly foreign stuff is used up. Popular Governments should signalize their advent by adopting popular measures and inexpensive habits.

- H., 16-6-'46, p. 180

## CHAPTER 15

### LET US BEWARE!

#### I. A Letter from Andhra

Gandhiji referred to a letter from Andhra. He gave the following relevant extracts from the letter:

"I hate to point out the shortcomings of an individual, but to shut one's eyes to the terrible consequences of the rot set in the individuals of an organization like the Congress, noble in its origin and admirable in its achievements, would be heinous. This rot in the Congress is that of the peoples' representatives in the legislative bodies of the provinces who are the prototype of the rank and file. They are vociferous about stopping the wide-spread corruption, but they themselves resort to worse corruption. They take money from the people to get licences of every description, indulge in black marketing of the worst type, trade- on the ignorance of the masses, and corrupt the sources of justice, and force the administrative machinery to get transfers for the administrative personnel. The people are crushed between these two sets of people. Two hundred and fifty of these legislators let loose on the people in a province without opposition are, in my opinion, the worst plague. Is it after all for replacing the White rapacity by the Black that many noble souls who are no more with us suffered and sacrificed everything worth living for in their lives? There must be an escape out of this morass. If these legislators are not so numerous, the evils would be less. Fifty members in the lower house and half that number in the upper house for each province which is going to be smaller on the linguistic basis would reduce the nuisance. Will the constitutionalists embody this principle of less -the number the better in the constitution of our country and save us from the rapacious legislators and incidentally from top heavy expenditure?"

He had a confirmatory letter from an old and aged Andhra friend from Andhra. Gandhiji appealed to all whether Congressmen, Socialists or Communists to live and work for the good of India. If they all ran after power, where would India be? They should think of the interests of the country rather than their own or of those of their friends.

- D.D., 11-1-'48, pp. 324-25

## II. Call to Self-purification

I told you yesterday of two letters from Andhra. One was from the aged friend, no other than Desha- bhakta Konda Venkatappayya Garu. I give here extracts from it:

"The one great problem, apart from many other political and economic issues of very complicated nature, is the moral degradation into which the men in Congress circles have fallen. I cannot say much about other provinces, but in my province the conditions are very deplorable. The taste of political power has turned their heads. Several of the M.L.A.'s and M.L.C.'s are following the policy of make hay while the sun shines, making money by the use of influence, even to the extent of obstructing the administration of justice in the criminal courts presided over by Magistrates. Even the District Collectors and other revenue officials do not feel free in the discharge of their duties on account of the frequent interference by the M.L.A.'s and M.L.C.'s on behalf of their partisans. A strict and honest officer cannot hold his position, for, false reports are carried against him to the Ministers who easily lend their ears to these unprincipled self-seekers.

"Swaraj was the only all absorbing passion which goaded men and women to follow your leadership. But now that the goal has been reached, all moral restrictions have lost their power on most of the fighters in the great struggle who are joining hands even with those who were sworn opponents of the national movement and who, now for their personal ends, enlist themselves as Congress members. The situation is growing intolerable every day with the result that the Congress as well as the Congress Government have come into disrepute. The recent municipal elections in Andhra had proved how far and how fast the Congress is losing its hold upon the people. The municipal elections in the town of Guntur were suddenly ordered to be stopped by an urgent message from the Minister for Local Bodies (Madras) after every preparation was made for carrying on elections. Only a nominated council was in power for, I believe, the last ten years or more and for nearly a year now the municipal administration has been in the hands of a Commissioner. Now the talk prevails that the Government would soon nominate councillors to take charge of the municipal affairs of this town. I, old, decrepit, with a broken leg, slowly limping on crutches within the walls of my house have no axe to grind. I no doubt entertain certain strong views against some of the Provincial and District Congress Committees now standing divided. And I have made no secret of my views.



"The factions in the Congress circles, the money- making activities of several of the M.L.A.'s and M.L.C.'s and the weakness of the Ministers have been creating a rebellious spirit amongst the people at large. The people have begun to say that the British Government was much better and they are even cursing the Congress."

Let the people of Andhra and the other provinces measure the words of this self-sacrificing servant of India. As he rightly says, the corruption described by him is no monopoly of Andhra. He could only give first-hand evidence about Andhra. Let us beware!

- *D.D.*, 12-1-'48, pp. 329-31

## CHAPTER 16

### CORRUPTION IN CONGRESS RANKS

This office-holding is either a step towards greater prestige or its total loss. If it is not to be a total loss, the ministers and the legislators have to be watchful of their own personal and public conduct. They have to be, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion in everything. They may not make private gains either for themselves or for their relatives or friends. If the relatives or friends get any appointment, it must be only because they are best among the candidates, and their market value is always greater than what they get under the Government. The ministers and the legislators on the Congress ticket have to be fearless in the performance of their duty. They must always be ready to risk the loss of their seats or offices. Offices and seats in the legislatures have no merit outside their ability to raise the prestige and power of the Congress. And since both depend wholly upon the possession of morals, both public and private, any moral lapse means a blow to the Congress. This is the necessary implication of non-violence.

- H., 23-4-'38, p. 88

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### Indiscipline in Assembly

The Daily Press reports that at the opening of the C. P. Assembly session the gallery which was packed to overflowing made an unseemly demonstration against Shri Raghavendra Rao. Those who packed the gallery were presumably Congressmen or those who sympathized with the Congress. I suppose there will be parties even after we have complete Independence of our make. It will go hard with us if the parties will not tolerate one another or show towards one another ordinary courtesy. And the Congress which claims to represent the whole nation can ill afford to be intolerant towards its political opponents or others. If it is, and it is, the only all- India body, it represents all interests. It represents even Shri Raghavendra Rao who was at one time a respected

member of the Congress organization. It may be that the votes in the constituency for which he stood were tampered with. If they were, the law would look after it. But he must be presumed to be honest till he is proved guilty. And even if he is proved guilty, the guilt will be no warrant for unseemly demonstration against him.

Intolerance, discourtesy, harshness are not only against Congress discipline and code of honour, they are taboo in all good society and are surely contrary to the spirit of democracy.

- H., 14-8-'37, p. 209

## SECTION VI: VOTES, FRANCHISE AND LEGISLATION

## CHAPTER 17

### LEGISLATORS AND VOTERS

#### I. Legislators are Servants

Legislators are not the masters, but servants of their electors—the nation.

- *H.*, 25-1-'42, p. 10

Only a limited number of men and women can become members of legislatures, say 1,500. How many from this audience can become legislators? And just now no more than crores can vote for these 1,500 members. What about the remaining 3½ crores? In our conception of Swaraj they are the real masters and the 3½ crores are the former's servants who in their turn are masters of the 1,500. Thus the latter are doubly servants, if they will be true to their trust.

But the 3½ crores have also a trust to discharge towards themselves and the nation of which they as individuals are but tiny parts. And if they remain lazy, know nothing of Swaraj and how to win it, they will themselves become slaves of the 1,500 legislators. For my argument the crores of voters here belong to the same category as 3½ crores. For if they do not become industrious and wise, they will be so many pawns in the hands of 1,500 players, it is of little consequence whether they are Congressmen or otherwise. If the voters wake up only to register their votes every three years or more and then go off to sleep their servants will become their masters.

- *H.*, 2-1-'37, p. 375

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#### II. Where does Power Reside?

We have long been accustomed to think that power comes only through Legislative Assemblies. I have regarded this belief as a grave error brought about by inertia or hypnotism. A superficial study of British history has made us think that all power percolates to the people from parliaments. The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those

whom they may choose as their representatives. Parliaments have no power or even existence independently of the people. It has been my effort for the last twenty-one years to convince the people of this simple truth. Civil Disobedience is the storehouse of power. Imagine a whole people unwilling to conform to the laws of the legislature, and prepared to suffer the consequences of non-compliance! They will bring the whole legislative and executive machinery to a standstill. The police and the military are of use to coerce minorities however powerful they may be. But no police or military coercion can bend the resolute will of a people who are out for suffering to the uttermost.

And parliamentary procedure is good only when its members are willing to conform to the will of the majority. In other words, it is fairly effective only among compatibles.

- *Constructive Programme* (1961), pp. 9-10

## CHAPTER 18

### WOMEN AND LEGISLATURES

#### I. Kasturba Smarak Trust

There were two meetings at Uruli Kanchan on the 28th, 29th and 30th March; one of the Agents of this Trust and the other of the Executive. The meeting of the Agents was the first of its kind. The Agents had many interesting questions. Why could not the Agents be members of the legislatures ? The obvious answer is that if they are to do justice to their work, they should have no time for legislative duties. The decisive reason is that the villagers will have a wrong example set to them, if they have members of legislatures to look up to.

- H., 7-4-'46, p. 76

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#### II. Why not?

"You say that if the Kasturba Agents are also members of the legislatures, it will be setting a bad example to the villagers. I can understand this being applicable to the present Assembly, but when we have swaraj the position will be changed. Will it, therefore, not be an advantage for us to be there? Will not such work as we want done be done in one session of the legislature, whereas ordinarily it would take years to do?"

So writes a sister. But there seem to be three flaws in her line of argument.

Firstly, I have not made any distinction between the present and the future Assembly under swaraj. It is unnecessary for my argument.

Secondly, it is an illusion to think that M.L.A.'s are the guides of the voters. Voters do not send representatives to the Assemblies in order to be guided by them. On the contrary, they are sent there loyally to carry out the people's wishes. The people are, therefore, the guides, not the M.L.A.'s. The latter are servants, the former masters. The illusion is due to the present system of government. When the illusion disappears, the existing unseemly competition to get into the legislatures will also be much less. There will be a few whose duty it will be to go there, and they will go to do the people's will. Today they

go to the Assembly in order to fight there for swaraj, but it has now dawned on most people that they cannot achieve much there even in this line.

The third mistake in the argument is that the Assemblies are best fitted to guide the people. If we look around the world we shall find that the best guidance is given by those outside. If that were not so, a rot would set in all governments, because the field for guidance is vast and the Assembly is a very small thing. Parliaments are, after all, a mere drop in the ocean of national life.

- H., 28-4-'46, p. 112

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### III. Question Box

Q. We find that the Congress is reluctant to select women representatives on a large scale for elective bodies. It is surely just and necessary that more women are taken into the various bodies. How would you deal with the question?

A. I am not enamoured of equality or any other proportion in such matters. Merit should be the only test. Seeing, however, that it has been the custom to decry women, the contrary custom should be to prefer women, merit being equal, to men even if the preference should result in men being entirely displaced by women. It would be a dangerous thing to insist on membership on the ground merely of sex. Women and for that matter any group should disdain patronage. They should seek justice, never favours. Therefore, the proper thing is for women as indeed for men to advance the spread not of English or Western education among them but such education on general lines through their provincial languages as will fit them for the numerous duties of citizenship. For men to take a lead in this much needed reform would be not a matter of favour but a simple act of belated justice due to women.

- H., 7-4-'46, p. 67



## CHAPTER 19

### FRANCHISE

I am wedded to adult suffrage. . . . Adult suffrage is necessary for more reasons than one, and one of the decisive reasons for me is that it enables me to satisfy all the reasonable aspirations, not only of the Musalmans, but also of the so-called untouchables, of Christians, of labourers and all kinds of classes. I cannot possibly bear the idea that a man who has got wealth should have the vote but that a man who has got character but no wealth or literacy should have no vote, or that a man who works honestly by the sweat of his brow day in and day out should not have the vote for the crime of being a poor man.

- Y.I., 8-10-'31, p. 297

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As to the franchise he swore by the franchise of ail adults, males and females, above the age of twenty-one, or even eighteen. He would bar old men like himself. They were of no use as voters. India and the rest of the world did not belong to those who were on the point of dying. To them belonged death, life to the young. Thus he would have a bar against persons beyond a certain age, say fifty, as he would against youngsters below eighteen.

- H., 2-3-'47, p. 45

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### Adult Franchise and Literacy Test

I have myself hitherto sworn by simple adult franchise as well for the illiterate as the literate. My observation of the working of the Congress Constitution has altered my opinion. I have come "round to the view that a literacy test is necessary for two reasons. The vote should be regarded as a privilege and therefore carry some qualification. The simplest qualification is a literacy test. And if the ministry appointed under the literacy franchise is sincere and solicitous about the disqualified illiterates, the much desired literacy 'would come in no time.

- H., 14-1-'39, p. 421

## CHAPTER 20

### LEGISLATION

People seem to think, that when a law is passed against any evil, it will die without any further effort. There never was a grosser self-deception. Legislation is intended to be and is effective against an ignorant or a small evil-minded minority; but no legislation which is opposed by an intelligent and organized public opinion, or under, cover of religion by a fanatical minority, can ever succeed.

- Y.I., 7-7-'27, p. 219

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The first thing is to avoid the slightest shadow of compulsion or untruth. No reform worth the name has yet, in my humble opinion, been achieved by compulsion. For whilst compulsion may lead to apparent success, it gives rise to so many other evils which are worse than the original evil itself.

- Y.I., 8-12-'27, p. 415

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Once a law is enacted, many difficulties must be encountered before it can be reversed. It is only when public opinion is highly educated that the laws in force in a country can be repealed. A constitution under which laws are modified or repealed every now and then cannot be said to be stable or well organized.

- *Satyagraha in South Africa* (1961), p. 885

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I am afraid that for years to come India would be engaged in passing legislation in order to raise the downtrodden, the fallen, from the mire into which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by the landlords, by the so-called higher classes, and then, subsequently and scientifically, by the British rulers. If we are to lift these people from the mire, then it would be the bounden duty of the National Government of India, in order to set its house in order, continually

to give preference to these people and even free them from the burdens under which they are being crushed. And, if the landlords, zamindars, moneyed men and those who are today enjoying privileges – I do not care whether they are Europeans or Indians – if they find that they are discriminated against, I shall sympathize with them, but I will not be able to help them, even if I could possibly do so, because I would seek their assistance in that process, and without their assistance it would not be possible to raise these people out of the mire.

It will, therefore, be a battle between the haves and the have-nots; and if that is what is feared, I am afraid the National Government will not be able to come into being if all these classes hold the pistol at the heads of the dumb millions and say: 'You shall not have a government of your own unless you guarantee our possessions and our rights.'

- *Nation's Voice* (1958), pp. 51-52

## **SECTION VII : OFFICE ACCEPTANCE AND THE TASK BEFORE MINISTERS**

## CHAPTER 21

### CONGRESS MINISTRIES

Since the Working Committee and other Congressmen have allowed themselves to be influenced by my opinion On the office issue, it is perhaps due to the public for me to explain my conception of office acceptance and what is possible to do in terms of the Congress election manifesto. I need offer no apology for crossing the self-imposed limit in the conduct of the *Harijan*. The reason is obvious. The Government of India Act is universally regarded as wholly unsatisfactory for achieving India's freedom. But it is possible to construe it as an attempt, however limited and feeble, to replace the rule of the sword by the rule of the majority. The creation of the big electorate of three crores of men and women and the placing of wide powers in their hands cannot be described by any other name. Underlying it is the hope that what has been imposed upon us we shall get to like, i.e. we shall really regard our exploitation as a blessing in the end. The hope may be frustrated if the representatives of the thirty million voters have a faith of their own and are intelligent enough to use the powers (including the holding of offices) placed in their hands for the purpose of thwarting the assumed intention of the framers of the Act. And this can be easily done by lawfully using the act in a manner not expected by them and by refraining from using it in the way intended by them.

Thus the ministries may enforce immediate prohibition by making education self-supporting instead of paying for it from the liquor revenue. This may appear a startling proposition, but I hold it perfectly feasible and eminently reasonable. The jails may be turned into reformatories and workshops. They should be self-supporting and educational instead of being spending and punitive departments. In accordance with the Irwin-Gandhi Pact, of which only the salt clause remains still alive, salt should be free for the poor man, but it is not; it can now be free in Congress Provinces at least. All purchases of cloth should be in khadi. The attention should now be devoted more to the villages and the peasantry than to the cities. These are but illustrations taken at

random. They are perfectly lawful, and yet not one of them has as yet even been attempted.

Then the personal behaviour of Ministers. How will Congress Ministers discharge themselves? Their Chief, the President of the Congress, travels third class. Will they travel first? The President is satisfied with a coarse khadi *dhoti*; *kurta* and waist coat. Will the Ministers require the Western style and expenditure on the Western scale? Congressmen have for the past seventeen years disciplined themselves in rigorous simplicity. The nation will expect the Ministers to introduce that simplicity in the administration of their provinces. They will not be ashamed of it, they will be proud of it. We are the poorest nation on earth, many millions living in semi-starvation. Its representatives dare not live in a style and manner out of all correspondence with their electors. The Englishmen coming as conquerors and rulers set up a standard of living which took no account whatsoever of the helpless conquered. If the Ministers will simply refrain from copying the Governors and the secured Civil Service, they will have shown the marked contrast that exists between the Congress mentality and theirs. Truly, there can be no partnership between them and us even as there can be none between a giant and a dwarf.

Lest Congressmen should think that they have a monopoly of simplicity and that they erred in 1920 in doing away with the trousers and the chair, let me cite the examples of Aboobakar and Omar. Rama and Krishna are prehistoric names. I may not use these names as examples. History tells us of Pratap and Shivaji living in uttermost simplicity. But opinion may be divided as to what they did when they had power. There is no division of opinion about the Prophet, Aboobakar and Omar. They had the riches of the world at their feet. It will be difficult to find a historical parallel to match their rigorous life. Omar would not brook the idea of his lieutenants in distant provinces using anything but coarse cloth and coarse flour. The Congress Ministers, if they will retain the simplicity and economy they have inherited since 1920, will save thousands of rupees, will give hope to the poor and probably change the tone of the Services. It is hardly necessary for me to point out that simplicity does not mean shoddiness. There is a beauty and an art in simplicity which he who runs

may see. It does not require money to be neat, clean and dignified. Pomp and pageantry are often synonymous with vulgarity.

This unostentatious work must be the prelude to demonstrating the utter insufficiency of the Act to meet the wishes of the people and the determination to end it.

The English Press has been at pains to divide India into Hindu and Muslim. The Congress majority provinces have been dubbed Hindu, the other five Muslim. That this is demonstrably false has not worried them. My great hope is that the Ministers in the six provinces will so manage them as to disarm all suspicion. They will show their Muslim colleagues that they know no distinction between Hindu, Muslim Christian or Sikh or Parsi. Nor will they know any distinction between the high caste and the low caste Hindu. They will demonstrate in every action of theirs that with them all are the sons of the soil among whom there is no one low and no one high. Poverty and climate are common to all without distinction. The major problems are identical for all of them. And whilst, so far as we can judge from actions the goal of the English system is wholly different from ours, the men and women representing the two goals belong to the same human family. They will now be thrown together as they never have been before. If the human reading that I have given to the Act is correct, the two parties meet together, each with its own history, background and goal, to convert one another. Corporations are wooden and soulless but not those who work, them or use them. If the Englishmen or Anglicized Indians can but see the Indian which is the Congress viewpoint, the battle is won by the Congress and Complete Independence will come to us without shedding a drop of blood. This is what I call the non-violent approach. It may be foolish, visionary, impractical; nevertheless, it is best that Congressmen, other Indians and Englishmen should know it. This office acceptance is not intended to work the Act anyhow. In the prosecution by the Congress of its goal of Complete Independence, it is a serious attempt on the one hand to avoid a bloody revolution and on the other to avoid mass civil disobedience on a scale hitherto not attempted. May God bless it.

- H., 17-7-'37, p. 180-81

## CHAPTER 22

### THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE

It is necessary to contemplate for a moment the fundamental difference between the old and the new order. In order fully to realize it we must try to forget for the moment the crushing limitations of the Act. Seeing that the Congress has gone to the farthest limit and has accepted office, let every Congressman note the power it has taken. Whereas formerly the Ministers were amenable to the control of the Governors, now they are under the control of the Congress. They are responsible to the Congress. They owe their status to the Congress. The Governors and the Civil Service though irremovable are yet answerable to the Ministers. The Ministers have effective control over them up to a point. That point enables them to consolidate the power of the Congress i.e. the people. The Ministers have the whip hand so long as they act within the four corners of the Act, no matter how distasteful their actions may be to the Governors. It will be found upon examination that so long as the people remain non-violent, the Congress Ministers have enough freedom of action for national growth.

For effective use of this power, the people have to give hearty co-operation to the Congress and their Ministers. If the latter do wrong or they neglect their duty, it is open to any person to complain to the Secretary of the A.-I.C.C. and seek redress. But no one may take the law into his own hands.

Congressmen should also realize that there is no other political party in the field to question the authority of the Congress. For, the other parties have never penetrated the villages. And that is not a work which can be done in a day. So far, therefore, as I can see a vast opportunity is at the disposal of the Ministers in terms of the Congress objective of Complete Independency, if only they are *honest, selfless, industrious, vigilant, and solicitous* for the true welfare of the starving millions. No doubt, there is great validity in the argument that the Act has left the Ministers no money to spend for the nation-building departments. But this is largely an illusion. I believe with Sir Daniel



Hamilton that labour, not metal is real money. Labour backed by paper is as good as, if not better than, paper backed by labour. Here are the sentiments of an English financier who has held high office in India: "The worst legacy we have left to India is a high- grade Service. What has been done cannot be undone. I should now start something independent. Whatever is being done today with 'money motive' should in future be based on 'service motive'. Why should teachers and doctors be paid high salaries? Why cannot most of the work be done on a co-operative basis? Why should you worry about capital when there are seven hundred million hands to toil? If things are done on a co-operative basis, which in other words is modified socialism, money would not be needed, at least not in large quantity." I find this verified in little Segaon. The four hundred adults of Segaon can easily put ten thousand rupees annually into their pockets if only they would work as I ask them. But they won't. They lack co-operation, they do not know the art of intelligent labour, they refuse to learn anything new. Untouchability blocks the way. If someone presented them with one lac of rupees, they would not turn it to account. They are not responsible for this state of affairs. We the middle class are. What is true of Segaon is true of other villages. They will respond by patient effort as they are responding in Segaon though ever so slowly. The State, however, can do much in this direction without having to spend a single pie extra. The State officials can be utilized for serving the people instead of harassing them. The villagers may not be coerced into doing anything. They can be educated to do things which enrich them morally, mentally, physically and economically.

- H., 24-7-'37, p. 188

## CHAPTER 23

### MINISTERSHIPS NOT PRIZES

I have been receiving several letters from different provinces protesting against the exclusion of their or their \* friends' names from ministerships and asking me to intervene. I do not think there is a single province from which such complaints have not been received. In some such letters dire results including communal riots have been threatened, if the excluded person's claims are not considered.

In the first instance let me say that I have not intervened in any single case in the selection of ministers.

I have no right, having completely withdrawn from the Congress, to intervene in such matters, even if I had the wish which I have not. My participation in Congress affairs is confined to tendering advice on the issues involved in office acceptance and on the policies to be pursued in the prosecution of our march to the goal of Complete Independence.

But it seems to me that my numerous correspondents who have been writing voluminously think that ministerships are prizes for past services and that certain Congressmen can demand their inclusion. I venture to suggest to them that ministerships are avenues to service which those who are called to it should render cheerfully and to the best of their ability. There can, therefore, never be a scramble for these offices. It would be decidedly wrong to create ministerships for the sake of conciliating interests. If I were a Prime Minister and I was pestered with such claims, I should tell my electors to choose another leader. These offices have to be held lightly, not tightly. They are or should be crowns of thorns, never of renown. Offices have been taken in order to see if they enable us to quicken the pace at which we are moving towards our goal. It would be tragic if self-seekers or misguided zealots were allowed to impede the progress by imposing themselves on Prime Ministers. If it was necessary to have assurances from those who have ultimately to clothe Ministers with authority, it is doubly necessary to have assurances of understanding, of loyalty beyond

suspicion and of willing obedience to discipline. The grim fight in which the country is engaged cannot be won if Congressmen do not show in their conduct a sufficient measure of selflessness, discipline, and faith in the means enunciated by the Congress for the attainment of the goal.

Thanks to the Karachi resolution, ministerships under the Congress aegis have no pecuniary attraction. I must say in parenthesis that considering Rs. 500/- as if it was the minimum instead of the maximum was a mistake. Rs. 500/- was the last limit. Had we not got used to the excessive scale of salaries imposed upon the country, we would have regarded Rs. 500/- to be excessive. The Congress scale has been generally, for the past seventeen years at least, Rs. 75/- per month. In its three great constructive all-India departments, national education, khadi and village industries, the authorized scale has been Rs. 75/-. These departments contain men who are good enough, so far as ability is concerned, any day to be Ministers. They have distinguished educationists, lawyers, chemists, and merchants, who if they were so minded, could easily command over Rs. 500/- per month. Why should the fact of becoming a Minister make the great difference we see? But the die is perhaps cast. My remarks represent my personal opinion. I have too high a regard for the Prime Ministers to question their judgment and wisdom. No doubt they thought that this was the best in the circumstances facing them. The point I wish to make, in answer to my correspondents, is that these offices have not been taken in view of the emoluments they offer.

And then they have to be given to those only in the party who are best able to discharge the duty to which they are called.

And, lastly, the acid test is that the choice must commend itself to the members of the party to whom the Prime Ministers owe their nomination. No Prime Minister can for one moment impose a man or woman of his choice on the party. He is Chief because he enjoys the full confidence of his party as to ability, knowledge of persons, and the other qualities that mark out one for leadership.

- H., 7-8-'37, p. 204

## CHAPTER 24

### THE IMPLICATIONS

I have not hesitated to express my opinion that the salaries that the Congress Ministers have voted for themselves are much too high for the standard that should govern us in this the poorest country in the world. In the hurried note\* that Prof. K. T. Shah has sent me and which the reader will find in the footnote below, India's average per capita income will be found to be £4 against £50 of Great Britain. Unfortunately for us we have to bear yet a while the burden of the British inheritance, and in spite of the best effort we fail to achieve the ideal standard. The salaries and the allowances are now a settled fact. The question now is, will the Ministers, their Secretaries and the members work-so hard as to deserve the emoluments they will receive? Will the members become whole-time workers for the nation and give a faithful account of the services they may render? Let us not make the mistake of imagining that the things are what we wish them to be or what they should be.

#### \* Comparative Figures

Attached is a list of salaries (annual) and allowances paid to some of the leading public officials of the world. (United Kingdom : £ 8000, U.S.A. : £ 18,000, France : £ 28,000, Australia : £ 8,000, Canada : £ 10,000, India : £ 1,30,000.) The figures by themselves will not tell the whole tale, since they cannot show what a burden these salaries are on the average wealth of the country. I cannot give the figures correctly, or up-to-date; but speaking from memory, and approximately correctly,. I should say the present per capita wealth of the countries named below would be about the figure mentioned against each, i.e.,

United Kingdom	£	50	p.a.
U.S.A.	„	100	„
France	„	40	„
Australia	„	70	„
Canada	„	75	„
India	„	4	„ at most at present prices

Even Japan stands much higher than India.—K. T. Shah. (*Harijan*, 21-8-'37, p 218).

And it is not enough that the Ministers live simply and work hard. They have to see to it that the departments they control also respond. Thus justice should become cheap and expeditious. Today it is the luxury of the rich and the joy of the gambler. The police should be friends of the people instead of being their dread. Education should be so revolutionized as to answer the wants of the poorest villager instead of answering those of an imperial exploiter.

All those who were imprisoned for political offences even of a violent nature will shortly find themselves free if the Ministers can give them the freedom. This is a phenomenon not to be looked at lightly. Does it mean passport to violence? Certainly not in terms of the Congress creed of non-violence. The Congress abhors individual violence in a far more real sense than the Government it replaces. It seeks to meet the violence of individuals not with the organized violence called punishment but with non-violence in the shape of friendly approach to the erring individuals and through the cultivation of sound public opinion against any form of violence. Its methods are preventive, not punitive. In other words, the Congress will rule not through the police backed by the military but through the moral authority based upon the greatest goodwill of the people. It will rule not in virtue of authority derived from a superior armed power but in virtue of the service of the people whom it seeks to represent in every one of its actions.

Ban on all prohibited literature is being removed. Now some of the books banned will be found, I suppose, to inculcate violence and spread obscenity, or hatred among different classes or sects. The Congress rule does not mean licence to violence or obscenity or fomenting of hatred. Again, the Congress will rely upon the unstinted support of enlightened public opinion in dealing with objectionable literature. The Ministers who may find violence, hatred or obscenity spreading in their provinces will look to the Congress organizations and ultimately the Working Committee for active and efficient help before they resort to the processes of the criminal law and all it means. Indeed, the triumph of the Congress will be measured by the success it achieves in render-

ing the police and the military practically idle. And it will fail utterly if it has to face crises that render the use of the police and the military inevitable. The best and the only effective way to wreck the existing constitution is for the Congress to prove conclusively that it can rule without the aid of the military and with the least possible assistance of the police who may well have some new and friendly designation given to them as a correspondent suggests.

- *H.*, 21-8-'37, p. 220

## CHAPTER 25

### MY MEANING OF OFFICE ACCEPTANCE

Shri Shankarrao Deo writes:

"In your note 'Not Instrument of Instructions' in the last *Harijan* (21-8-'37), you say in the second paragraph, 'For me office acceptance has a special meaning even in terms of the Congress manifesto and resolutions. It would be wrong if I did not put before the Ministers and the public my meaning of office acceptance.' As I have understood you, you are for office acceptance for serving the masses and consolidating the Congress position through constructive programme. But I think you should explain in greater detail your meaning of office acceptance."

Rightly or wrongly, since 1920 the Congress- minded millions have firmly held the view that the British domination of India has been on the whole a curse. It has been as much sustained by British arms as it has been through the legislatures, distribution of titles, the law courts, the educational institutions, the financial policy, and the like. The Congress came to the conclusion that the guns should not be feared, but that the organized violence, of which the British guns were a naked emblem, should be met by the organized non-violence of the people, and the legislatures and the rest by non- co-operating with them. There was a strong and effective positive side to the foregoing plan of non-co-operation which became known as the constructive programme. The nation succeeded to the exact extent of its success in the programme of action laid down in 1920.

Now this policy has never changed; not even the terms have been revoked by the Congress. In my opinion all the resolutions since passed by the Congress are not a repudiation but a fulfillment of the original, so long as the mentality behind all of them remains the same as in 1920.

The corner-stone of the policy of 1920 was organized national non-violence. The British system was wooden, even satanic; not so the men and women behind the system. Our non-violence, therefore, meant that we were out to convert the administrators of the system, not to destroy them; the conversion

may or may not be willing. If, notwithstanding their desire to the contrary, they saw that their guns and everything they had created for the consolidation of their authority were useless because of our non-use of them, they could not do otherwise than bow to the inevitable and either retire from the scene, or remain on our terms, i.e. as friends to co-operate with us, not as rulers to impose their will upon us.

If Congressmen have entered the legislatures and have accepted office with that mentality, and if the British administrators tolerate Congress Ministers indefinitely, the Congress will be on a fair way to wreck the Act and to achieve Complete Independence. For an indefinite prolongation of the Ministries on the terms mentioned by me means an ever-increasing power of the Congress till it becomes irresistible and is able to have its way all along the line. The first indispensable condition of the attainment of such a consummation means? willing exercise of non-violence by the whole mass of the people. That means perfect communal co-operation and friendship, the eradication of untouchability, willing restraint of the addicts to the drink and opium habits, the social enfranchisement of women, the progressive amelioration of the toiling millions in the villages, free and compulsory primary education— not in the name as it is to-day, but in reality, as I have ventured to adumbrate — the gradual eradication of superstition of proved harmfulness, through adult mass education, a complete overhauling of the system of higher education so as to answer the wants of the millions instead of the few middle class people, a radical change in the legal machinery so as to make justice pure and inexpensive, conversion of jails into reformatories in which detention would be not a course of punishment but a complete course of the education of those miscalled convicts but who are in fact temporarily deranged.

This is not conceived as a terribly long plan of action. Every one of the items suggested by me can be put into motion to-day, without let or hindrance, if we have the will.

I had not studied the Act when I advised office acceptance. I have since been studying *Provincial Autonomy* by Prof. K.T. Shah. It is an energetic but true



indictment of the Act from the orthodox standpoint. But the three months' self-denial of the Congress has changed the atmosphere. I see nothing in the Act to prevent the Congress Ministers from undertaking the programme suggested by me. The special powers and safeguards come into play only when there is violence in the country, or a clash between minorities and the so-called majority community, which is another word for violence.

I detect in the Act a profound distrust of the nation's capacity to rule itself, running through every Section, and an inevitable desire to perpetuate British rule, but at the same time a bold experiment of wooing the masses to the British side, and, failing that, a resignation to their will to reject British domination. The Congress has gone in to convert these missionaries. And I have not a shadow of doubt that if the Congress is true to the spirit of non-violence, non-co-operation and self-purification, it will succeed in its mission.

- H. 4-9-'37, p. 236

## CHAPTER 26

### CRITICISM ANSWERED

My article on Congress Ministries (17-7-'37 - Chapter 21) has attracted attention and evoked criticism. The latter demands an answer.

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#### Prohibition

How can total prohibition be brought about immediately if at all? By 'immediately' I mean an immediate planned declaration bringing about total prohibition not later than three years from 14th July 1937, the date of the taking of office by the first Congress Ministry. I imagine that it is quite possible to bring it about in two years. But not being aware of administrative difficulties I put down three years. I count loss of this revenue as of no account whatsoever. Prohibition will remain a far cry, if the Congress is to count the cost in a matter of first class national importance.

Let it be remembered that this drink and drug revenue is a form of extremely degrading taxation. All taxation to be healthy must return tenfold to the taxpayer in the form of necessary services. Excise makes people pay for their own corruption, moral, mental and physical. It falls like a dead weight on those who are least able to bear it. The revenue is largely derived, I believe, from industrial labour which together with field labour the Congress almost exclusively represents.

The loss of revenue is only apparent. Removal of this degrading tax enables the drinker, i.e. the taxpayer to earn and spend better. Apart, therefore, from the tremendous gain, it means a substantial economic gain, to the nation.

I put this prohibition in the forefront because its result is immediate; Congressmen and especially women have bled for it; national prestige will rise in a manner it cannot by any single act that I can conceive, and the other five provinces are highly likely to follow the six. The Mussalman non-Congress Prime Ministers are equally interested in seeing India sober rather than drunk.

The cry of great expenditure in preventing illicit distillation is thoughtless where it is not hypocritical. India is not America. The American example is a hindrance rather than a help to us. In America drinking carries no shame with it. It is the fashion there to drink. It reflects the greatest credit on the determined minority in America that by sheer force of its moral weight it was able to carry through the prohibition measure however short-lived it was. I do not regard that experiment to have been a failure. I do not despair of America once more returning to it with still greater fervour and better experience in dealing with it. It may be that if India carries out prohibition it will hasten the advent of prohibition in America. In no part of the world is prohibition as easy to carry out as in India for with us it is only a minority that drinks. Drinking is generally considered disrespectful. And there are millions, I believe, who have never known what drink is.

But why should prevention of illicit distillation cost any more than prevention of other crimes? I should make illicit distillation heavily punishable and think no more about it. Some of it will go on perhaps till doomsday as thieving will. I would not set up a special agency to pry into illicit distilleries. But I would punish anyone found drunk though not disorderly (in the legal sense) in streets or other public places with a substantial fine or alternatively with indeterminate imprisonment to end when the erring one has earned his or her keep.

This, however, is the negative part. Voluntary organizations especially manned by women will work in the labour areas. They will visit those who are addicted to drink and try to wean them from the habit. Employers of labour will be expected by law to provide cheap, healthy refreshment, reading and entertainment rooms where the working men can go and find shelter, knowledge, health-giving food and drink and innocent fun.

Thus prohibition means a type of adult education of the nation and not merely a closing down of grog shops.

Prohibition should begin by preventing any new shop from being licensed and closing some that are in danger of becoming a nuisance to the public. How far

the latter is possible without having to pay heavy compensation I do not know. In any case, generally, licenses that lapse should not be renewed. No new shops should be opened on any account. Whatever immediately is possible in law should be done without a moment's thought so far as the revenue is concerned.

But what is the meaning or extent of total prohibition? Total prohibition is prohibition against sales of intoxicating drinks and drugs, except under medical prescription by a practitioner licensed for the purpose and to be purchasable only at Government depots maintained therefore. Foreign liquors in prescribed quantity may be imported for the use of Europeans who cannot or will not do without their drink. These will also be sold in bottles in select areas and under authorized certificates. Hotels and restaurants will cease to sell intoxicating drinks.

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### The Peasantry

But what about relief to the peasantry which is oppressed by excessive taxation, rack-renting, illegal exactions, indebtedness which can never be fully discharged, illiteracy, superstition and disease, peculiarly due to pauperism? Of course it comes first in terms of numbers and economic distress. But the relief of the peasantry is an elaborate programme and does not admit of wholesale treatment. And no Congress ministry that does not handle this universal problem can exist for ten days. Every Congressman is instinctively interested, if largely academically, in this problem. He has inherited the legacy from the birth of the Congress. The distress of the peasantry may be said to be the *raison d'etre* of the Congress. There was and is no fear of this subject being neglected. I fear the same cannot be said of prohibition. It became an integral part of the Congress programme only in 1920. In my opinion the Congress, now that it is in power, will put itself morally right only by once for all courageously and drastically dealing with this devastating evil.

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## Education

How to solve the problem of education is the problem unfortunately mixed up with the disappearance of the drink revenues. No doubt there are ways and means of raising fresh taxation. Professors Shah and Khambatta have shown that even this poor country is capable of raising fresh taxation. Riches have not yet been sufficiently taxed. In this of all countries in the world possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity. Therefore the maximum limit of taxation of riches beyond a certain margin can never be reached. In England, I understand, they have already gone as far as 70% of the earnings beyond a prescribed figure. There is no reason why India should not go to a much higher figure. Why should there not be death duties? Those sons of millionaires who are of age and yet inherit their parents' wealth, are losers for the very inheritance. The nation "thus becomes a double loser. For the inheritance should rightly belong to the nation. And the nation loses again in that the full faculties of the heirs are not drawn out, being crushed under the load of riches. That death duties cannot be imposed by provincial governments does not affect my argument.

But as a nation we are so backward in education that we cannot hope to fulfill our obligations to the nation in this respect in a given time during this generation, if the programme is to depend on money. I have, therefore, made bold, even at the risk of losing all reputation for constructive ability, to suggest that education should be self-supporting.

. . . The Ministers have the organizing and organized ability of the civil service at their disposal to execute their policy. The Services have learnt the art of reducing to practice the policies laid down for them even by capricious Governors and Viceroys. Let the Ministers lay down a well-conceived but determined policy, and let the Services redeem the promise made on their behalf and prove worthy of the salt they eat.

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## The Jails

My suggestion to turn jails into reformatories to make them self-supporting has not excited much criticism. Only one remark I have noticed. If they turn out marketable goods, I am told, they will unfairly compete with the open market. There is no substance in the remark. But I anticipated it in 1922 when I was a prisoner in Yeravda. I discussed my plan with the then Home Member, the then Inspector General of Prisons, and two Superintendents who were in charge of the prison in succession. Not one of them cavilled at my suggestion. The then Home Member was even enthusiastic about it and wanted me to put my scheme in writing, if he could obtain the permission from the Governor. But His Excellency would not hear of a prisoner making suggestions regarding jail administration! And so my scheme never saw the light of day. But the author believes in its soundness to-day just as much as when he first made it. This was the plan: All industries that were not paying should be stopped. All the jails should be turned into hand-spinning and hand-weaving institutions. They should include (wherever possible) cotton-growing to producing the finest cloth. I suggest that almost every facility for this purpose already exists in the prisons. Only the will has to be there. Prisoners must be treated as defectives, not criminals to be looked down upon. Warders should cease to be the terrors of the prisoners, but the jail officials should be their friends and instructors. The one indispensable condition is that the State should buy all the khadi that may be turned out by the prisons at cost price. And if there is a surplus, the public may get it at a trifling higher price to cover the expense of running a sales depot. If my suggestion is adopted, the jails will be linked to the villages and they will spread to them the message of khadi and discharged prisoners may become model citizens of the State.

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## Salt

I am reminded that salt being a Central subject, the poor Ministers cannot do anything. I should be painfully surprised if they cannot. The Central Government has to operate in provincial territories. Provincial Governments are

bound to protect people within their jurisdiction against being dealt with unjustly even by the Centre. And the Governors are bound to back the protests of their Ministers against unjust dealings with the people of their respective provinces. If the Ministers are on the alert, there should be no difficulty in the poor villagers helping themselves to the salt without undue interference on behalf of the Central authority. I have no fear of such undue interference.

In conclusion I should like to add that whatever I have said about Prohibition, Education and Jails, is presented merely for the consideration of Congress Ministers and the interested public. I may not withhold from the public the views which – however strange, visionary or unpractical they may appear to critics – I have held tenaciously for long.

- H., 31-7-'37, pp. 196- 98

## CHAPTER 27

### FOURFOLD RESPONSIBILITY OF CONGRESS MINISTERS

Congress Ministers have a fourfold responsibility. As an individual, a Minister is primarily responsible to his constituents. If he is satisfied that he no longer enjoys their confidence or that he has changed the views for which he was elected, he resigns. Collectively the Ministers are responsible to the majority of the legislators who, by a no-confidence vote or similar means, may any moment drive them out of office. But a Congress Minister owes his position and responsibility to his Provincial Congress Committee and the A.I.C.C. also. So long as all these four bodies act in co-ordination, Ministers have smooth sailing in the discharge of their duty.

The recent meeting of the A.-I.C.C. showed, however, that some of its members were not at all in accord with the Congress Ministries, specially that of C. Rajagopalachari, the Prime Minister of Madras. Healthy, well-informed, balanced criticism is the ozone of public life. A most democratic Minister is likely to go wrong without ceaseless watch from the public. But the resolution moved in the A.-I.G.G. criticizing the Congress Ministries, and still more the speeches, were wide of the mark. The critics had not cared to study the facts. They had not before them G. Rajagopalachari's reply. They knew that he was most eager to come and answer his critics. But severe illness prevented him from coming. The critics owed it to their representative that they should postpone the consideration of the resolution. Let them study and take to heart what Jawaharlal Nehru has said in his elaborate statement on the matter. I am convinced that in their action the critics departed from truth and nonviolence. If they had carried the A.-I.G.G. with them, the Madras Ministers at least would have resigned, although they seemingly enjoy the full confidence of the majority of the legislators. Surely, that would not have been a desirable result.

Much more offensive, in my opinion, was the Mysore resolution; and the pity of it is that it was carried with practically nobody to speak out for truth. I hold no brief for Mysore. There are many things I would like the Maharaja to reform.



But the Congress policy is to give even an opponent his due. In my opinion the Mysore resolution was ultra vires of the resolution of non-interference. This, so far as I am aware, has never been repealed. On merits the A.-I.C.C. was not out to deal with the State as a whole. It was dealing only with the policy of repression. The resolution did not set forth the correct state of affairs, and the speeches were full of passion and without regard to the facts of the case. The A.-I.C.C. should have appointed, if it was so minded, a committee even of one person to ascertain the facts before proceeding to pronounce judgment. The least it can do in such matters, if it has any regard for truth and non-violence, is first to let the Working Committee to pronounce its judgment on them and then, if necessary, review them in a judicial manner. I have purposely refrained in the case of either resolution from going into details to prove my submission. I am saving my limited energy and am leaving the matter also to the good sense of the members of the A.-I.C.C. which has since 1920 assumed a unique importance and doubly so after the office acceptance resolution.

- H., 13-11-'37, p. 332

## CHAPTER 28

### PROHIBITION

#### I. Prohibition and Revenue

The cry of prohibition has been always fashionable. In 1920, it became one of the chief constructive items of the Congress. The Congress, therefore, could not but go in for total prohibition immediately it came into power in any part of India. The Ministers had to have the courage to sacrifice nearly rupees eleven crores of revenue in the six provinces. The Working Committee has taken the risk for the sake of redeeming its pledge and conserving the moral and material welfare of those who are addicted to intoxicants and narcotics. . . .

I know that many are sceptical about prohibition being achieved. They think that the financial lure will be too strong for them to resist. They argue that the addicts will procure their drinks and drugs anyhow, and that when the Ministers discover that prohibition means mere loss of revenue without any appreciable diminution in the consumption, though illicit, of drinks and drugs, they will revert to the tainted revenue and the then state will be worse than the present. . . .

Now as to how to make up for the loss of revenue in some provinces to the extent of one-third? I have unhesitatingly suggested cutting out the educational budget for which purpose mainly the excise revenue is used. I still maintain that education can be made self-supporting..... Fresh sources of revenue have to be tapped. Death duties, tax on tobacco including *bidis* have already been given as some suggestions. If these are considered impossible of immediate accomplishment, short-term loans may be devised to tide over the deficit; and if even that fails, the Central Government should be approached to curtail the military budget and give the provinces the proportionate grant. The demand would be irresistible especially if it is demonstrated by the Provincial Governments that they do not need the military, at any rate for their internal peace and tranquility.

- H., 28-8-'37, pp. 228

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## II. Prohibition and Budgets

One finds Ministers drawing up prohibition programmes in a proper *bania* spirit. They think of their deficits. I wonder what they will do if all the wine-bibbers and opium-eaters suddenly give up their drinks and drugs! They will manage somehow, it may be answered. Why will they not do so voluntarily? Surely, merit lies in doing the right thing voluntarily, not compulsorily! The Bihar Government did not come to a standstill, when the earthquake swallowed more than their annual income. What do the governments all over India do, when famines and floods ruin people and materially reduce the State revenue? I maintain that the Congress Governments break the spirit, if not the letter, of their pledge, when they delay prohibition for the sake of revenue.

They can and must make an honest attempt to raise money by fresh taxation. The drink curse is most prevalent in urban areas. It is in these areas that they can resort to fresh taxation. Prohibition gives direct help to the employers of labour. They can surely afford to bear the loss of revenue caused by prohibition. The few months of prohibition in Ahmedabad have put money into the pockets both of the employers and the labourers. There is no reason whatsoever why the employers should not pay for this inestimable service. Many similar sources of revenue can easily be thought of.

I have not hesitated to suggest a grant or at least a loan without interest from the Government of India where it can be proved that the raising of additional revenue is not a practical proposition.

- H., 24-12-'38, p. 396

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## III. Prohibition and the Finance Minister

Prohibition in Bombay will mean a big fall in revenue. The Finance Minister has to balance his budget. He has to find money. He has to levy new taxes. Let there be no complaint from those who will have to bear the burden. Dislike of taxes, be they ever so reasonable, is proverbial. I understand that the Finance

Minister has met all just objections. Why should those who will have to bear the burden not feel a pride in being given the privilege of contributing to the great experiment? It will be a proud day for Bombay if prohibition is ushered in amid the rejoicings of the whole population. Let it be remembered that this prohibition is not a super- imposition. It is being introduced by governments that are responsible to the people. It has been a plank in the national programme since 1920. It is coming, therefore, in due fulfillment of the national will definitely expressed nearly twenty years ago.

- H., 1-4-'39, p. 69

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#### **IV. Ministers and Prohibition**

The Ministers' duty is plain. They have to pursue their programme undeterred by any opposition, if they have faith in it. Prohibition is the greatest moral reform in the Congress programme. Previous governments too had given their lip assent to it, but having been irresponsible they had neither the courage nor the will to carry it out. They were not willing to forego revenue which they could get without effort. They did not stay to examine its tainted source. The Congress Governments have the backing of public opinion. The Working Committee after very careful deliberation issued its mandate on prohibition. The Ministers have all over taken it up to the best of their ability. The manner of execution was naturally left to the respective ministries. The Bombay Ministers have been courageously pursuing their programme with every prospect of success. Theirs is a difficult position. They were bound to tackle Bombay some day or other. They would be faced with the same opposition as to-day from the interests directly affected by the prohibition policy. It is not open to any Congressman to embarrass the Ministers.

- H., 22-7-'39, p. 207

## CHAPTER 29

### KHADI

#### I. Ministers and Khadi

It appears we have been ridiculing the spinning wheel. For August 15 none has thought of working the wheel. If I could have my way, the Ministers would be made to spin as a sacrificial rite in the same Hall ceremoniously and pray before the oath of office is administered to them. Then only should the oath-taking follow.

- B.P.D., p. 440

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I recognize that very few Congressmen have this living faith in khadi. The Ministers are Congressmen. They derive their inspiration from their surroundings. If they had a living faith in khadi, they could do a great deal to popularize it.

I may say what the Congress Ministers and, for that matter, all the Ministers, khadi workers and Congressmen can and should do.

There may be a Minister whose sole business would be to look after khadi and village industries. There should, therefore, be a department for this purpose. The other departments will co-operate. Thus the Agricultural Department will frame a scheme of decentralization of cotton production, survey the land suitable for cotton production for village use and find out how much cotton will be required for its province. It will even stock cotton at suitable centres for distribution. The Stores Department will make purchases of khadi available in the province and give orders for its cloth requirements. The Technical Departments will tax themselves to devise better wheels and other instruments of hand production. All these departments will keep in constant touch with the A.-I.S.A. and the A.-I.V.I.A. using them as their experts.

The Revenue Minister will devise means of protecting khadi against mill competition.

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## **II. A Minister's Dream**

"If you can give a message or direction to the Provincial Governments and the people to see that spinning and weaving are made compulsory for boys and girls in all the schools, I have no doubt that within a short time the children of schools will be wearing cloth made by themselves. This will be the first step. I have not lost faith in your ideals and I am hoping to see that each home will make its own cloth and each village will become self-sufficient not only with regard to cloth but also every other article of necessity under your village industries scheme and education scheme. I believe with you that real Swaraj in this land can be established only when the budget of the villager is balanced alongside of the budget of the Provincial Government or that of the Government of India which is brought about by artificial adjustments and manipulations generally."

Thus writes a Congress Minister. If I had the powers of an autocrat, I would certainly make hand-spinning compulsory in at least the primary schools. A Minister who has the faith should do so. There are several useless things made compulsory in our schools. Why should not this most useful art be made compulsory? But nothing can be made compulsory in a democratic system, if it is not widely popular. Thus compulsion in democracy is only so called. It removes laziness; it does not force the will. Such compulsion is an educative process. I suggest a milder preliminary course. Let there be prizes given to the best spinner. This competition will induce many if not all to take part in it. No plan will succeed if the schoolmasters themselves have no faith in it. If basic education is accepted by the Provincial Governments, hand-spinning and the like is not merely part of the curriculum, it is the vehicle of education. If basic education takes root, khadi surely becomes universal and comparatively cheap in this afflicted land of ours.

- *H., 28-4-'46, p. 104*

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### III. Ministers' Duty

It is legitimate to ask what Congress Ministers will do for khaddar and other village industries now that they are in office. I should broaden the question and apply it to all the Provincial Governments of India. Poverty is common to all the provinces and so are means of alleviation in terms of the masses. Such is the experience of both the A.-I.S.A. and the A.-I.V.I.A. A suggestion has been made that there should be a separate Minister for the work, as, for proper organization, it will occupy all the time of one Minister. I dread to make the suggestion, for we have not yet outlived the English scale of expenditure. Whether a Minister is separately appointed or not, 4 department for the work is surely necessary. In these times of scarcity of food and clothing, this department can render the greatest help. The ministers have experts at their disposal through the A.-I.S.A. and the A.-I.V.I.A. It is possible to clothe today the whole of India in khadi on the smallest outlay and in the shortest time possible. Each Provincial Government has to tell the villagers that they must manufacture their own khaddar for their own use. This brings in automatic local production and distribution. And there will undoubtedly be a surplus for the cities at least to a certain extent which, in its turn, will reduce the pressure on the local mills. The latter will then be able to take part in supplying the want of cloth in other parts of the world.

How can this result be brought about?

The governments should notify the villagers that they will be expected to manufacture khaddar for the needs of their villages within a fixed date after which no cloth will be supplied to them. The governments in their turn will supply the villagers with cotton seed or cotton wherever required, at cost price and the tools of manufacture also at cost, to be recovered in easy instalments payable in, say, five years or more. They will supply them with instructors wherever necessary and undertake to buy surplus stock of khaddar, provided that the villagers in question have their cloth requirements supplied from their own manufacture. This should do away with cloth shortage without fuss and with very little overhead charges.

The villages will be surveyed and a list prepared of things that can be manufactured locally with little or no help and which may be required for village use or for sale outside, such for instance, as *ghani*-pressed oil and cakes, burning oil prepared through *ghanis*, hand-pounded rice, *tadgud*, honey, toys, mats, hand-made paper, village soap, etc. If enough care is thus taken the villages, most of them as good as dead or dying, will hum with life and exhibit the immense possibilities they have of supplying most of their wants themselves and of the cities and towns of India.

Then there is the limitless cattle wealth of India suffering from criminal neglect. The Goseva Sangh, as yet not properly experienced, can still supply valuable aid.

Without the basic training the villagers are being starved for education. This desideratum can be supplied by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. The experiment was already commenced by Congress Governments but it was interrupted by the resignations of the Congress ministries. The thread can be easily resumed now.

- H., 28-4-'46, p. 104

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#### IV. If I Were the Minister

The talks with the Ministers concerned at Poona on 29th to 31st July (1946) on village-crafts and basic education have given rise to a lot of correspondence and private discussion. For the guidance of the Provincial Governments and others interested in the question of khadi which has naturally occasioned the bulk of the correspondence and discussion, I set forth below my thoughts on the subject.

I refer the reader to my note in the *Harijan* of 28th April last.\* My views, then expressed, remain unaltered. One thing has created a misunderstanding. Some friends have read compulsion in that note. I am sorry for the obscurity. In it I had answered the question as to what representative governments could do if they wished. I had, I hope pardonably, assumed that such governments' notices



too could not be interpreted as compulsion. For every act of a *bona fide* representative government would assume consent of the voters represented. The voters would mean the whole populace, whether registered as voters or not. With that background, I wrote that the government should notify to the villagers that mill cloth would not be supplied to the villagers after a certain fixed date, so as to enable them to wear khadi prepared by themselves.

Whatever the meaning of my article of the 28th April last, I want to state that any scheme adopted about khadi, without the willing co-operation of those concerned, must mean death to khadi as a means for attaining Swaraj. Then the taunt that khadi was a return to the darkness and slavery of the Middle Ages would be true. But I have held the contrary view. Whilst khadi under compulsion was a badge of slavery, khadi intelligently and voluntarily prepared, primarily for one's own use, was easily the badge of our freedom. Freedom is nothing if it is not all-round self-help. I, for one, would have nothing to do with khadi, if it were not a free man's privilege as well as duty.

A friendly critic asks whether khadi thus prepared could also and at the same time be for sale. Yes, if sale is its secondary use; not, if manufacture for sale is its only or even primary use. That we began with sale of khadi shows temporary necessity as well as our limited vision. Experience is a great teacher. It has taught us many things. Not the least is its primary use. But it is by no means the last. But I must leave this fascinating field of speculation and proceed definitely to answer the question put in the heading.

My first business as the Minister in charge of revival of the villages as the centre of all governmental activity, would be to find out from among the Permanent Service honest and incorruptible men capable for the work. I would put the best among them in touch with the A.-I.S.A. and the A.-I.V.I.A., creations of the Congress, and bring in a scheme for giving the village-crafts the greatest encouragement. I would stipulate, there should be- no compulsion on the villagers, that they must not slave for others and that they should be taught to help themselves and rely upon their own labour and skill for the production of articles of food, cloth and other necessities. The scheme would thus have to be

comprehensive. I would instruct my first man, therefore, to see the Hindustani Talimi Sangh and see what it has to say.

Let me assume that the scheme, thus produced, contains a clause saying that the villagers themselves declare that they would not want mill cloth, say, after one year from a fixed date, that they require cotton, wool and necessary implements and instruction, not as a gift but to be paid for on the easiest terms. The scheme provides too, that it will not apply at once to the whole of any province but only to a part to begin with. The scheme further tells one that the A.-I.S.A. will guide and assist the working of the scheme.

Being convinced of its soundness, I would give it legal form in consultation with the law department and issue a notification, fully describing the genesis of the scheme. The villagers as well as the mill owners and others would have been party to it. The notification will show clearly that it is the people's measure, though bearing the Government stamp. The Government money will be used for the benefit of the poorest villagers, making the largest return possible to the people concerned. It will, therefore, be probably the most profitable investment in which expert assistance will be voluntary and overhead charges the least item. The notification will give in detail, the whole cost to the country and the return to the people.

The only question for me as Minister is whether the A.-I.S.A. has the conviction and capacity to shoulder the burden of creating and guiding a khadi scheme to success. If it has, I would put my little barque to sea with all confidence.

- H., 1-9-'46, p. 288

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## **V. State Ownership v. Control**

The annual meeting of the A.-I.S.A. which was held on the 8th, 9th and 10th October (1946) at Harijan Colony, Kingsway, brought home the fact that with the advent of the National Government several things that were so far regarded from a theoretical plane have entered the realm of practical possibility. About 80 members participated in the proceedings. One of the questions discussed

was about the exclusion of mill cloth from certain areas and laying an embargo on the erection of new textile mills in order that mill cloth should not compete with and kill khadi. Gandhiji had suggested that in certain areas where the people are prepared to try out the experiment of self-sufficiency in cloth, the Government should prohibit the entry of mill cloth. He had also advised the Provincial Governments that if they were serious about making khadi universal, they should not erect new textile mills nor permit them to be erected. They could not spend crores on new mills and yet expect the villagers to take their khadi schemes seriously. The villager was a shrewd person. He would at once begin to suspect their *bona fides*, if they talked to him of self-sufficiency in cloth and at the same time allowed new textile mills in their province.

A member suggested that the A.-I.S.A. might pass a resolution requesting the Government to nationalize all new textile mills and the existing ones also as soon as practicable. Gandhiji demurring to the suggestion explained that they could not ask the Government to nationalize new textile mills when they were telling them that khadi and the erection of new mills could not go together. Shri T. Prakasam, the Premier of Madras had already made an announcement to the effect that no new textile mills would be erected in the Madras Presidency. They might ask for the nationalization of the existing mills but he himself preferred putting them under strict State- control to taking charge of and running them as a State concern. As a believer in non-violence he believed in trusteeship. He wanted a peaceful conversion of mill owners, so that the mill owners and their employees would all come under social control voluntarily. That meant that though, for instance, X might continue to be the legal owner, he would Only take such commission out of the profits for himself as was warranted by his services and sanctioned by the people. The real owners would be the labourers in the mills. In one of the Tata concerns the labourers were reported to have become profit-sharers. Shri J. R. D. Tata's speech in that connection was worthy of perusal. He (Gandhiji) considered such solution to be the best. Several mill owners had assured him that they were ready to co-operate in am such scheme, if required, and would prevent further. expansion of their textile mills. He deprecated the idea of joint control of the mill

industry by the Government, the A.-I.S.A. and the mill owners. "Our job is not to run mills but to ply the little wheel by the hand. Why should we spend time in discussing a thing which lies outside our sphere of action. I would not shed a single tear if all the mills were to close. If mills flourish, khadi must die. It might still function as a supplementary occupation for the relief of the poor. But for that you do not need a big organization like the Charkha Sangh." He would,' he concluded, be perfectly satisfied if the State exercised control over the textile mills in consultation with them and so far as possible according to their advice.

- H., 20-10-'46, p. 365

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## VI. Hand-spun v. Mill Cloth

The Premier of Madras has fallen foul of the big- capitalist interests such as the Chamber of Commerce and even some Congressmen. I have had cuttings sent to me from the Madras Press. I am sorry to say that the criticism seems to me to be interested and ignorant.

My name has been dragged in the controversy. That I sponsor the Premier's scheme should not affect a dispassionate discussion of the very simple problem.

The simple question is merely this: Can khadi become universal in Madras if encouragement is given by the Madras Government to new mills being erected or old ones being so expanded as to enable them to double production ? Are the villagers expected to be so simple as not to understand that it would be merely playing with khadi, if mill cloth heavily aided is to be dumped down in their midst, probably at a rate cheaper even than cotton required to weave a particular length of calico ? This happened when Japan sent her calico to India.

The Madras Scheme is undoubtedly meant to utilize a part of the idle hours of the villagers for spinning sufficient yarn to clothe themselves. Is it chimerical to induce and expect the people to utilize their idle hours to do useful, national, honest labour?

It will be time to declaim against the Madras Government when there is a feasible scheme to find useful and more remunerative employment for all who need work. It is hardly an honourable pastime to dismiss from consideration honest servants of the nation by dubbing them idealists, dreamers, fanatics and faddists.

Let not capitalists and other entrenched personages range themselves against the poor villagers and prevent them from bettering their hard lot by dignified labour.

The great flaw about new mills in the Madras scheme was detected by me. It was when the Textile Commissioner was convinced of the absurdity of the two things running side by side and the feasibility of the scheme as envisaged by the A.-I.S.A. that he ventured to recommend it to the Madras Government. His reputation will be at stake if it is impracticable or unworkable, not the critics.

This is work for democracy by a democratic Government.

Hence the scheme must be popular at least where it is to be tried.

It must not be one man's scheme but the whole Government's.

It must have the backing of the Legislature.

In no case may it smack of compulsion.

It must be intrinsically practicable and of benefit to the masses.

These conditions of success are all reduced to writing. The Government have accepted them *in toto* after, I understand, full discussion with experts and among themselves.

Let it be remembered that the existing Madras mills will not be touched at present. That the whole mill industry will be affected, if the scheme spreads like wild fire as I expect some day such a thing must, goes without saying. Let not the largest capitalist rue the day when and if it comes.

The only question then worth considering is whether the Madras Government are honest and competent. If they are not, everything will go wrong. If they are, the scheme must be blessed by all and must succeed.

- H., 27-10-'46, p. 372

## CHAPTER 30

### CONGRESS MINISTRIES AND RURAL UPLIFT

Resumption of office by Congress Ministers in the provinces is by no means an experiment in constitutionalism. The task before them is to realize the content of Independence for the masses which the Congress has envisaged. What should be the end of our economic policy and the nature of social organization that should be built up and what are the obstacles in the present economic and administrative organization in achieving the goal of rural prosperity – these were the questions that the Ministers for Industries from the various Provinces, who met in conference in the Council Hall at Poona on the 31st of July (1946), set themselves to examine.

Gandhiji explained his approach to Village Industries in the course of a thirty minutes address. The conception underlying both the Nai Talim and the Village Industries programme, including khaddar, was rooted in the same thing viz. concern for the dignity and status of the village unit as against the big cities and of the individual against the machine. The concern was further augmented by the fact that India lives not in a handful of her big cities but in her 700,000 villages. The problem was of re-establishment of justice between the town and the village. As it was, the balance was heavily tipped in favour of the former to the disadvantage of the latter.

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#### The Machine Age

"Ours has been described as the machine age," observed Gandhiji, "because the machine dominates our economy. 'Now, what is a machine?' – one may ask. In a sense, man is the most wonderful machine in creation. It can neither be duplicated nor copied." He had, however, used the word not in its wider sense but in the sense of an appliance that tended to displace human or animal labour instead of supplementing it or merely increasing its efficiency. That was the first differential characteristic of the machine. The second characteristic

was that there was no limit to its growth or evolution. That could not be said of human labour. There was a limit beyond which its capacity or mechanical efficiency could not go. Out of this circumstance arose the third characteristic of the machine. It seemed to be possessed of a will or genius of its own. It was antagonistic to man's labour. Thus it tended more to displace man, one machine doing the work of hundred, if not a thousand, who went to swell the army of the unemployed and the under-employed, not because it was desirable but because that was its law. In America it had perhaps reached the extreme limit. He had been opposed to it, said Gandhiji, not from today, but even before 1908 when he was in South Africa surrounded by machines. Their onward march had not only not impressed him but had repelled him. "It then dawned on me that to suppress and exploit the millions, the machine was the device *par excellence*, it had no place in man's economy if, as social units, all men were to be equal. It is my belief that the machine has not added to man's stature and it won't serve the world but disrupt it, unless it is put in its proper place. Then, I read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* during a train journey to Durban and it gripped me immediately. I saw clearly that if mankind was to progress and to realize the ideal of equality and brotherhood, it must adopt and act on the principle of *Unto This Last*; it must take along with it even the dumb, the halt and the lame. Did not Yudhishtira— the Prince of Righteousness, refuse to enter heaven without his faithful dog?"

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### Ministries and the A.-I.V.I.A.

In the machine age these had no place. Under it the fittest alone survived to the exclusion and at the cost of the weak. "That is not my picture of Independence in which there is room even for the weakest," observed Gandhiji. "That requires that we must utilize all available human labour before we entertain the idea of employing mechanical power."

It was with that background, that he was instrumental in founding the Talimi Sangh and the A.-I.V.I.A. The object was to strengthen the Congress which claimed to be essentially the people's organization. The Congress had created

these autonomous institutions. The Congress Ministries could requisition the services of these organizations always and without any compunction. They existed and laboured for the villagers who were the backbone of the Congress. But the Ministries were under no obligation. If they had no faith in what these organizations stood for, they should plainly say so through the Working Committee. To play with a thing when they had no heart in it, would be worse than useless. They should take it up, only if they believed with him that it alone held the key to the economic and political salvation of the country. They should not deceive themselves or others.

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### The Good Earth

The base and foundation of village industries was agriculture. "Years ago I read a poem in which the peasant is described as the father of the world. If God is the Provider, the cultivator is His hand. What are we going to do to discharge the debt we owe to him ? So long we have only lived on the sweat of his brow. We should have begun with the soil but we could not do so. The fault is partly mine."

There were people, remarked Gandhiji, who said that no basic reform in agriculture was possible, without political power. They dreamt in terms of industrialization of agriculture by large scale application of steam and electricity. He warned them that trading in soil fertility for the sake of quick returns would prove to be a disastrous, short-sighted policy. It would result in virtual depletion of the soil. Good earth called for the sweat of one's brow to yield the bread of life.

People might criticize that approach as being slow and unprogressive. It did not hold out promise of dramatic results. Nevertheless, maintained the speaker, it held the key to the prosperity of both the soil and the inhabitants living on it. Healthy, nourishing food was the *alpha* and *omega* of rural economy. "The bulk of a peasant's family budget goes to feed him and his family. All other things come afterwards. Let the tiller of the soil be well fed. Let him have a sufficiency of fresh, pure milk and ghee and oil, fish, eggs, and meat if he is a



non-vegetarian. What would fine clothes, for instance, avail him, if he is ill nourished and underfed?" The question of drinking-water supply and other things would come next. A consideration of these questions would naturally involve such issues, as the place of plough cattle in the economy of agriculture as against the tractor plough and power irrigation etc. and thus, bit by bit, the whole picture of rural economy would emerge before them. In this picture cities would take their natural place and not appear as unnatural, congested spots or boils on the body politic as they were today. "We stand today in danger of forgetting the use of our hands," concluded Gandhiji. "To forget how to dig the earth and tend the soil is to forget ourselves. To think that your occupation of the Ministerial chair will be vindicated if you serve the cities only, would be to forget that India really resides in her 700,000 village units. What would it profit a man if he gained the world but lost his soul into the bargain?"

Questions were then asked.

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### Remedies

Q. You have called cities boils or abscesses on the body politic. What should be done with these boils?

A. If you ask a doctor he will tell you what to do with a boil. It has to be cured either by lancing or by the application of plasters and poultices. Edward Carpenter called civilization a malady which needed a cure. The growth of big cities is only a symptom of that malady. Being a nature curist, I am naturally in favour of nature's way of cure by a general purification of the system. If the hearts of the city-dwellers remain rooted in the villages, if they become truly village-minded, all other things will automatically follow and the boil will quickly heal.

Q. What practical steps can be taken to protect our village crafts from the invasion of foreign and Indian manufactured goods under the present circumstances?

A. I can only speak in broad terms. If you have felt in your heart that you have taken office as custodians and representatives of the interests of the masses, everything that you do, your legislation, your executive orders, the instructions that you issue, will breathe concern for the villager. To protect his interests, you do not need the Viceroy's sanction. Supposing you want to protect the hand-spinner and hand-weaver against the competition of mills and solve the problem of cloth shortage for the masses, you will put aside red tape and send for the mill owners and tell them that, unless they want you to go out of office, they must make their production policy conform to the requirement of the masses, whose custodian and representative you are. You will tell them not to send mill cloth, to certain areas, which are put under hand production or produce a certain range of yarns and textiles which comes within the hand-loom weaver's domain. If you are in earnest, your word will go home and they will willingly give their co-operation as they did recently, when they provided the required textiles for export to Indonesia, in return for Indonesian surplus rice for the relief of the Indian famine. But there must be that inner conviction first, everything else will then be all right.

- H., 25-8-'46, pp. 281-82

## CHAPTER 31

### CONGRESS MINISTRIES AND BASIC EDUCATION

The worst sabotage during the Sec. 93 regime following upon the resignation of the Congress Ministries in seven provinces in 1940 was that of the basic education plans, prohibition and the programme of rural rehabilitation and resuscitation of basic rural crafts that were launched by the Congress Ministries. Naturally, the first concern of the Congress Ministries on resuming office was to salvage what remained of their experiments and to take up the broken threads where they had left them.

The Education Ministers from the Congress provinces met at the invitation and under the presidentship of Shri Balasaheb Kher in a conference for the purpose in the Council Hall at Poona on the 29th and 30th July, 1946. Education Ministers from all the provinces had been invited. But from two, they could not attend. Gandhiji attended the conference for over One hour on the afternoon of the 29th. Although the basic education experiment had received a set-back so far as Governmental and affiliated institutions were concerned, it was continued under the auspices of the Talimi Sangh, who, thanks to Gandhiji's prevision, was fully prepared for the emergency. With the completion of the first seven years, basic education came of age. In his first meeting with the members of the Talimi Sangh in 1944, after his release from detention, Gandhiji explained to them that a stage had been reached, when the scope of basic education should be extended. They would have to take post-basic as well as pre-basic training within their compass. Basic education must become literally education for life. Taking up the thread of the argument from that point, Gandhiji explained to the conference in the course of his address, on what line that extension should take place and what, according to him, the duty of the Ministers was in that respect. He was speaking in answer to the question of Dr. Zakir Hussain, who was anxious that in their overzeal, they should not take a bigger bite than they could chew. An over-ambitious

programme which they had not the means to implement, might prove a trap and danger.

"If I Were a Minister"

He knew clearly enough, said Gandhiji, what was to be done but he did not quite know how it could be done. So far they had their course mapped out for them, but now they had to sail on uncharted waters. He knew their difficulties. It was not easy for those who had been brought up in the old tradition, to break away from it at a stroke. If he were in the Ministerial chair, said Gandhiji, he would issue broad instructions that hereafter all educational activity of the Government should be on basic education lines. Adult education drives had been launched in several provinces. If he had his way, he would conduct them also through a basic craft. In his opinion, cotton spinning and the allied processes were crafts *par excellence* for this purpose. But he would leave the choice of the craft to the people concerned in each case in the certain belief that in the end that craft alone which had the necessary intrinsic merit would survive. It should be the job of the inspectors and other officers of the Education Department, to go among the people and teachers of schools and by persuasion and argument, educate them in the value and utility of the Government's new educational policy. That was their primary job, not to lord it over them. If they had no faith in it or if they were unwilling loyally to work out the new policy, he would give them the choice to resign. But he did not think that it would be necessary, if the Ministers knew their job and put their shoulder to the wheel. Merely issuing orders would not do the trick.

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### Reorientation of University Education

What he had said about adult education applied equally to university education. It must be organically related to the Indian scene. It must, therefore, be an extension and continuation of the basic education course. That was the central point. If they did not see eye to eye with him on that point, he was afraid they would have little use for his advice. If, on the other hand, they agreed with him that the present university education did not fit them for Independence but only enslaved them, they would be as impatient as

he was to completely overhaul and scrap that system and remodel it on new lines consonant with the national requirement.

Today the youth educated in our universities either ran after Government jobs or fell into devious ways and sought outlet for their frustration by fomenting unrest. They were not even ashamed to beg or sponge upon others. Such was their sad plight. The aim of university education should be to turn out true servants of the people, who would live and die for the country's freedom. He was therefore of opinion that university education should be co-ordinated and brought into line with basic education, by taking in teachers from the Talimi Sangh.

The Ministers had accepted office as people's representatives. Their writ would not run beyond the four walls of the Council Hall, unless they could carry the people with them. What was taking place in Bombay and Ahmedabad today, was an ominous symptom, if it portended that the Congress had lost its hold over the people. Nai Talim was as yet a tender sapling but it held out big promise. Its growth could not be forced by ministerial ukases, if popular support was lacking. If, therefore, they could not command popular support, his advice to them would be to tender their resignations. They should not be afraid of anarchy. Theirs was only to do their duty according to their light and leave the rest to God. People would learn the lesson of true Independence even out of that experience.

He then invited questions. The first question was: "Can basic education be conducted minus the self-support basis?"

"You can certainly try," replied Gandhiji. "But if you ask my advice, I will tell you that in that event, you had better forget basic education altogether. Self-sufficiency is not an *a priori* condition but to me, it is the acid test. This does not mean that basic education will be self-supporting from the very start. But taking the entire period of seven years, covered by the basic education plan, income and expenditure must balance each other. Otherwise, it would mean that even at the end of their training, the basic education students will not be fitted for life. That is the negation of basic education. Nai Talim without the self-support basis would, therefore, be like a lifeless body."

Other questions and answers then followed:

Q. We have accepted the principle of giving education through a basic craft. But the Mussalmans are somehow opposed to the spinning wheel. Your emphasis on spinning is perhaps all right in cotton tracts. But do not you agree that it is unsuited to areas where the cotton crop is not grown? May not some other craft be substituted for it, in such places—agriculture for instance?

A. This is a very old question. Any basic craft to serve as a medium for education must answer the test of universality. As early as 1908, I came to the conclusion that to make India free and to enable her to stand on her own legs, the spinning wheel had to hum in every home. If England can become an exporter of textiles to India and to the whole world, although she does not grow a pod of cotton, I cannot understand why we cannot introduce cotton spinning in our homes, merely because Cotton would have to be obtained from a neighbouring province or district. As a matter of fact, there is no part of India where cotton was not at one time grown. Localization of cotton cultivation in 'cotton tracts' is only a recent and anomalous development, forced upon India by cotton manufacturing interests at the expense of the poor tax-payer and cotton spinner of India. Even today tree cotton grows everywhere in India. Such arguments as yours, speak ill of our capacity for taking initiative, for our enterprise and resourcefulness. It would kill all manufactures if transportation of raw materials from another place were to be regarded as an insuperable handicap.

Moreover, to enable a person to clothe himself through his own effort, when the alternative is to go naked, is in itself an education. An intelligent pursuit of the various processes related to cotton spinning has besides, a very high instructional value. In fact, it covers the whole education of man as perhaps no other craft does. We may not today be able to dispel the doubts of the Mussalmans, as they are rooted in a delusion and delusion is a very real thing to its victim, while he is under its spell. But if our own faith is clear and firm, and we can demonstrate the success of our method, the Mussalmans will themselves come to us and ask to be taught the secret of our success. They do not seem to have realized that the Charkha has done more for the poorest Mussalman

masses than even the Muslim" League or any other Muslim organization. The bulk of the weavers in Bengal are Muslims. Nor should it be forgotten, that Dacca owed its world-wide fame for its *shabnams* to the deftness and skill of Muslim women spinners and Muslim weavers.

The same applies to Maharashtra. The best cure for the delusion is to concentrate on the performance of one's own duty. Truth alone will endure, all the rest will be swept away before the tide of time. I must, therefore, continue to bear testimony to Truth even if I am forsaken by all. Mine may today be a voice in the wilderness, but it will be heard when all other voices are silenced if it is the voice of Truth.

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### The Vicious Circle

"To produce efficient teachers for Nai Talim would take time. What should be done to improve education in the schools in the meantime?" asked Avinashilingam Chettiar speaking in English. Gandhiji chaffing him for it suggested amid general laughter, that if he could not speak in Hindustani, he might whisper what he had to say into his neighbour's ear, who would render it into Hindustani for him.

"If you realize," he proceeded, "that the present system of education cannot bring India Independence but only serves to deepen her slavery, you will refuse to encourage it, irrespective of whether any other takes its place or not. You will do whatever you can, within the four corners of the principles of Nai Talim and be satisfied with that." If people did not want the Ministers on those terms, it would be better for the Ministers to resign. They could not possibly be party to catering for poison, because they could not provide or because the people did not relish life-giving food.

Q. You say that for Nai Talim we do not need money but men. But to train men we again need institutions and, therefore, money. How can we get out of this vicious circle?

A. The remedy lies in your own hands. Begin with yourself. There is a good English proverb: 'Charity begins at home.' But if you yourself will sit in an easy

chair like a *sahib* and expect others of the "lesser breed" to get ready for the job, you will get nowhere. That is not my way. It has been my practice ever since my childhood, to begin with myself and my immediate environment in howsoever humble a way. Let us in this respect take a leaf out of the book of the British people. A mere handful of them came to and settled in India in the first instance and carved out an empire for themselves which is even more formidable in its cultural than in its political aspect, so much so that, today we are so infatuated with English that we hug it just as a slave hugs its fetters, even at the cost of the mother tongue. Think of the faith, single-minded devotion, sacrifice and perseverance, which must have been at the back of it. It only shows that where there is a will, there is a way. Let us be up and doing with the firm resolve not to give up, come what may, and all the difficulties will melt away.

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### The Place of English

Q. What is the place of English in this programme? Should it be made compulsory or taught only as an optional, second language?

A. I must cling to my mother tongue as to my mother's breast, in spite of its shortcomings. It alone can give me the life-giving milk. I love the English tongue in its own place, but I am its inveterate opponent, if it usurps a place which does not belong to it. English is today admittedly the world language. I would therefore accord it a place as a second, optional language, not in the school but in the university course. That can only be for the select few – not for the millions. Today when we have not the means to introduce even free compulsory primary education, how can we make provision for teaching English? Russia has achieved all her scientific progress without English. It is our mental slavery that makes us feel that we cannot do without English. I can never subscribe to that defeatist creed.

- H., 25-8-'46, pp. 282-84



## CHAPTER 32

### THE FOREIGN MEDIUM

The foreign medium has caused brain fag, put an undue strain upon the nerves of our children, made them crammers and imitators, unfitted them for original work and thought, and disabled them for filtrating their learning to the family or the masses. The foreign medium has made our children practically foreigners in their own land. It is the greatest tragedy of the existing system. The foreign medium has prevented the growth of our vernaculars. If I had the powers of a despot, I would today stop the tuition of our boys and girls through a foreign medium, and require all the teachers and professors on pain of dismissal to introduce the change forthwith. I would not wait for the preparation of text-books. They will follow the change. It is an evil that needs a summary remedy.

- *H.*, 1-9-'21, p. 277

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The medium of a foreign language through which higher education has been imparted in India has caused incalculable intellectual and moral injury to the nation. We are too near our own times to judge the enormity of the damage done. And we who have received such education have both to be<sup>1</sup> victims and judges—an almost impossible feat. . . .

I find daily proof of (the increasing and continuing wrong being done to the millions by our false de-Indianizing education. Those graduates who are my valued associates themselves flounder when they have to give expression to their innermost thoughts. They are strangers in their own homes. Their vocabulary in the mother tongue is so limited that they cannot always finish their speech without having recourse to English words and even sentences. Nor can they exist without English books. They often write to one another in English. I cite the case of my companions to show how deep the evil has gone. For we have made a conscious effort to mend ourselves.

Nothing but a heroic remedy can deal with (this) deep-seated evil. The Congress Ministers can if they will, mitigate it, if they cannot remove it.

Universities must be made self-supporting. The State should simply educate those whose services it would need. For all other branches of learning it should encourage private effort. The medium of instruction should be altered at once and at any cost, the provincial languages being given their rightful place. I would prefer temporary chaos in higher education to the criminal waste that is daily accumulating.

In order to enhance the status and the market value of the provincial languages, I would have the language of the law courts to be the language of the province where the court is situated. The proceedings of the Provincial Legislatures must be in the language, or even the languages of the province where a province has more than one language within its borders. I suggest to the legislators that they could, by enough application, inside of a month, understand the languages of their provinces. There is nothing to prevent a Tamilian from easily learning the simple grammar and a few hundred words of Telugu, Malayalam and Kanarese, all allied to Tamil. At the Centre Hindustani must rule supreme.

- H., 9-7-'38, pp. 176-77

Now that the opportunity for reform has come, Congressmen ought to become impatient. If the medium is changed at once and not gradually, in an incredibly short-time, we shall find text-books and teachers coming into being to supply the want. And if we mean business, in a year's time we shall find that we need never have been party to the tragic waste of the nation's time and energy in trying to learn the essentials of culture through a foreign medium. The condition of success is undoubtedly that provincial languages are introduced at once in government offices and courts, if the Provincial Governments have the power or the influence over the courts. If we believe in the necessity of the reform we can achieve it in no time.

- H., 30-7-'38, pp. 200-201

## CHAPTER 33

### MUSIC IN SCHOOLS

Pandit Khare of Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, who has dedicated his life to the spread of pure music among boys and girls, reports the great progress being made in Ahmedabad in particular and Gujarat in general, and he deplores the fact that the education authorities do not seem to countenance the introduction of music in the curricula of education. In the Pandit's opinion based upon wide experience, it should form part of the syllabus of primary education. I heartily endorse the proposition. The modulation of the voice is as necessary as the training of the hand. Physical drill, handicrafts, drawing and music should go hand in hand in order to draw the best out of the boys and girls and create in them a real interest in their tuition.

That this means a revolution in the system of training is admitted. If the future citizens of the State are to build a sure foundation for life's work, these four things are necessary. One has only to visit any primary school to have a striking demonstration of slovenliness, disorderliness and discordant speech. I have no doubt, therefore, that when the Education Ministers in the several provinces recast the system of education and make it answer the requirements of the country, they will not omit the essentials to which I have drawn attention. My plan of primary education certainly comprises these things which easily become possible the moment you remove from the children's shoulder the burden of having to master a difficult foreign language.

- H., 11-9-'37, p. 250

## CHAPTER 34

### FILTH IN LITERATURE

I have received a letter from the Hon. Secretary, Youths' Welfare Association, Lahore giving copious specimens of obscene and erotic passages from the text-books prescribed by various universities. They make sickening reading. Though they are from prescribed text-books, I would not soil these columns with a reproduction of the extracts. I have never come across such filth in all literature that I have read. The extracts are impartially given both from Sanskrit, Persian and Hindi poets... This is an occasion which not only justifies a strike on the part of students and pupils, it is in my opinion their duty to rise in revolt against such literature being forced on them.

It is one thing to defend the liberty to read what one likes. But it is a wholly different thing to force on young minds acquaintance with literature that cannot but excite their animal passions and an unhealthy curiosity about things which, in due course and to the extent necessary, they are bound to learn. The evil becomes accentuated when it comes in the guise of innocent literature bearing the *imprimatur* of great universities:

The Association asks me to appeal to the Congress Ministers to take such steps as may be possible to remove text-books or passages which are objectionable. I gladly make the appeal hereby not only to them but the Education Ministers in all the provinces. Surely all are equally interested in the healthy growth of the student mind.

- H., 15-10-'38, pp. 287-88

## CHAPTER 35

### GAMBLING, BROTHELS AND HORSE-RACING

In the provinces where the Congress has a majority, all kinds of hopes have been raised. Some are legitimate and will, no doubt, be fulfilled. Some others cannot be. Thus the people who indulge in gambling, which unfortunately is even on the increase in the Bombay Presidency<sup>^</sup> think that gambling will be legalized and surreptitious dens that cover Bombay will be no longer required. I am not quite sure that even if gambling is legalized on a universal scale, as it is already in a restricted manner, there will be no illegal dens. Thus it has been suggested that the Turf Club which has the monopoly of gambling on the race course, should be allowed to open an additional entrance to make it easier for poor people to gamble. The bait offered is a larger revenue.

A similar suggestion has been made for the regulation and licensing of brothels. The argument advanced, as in all such cases, is that the vice will continue whether it is legalized or not and, therefore, it is better to legalize it and make it safe for those who visit the brothels. Let me hope that the Ministers will not fall into this trap. The proper method of dealing with brothels is for the women to carry on a double propaganda, (a) amongst women who sell their honour for a livelihood, and (b) amongst men whom they must shame into behaving better towards their sisters whom they ignorantly or insolently call the weaker sex. I remember years and years ago in the early nineties when the brave Salvation Army people, at the risk of their own lives, used to carry on picketing at the corners of notorious streets of Bombay which were filled with houses of ill fame. There is no reason why some such thing should not be organized on a large scale.

As for gambling on the race course, it is, so <sup>1</sup> far as I am aware, an importation like many other importations, from the West, and if I had my way I would withdraw the protection of the law that gambling on the race course enjoys even to the extent it does. The Congress programme being one of self-purification, as is stated in so many words in the resolution of 1920, the

Congress can have nothing to do with income derived from any vice. The Ministers will, therefore, use the authority that they have obtained for educating public opinion in the right direction and for stopping gambling in high quarters. It is useless to hope that the unwary public will not copy the bad manners of the so-called high-placed people. I have heard it argued that horse-racing is necessary for breeding good horses. There may be truth in this. Is it not possible to have horse-racing without gambling, or is gambling also an aid to the good breeding of horses?

- H., 4-9-'37, pp. 233-34

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I have written before regarding the ruination of men and money through horse-racing but a very strongly-worded letter from a friend who says that gambling on the race course is not a lesser evil than the drink habit, constrains me to write again on this subject. The writer further says:

"Special trains are run for the races and are full of people who wear Gandhi caps, call themselves Congressmen and go there only to waste their money. \* Where does this money come from? We now have popular Ministries, but they too are silent and put up with the evil."

Although, in my opinion, gambling at races is not as great an evil as drinking of alcohol, one ought not really to draw comparisons. Less bad does not make gambling a good thing. I do not know all the intricacies of horse-racing. All I can say is that if it is within the competence of a popular Government to put an end to the evil, it should certainly do so.

- H., 18-8-'46, p. 275

## CHAPTER 36

### LEGALIZED PROSTITUTION

Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy furnishes one more proof of the very high expectations formed of Congress Ministries. People have a right to form such expectations. Even opponents of the Congress have admitted that they are standing the test well. The Congress Ministries seem to be vying with one another in adopting ameliorative measures so as to make their administrations respond to the real Indian environment. Dr. Muthulakshmi has issued a public appeal to the Madras Ministry to pass her bill which puts a stop to the immoral custom of dedicating *devadasis* to a life of shame: I have not examined the bill. But the idea behind is so sound that it is a wonder that it has not yet found a place in the Statute book of the Southern Presidency. I wholly agree with Dr. Muthulakshmi that the reform is as urgent as prohibition. She recalls the fact that the present Premier spoke out many years ago in strong terms against the evil practice. I know that he is no less eager now that he has some power to deal with it legally. And I hope with her that before many months have passed the *devadasi* system will cease to have legal sanction.

- H., 25-9-'37, p. 273

## CHAPTER 37

### MINISTRIES AND PROBLEMS OF HARIJANS

#### I. Harijan Work in Bhusawal Taluka

Shri Thakkar Bapa writes:

"It has been decided to carry on sound and extensive Harijan work-in the Bhusawal Taluka. For that purpose two meetings were arranged on the 14th of May. Shri Vai- kunthbhai Mehta, Shri Ganapatrao Tapase, Shri Barve, Shri Dastane and myself were present. We aim at having all the public wells opened to Harijans. The villagers showed great enthusiasm and we are hopeful of success. The circumstances are favourable."

What Bapa says is true. By favourable circumstances, Shri Thakkar Bapa probably means the establishment of a Congress Ministry. That does not mean that henceforth reforms will be imposed upon the people. There is the least room for the use of force in such things. An evil like untouchability which has found its way to the very marrow of the people's bones, and that too in the name of religion, cannot be removed forcibly. But an alien government uses its influence to further suppress the suppressed by force. And when it tries to help them from a motive, pure or selfish, that too is done by the exercise of force. The Congress has not established its position through force. It is a purely democratic organization. Therefore, it is hoped that the Congress Ministers will educate public opinion and win popular support for all its progressive measures.

This should result in an impetus to reforms like. Harijan work in their province and the forces standing in the way of such reforms would automatically disappear. Moreover, intensive work in the limited area of the Bhusawal Taluka is likely to prove very fruitful. We cannot reach the whole of India at one and the same time. Wherever the workers have the requisite ability and influence, the work will proceed at a quicker pace. Sound work in a small area is therefore likely to be copied by others and thus lead to an early success. Let us- hope that will be the result of the work which has been started in Bhusawal.

*H., 9-6-'46, p. 175*



## II. Harijans and Wells

Shri Hardev Sahay writes:

"Last evening (4-9-'46) in your address to the prayer gathering, you drew the attention of the public to the disability attached to Harijans in the matter of drawing, water from public wells. After 25 years of incessant effort on their behalf, we have not yet succeeded in removing this disability. No one knows of their sufferings more than you.

"It is my humble opinion that now that Congress Governments are in power, they should forthwith proclaim their policy towards the Harijans and remove all such of their disabilities as they can by law. In this connection I should like to draw your attention to conditions in the Punjab. Leave aside the question of drawing water from wells, Harijans are not even permitted to obtain land for sinking a well for themselves. I would beg of you to appeal to the Punjab Government to provide wells for Harijans at State expense, wherever there are no facilities of drawing water or at least provide them with land for sinking wells for themselves. There are ever so many villages in the Punjab where, even if the Harijans are willing to spend their own money, they are not given the requisite land.

"There are a few places where the Government has started making wells for the Harijans; but they are wholly insufficient. It is surely the duty of the State to see that a proper supply of drinking water is available to all its citizens."

The writer is perfectly right in what he says. It is the duty of the Government to provide wells for the Harijans. It is not enough only to give the land; the Government should be responsible for sinking the wells.

*H., 15-9-'46, p. 311*

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## III. A Wise Step

Shri G. D. Tapase, Minister for Backward Classes (Bombay) has sent me a copy of the Bombay Harijan (Removal of Social Disabilities) Act just passed by the Bombay Legislature. I give below the most relevant clauses:

"3. Notwithstanding anything contained in any instrument or any law, custom or usage to the contrary, no Harijan shall merely on the ground that he is a Harijan —

- (a) be ineligible for office under any authority constituted under any law; or
- (b) be prevented from —

- (i) having access to or using any river, stream, spring, well, tank, cistern, water-tap or any bathing place, burial or cremation ground, any sanitary convenience, any road, or pathway which the members of all other castes and classes of Hindus have a right to use or have access to;
- (ii) having access to or using any public conveyance licensed by the Provincial Government or any local authority to ply for hire;
- (iii) having access to or using any building, well, cistern or place used for charitable or public purposes maintained wholly or partially out of the revenues of the Province or the funds of a local authority;
- (iv) having access to a place of public amusement or a place of public entertainment;
- (v) having access to a shop which the members of all other castes and classes of Hindus have a right to have access to;
- (vi) having access to or using any place set apart or maintained for the use of Hindus generally but not for the use of any particular section or class thereof;
- (vii) enjoying any benefit under a charitable trust created for the benefit of Hindus generally but not for the benefit of any particular section or class thereof.

"3A. No person in charge of any of the places referred to in sub-clauses (i), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) or any conveyance referred to in sub-clause (ii), or clause (b) of section 3 shall impose any restrictions on a Harijan or act in a manner as to result in discrimination against him.

"4. No court shall in adjudicating any matter or executing any order recognize any custom or usage imposing- any civil disability on any Harijan merely on the ground that he is a Harijan.

"5. No local authority shall in carrying out the functions and duties entrusted to it under any law recognize any custom or usage referred to in section 4.

"6. Whoever—

- (a) prevents any person, by reason of his being a Harijan, from having access to or using any of the places referred to in sub-clauses (i), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi) or any conveyance referred to in sub-clause (ii) of clause (b) of section 3 or from enjoying any benefit under a charitable trust referred to in sub-clause (vii) of clause (b) of the said section or abets the prevention thereof; or
- (b) imposes any restriction on a Harijan or acts in a manner so as to result in discrimination against him or abets any person to impose such restriction or to act in such

manner •shall, on conviction, be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months or with fine which may extend to Rs. 200 or with both.

"7. If any person who has been convicted of any offence punishable under this Act is again guilty of the same offence he shall be punished on the second conviction with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine which may extend to Rs. 500 or with both and if he is again so guilty shall be punished on the third or any subsequent conviction with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to Rs. 1,000."

The author of the measure has kindly supplied me with the text of his speech delivered on his introducing the measure. From it I note below the most poignant passages.

"This untouchability amounts to irrationality. As soon as a Harijan is born, untouchability applies to him... As a Harijan he is born, as a Harijan he lives all through his life and as a Harijan he dies... However clean he may be, however wise he may be, however superior he may be, to the so-called orthodox Hindus he is not a superior being. The worst of it is that even after his death his dust and ashes are not allowed to mingle with the dust and ashes of the others. . . . The agonies of the Untouchable are further aggravated by the fact that he is treated as an Untouchable not only by the caste-Hindus but even by Christians, Muslims and others. . . . To my mind the Bill gives a *sanad*, a charter, to the Harijans for the exercise of certain social, civic, fundamental rights."

It is worthy of note that the Bill was passed without opposition worth the name from the Hindu side. That is a good augury for the successful working of the Act. And yet it would not do to be over-sanguine about it. Unfortunately for us, we know that we pass resolutions by acclamation and allow them to become dead letter. The greatest vigilance will have to be exercised by the Government and the reformers in the strict enforcement of the law.

It is no use blinking the fact that the reign of irrationality referred to by the author of the relief bill is still very much to the fore in India. It is not merely in regard to untouchability but many other things. Reformers, therefore, have to watch the demon and utilize their watchfulness, courtesy and tact in dealing with those who are possessed by the demon.

H., 3-11-'46, p. 384

## CHAPTER 38

### LAWS OF HEALTH

Shri Brijlal Nehru, himself a faddist like me, has written to the Press belauding the statement of the Minister of Health that "a very great deal of our ill-health is due to our own fault" and saying that there is to his knowledge no governmental agency responsible for removing this fault. He adds: "The attention of our Health Ministers has so far been confined to the establishment of hospitals, sanatoria, clinics, dispensaries etc., i.e. devices for the treatment of disease; no institutions have been founded for the prevention of disease by bringing home to the people the need of correct living and the methods of doing so."

He then goes on to suggest that "a separate branch be established to attend to the promotion of health as distinguished from treatment of disease. This agency may be given the assistance of an advisory body of both experts and laymen so that the experts may devise their schemes with the full knowledge of the requirements of the people and the limitations under which they have to live and work." Why does this fellow faddist want a separate branch for this very necessary purpose? This was the fashion under the old regime which went on piling expenditure on expenditure and deluded itself and the gullible public that the greater the expense the greater the utility. I would have the Minister of Health require the doctors under her and the other staff understand that their first care must be the attainment and preservation of the health of the public whom they are paid to serve.

As a preliminary step the writer "would have the production of a book on health laws and correct living in the conditions prevailing in India. To carry weight with the public, the book must be brought out under the authority of the Health Ministry of the Government of India. . . . The duty of writing such a book may be entrusted to the Indian Medical Association, who should be required to produce it within a stated time. A transfer of emphasis from disease

to health in the teaching given in our medical colleges would in itself be most desirable."

Indeed, the teaching of the laws of Health should be obligatory in all schools and colleges. If the treatise recommended by Shri Brijlal Nehru is brought out, I hope the authors would be instructed to avoid the introduction of disease under the guise of preserving health such as the craze for various inoculations.

*H., 28-12-'47, p. 484*

## CHAPTER 39

### RED TAPE

Ministers are so tied down to Red Tape that they have no time to think. They have no time to see me or discuss things with me and what is more or worse, knowing their condition I have no heart to inflict even letters on them. And I must not speak at them through the columns of *Harijan*. . . .

If the Ministers are to cope with their new responsibility, they must discover the art of burning Red Tape. The old order could only live by and on Red Tape. It will strangle the new order. The Ministers must see people on whose goodwill alone they can exist. They must listen to petty and serious complaints. But they need not keep a record of all these or the letters they receive nor even of all the decisions they give. They have only to keep sufficient record to refresh their memory and to preserve continuity of practice. Much of the departmental correspondence must cease. . . . They are responsible to the millions of their masters who do not know what Red Tape is and care little. Many of them can't read and write. But they have primary wants to be fulfilled. They have been accustomed by Congressmen to think that immediately the Congress comes into power there won't be a hungry mouth in all India nor a naked person who wants to cover himself. The Ministers have to give their time and thought to such problems, if they are to do justice to the trust they have undertaken. If they are of the so-called Gandhian hue, they must find out what it is, not from me but from within by searching inward. I may not always know what it is. But I do know that if it is properly investigated and followed, it is radical and revolutionary enough to satisfy all the real wants of India. The Congress is a revolutionary body. Only its revolution is to be distinguished from all the other political revolutions known to history. Whereas the previous ones have been based on violence, this one is deliberately non-violent. If it was violent, probably much of the old form and practice would have been retained. But, for the Congress most of the old forms and practice are taboo. The most potent is the police and the military. I have admitted that so long as Congressmen are in

office and they cannot discover peaceful ways and means of preserving order they are bound to make use of both. But the question ever present before the Ministers must be, is such use indispensable, and if it is, why is it so? If, as a result of their inquiry, – not after the old style, costly and more often than not useless, but an inquiry costless but thorough and effective – they find that they cannot run the State without the use of the police and the military, it is the clearest possible sign, in terms of non-violence, that the Congress should give up office and again wander in the wilderness in search of the Holy Grail.

*H., 17-12-'38, p. 385*

## SECTION VIII : MINISTERIAL SALARIES



## CHAPTER 40

### EXPECT NO PERSONAL GAIN

The holding of any office in the Congress Government must be in the spirit of service without the slightest expectation of personal gain. If A is satisfied in ordinary life with getting Rs. 25 per month, he has no right to expect Rs. 250 on becoming a Minister or obtaining any other office under the government. And there are many Congressmen who are taking only Rs. 25 per month in voluntary organizations and who are well able to shoulder ministerial responsibility. Bengal and Maharashtra are teeming with able men who have dedicated themselves to public service on a mere pittance and who are well able to give a good account of themselves no matter where they are put. But they are not to be tempted to leave the fields they have chosen, and it would be wrong to drag them out of their invaluable self-chosen obscurity. It is true all the world over, and more true perhaps of this country, that as a rule the best and the wisest men will not become Ministers or accept positions under governments.

We may not always get the best and the wisest men and women to run Congress Governments, but swaraj will become a distant dream if the Ministers and other Congressmen holding offices are not selfless," able and incorruptible. We are not likely to have such men if Congress Committees become job- hunting arenas in which the most violent would win.

*H., 14-4-'46, p. 92*

## CHAPTER 41

### SCALE OF PAY

Ministers and members of the provincial assemblies are in their respective places as servants of the people in every sense of the term. The British scale "of pay cannot be copied by them except at their cost. Nor need all draw payments because a certain scale is allowed. The scale fixes the limit up to which they may draw. It will be ludicrous for a moneyed man to draw the full or any payment. The payments are meant for those who cannot easily afford to render free service. They are representatives of the poorest people in the world. What they draw is paid by the poor. Let them remember this salient fact and act and live accordingly.

H., 14-4-'46, p. 92

## CHAPTER 42

## SALARIES OF MINISTERS

Q. On what principle is the question of the salaries of Ministers in Congress majority provinces going to be settled this time? Does the Karachi Resolution in this regard still hold? If the question is to be settled on the basis of the present high prices is it possible within the limits of their revenues, for the provincial budgets to increase the pays of all their servants threefold? If not, will it be proper for the Ministers to be paid Rs. 1500/- while a *chaprasi* or a teacher is told to make two ends meet on Rs. 15/- and 12/- p. m. and not make a fuss about it because Congress has to run the administration?

A. The question is apt. Why should a Minister draw Rs. 1500/- and a *chaprasi* or a teacher Rs. 15/- p. m.? But the question cannot be solved by the mere raising of it. Such differences have existed for ages. Why should an elephant require an enormous quantity of food and a mere grain suffice for the ant? The question carries its own answer. God gives to each one according to his need. If we could as definitely know the variations in the needs of men as those of the elephant and the ant, no doubts would arise. Experience tells us that differences in requirements do exist in society. But we do not know the law governing them. All therefore that is possible today is to try to reduce the differences as far as possible. The reduction can be brought about by peaceful agitation and by the creation of public opinion. It cannot be done by force or by *duragraha* in the name of satyagraha. The Ministers are the people's men. Their wants even before they took office were not those of *chaprasis*. I would love to see a *chaprasi* become worthy of holding the office of a Minister and yet not increase his needs. It should also be clearly understood that no Ministers need draw up to the maximum of the salary fixed.

It is worth while pondering over one thing that arises out of the questions. Is it possible for the *chaprasi* to support himself and his family on Rs. 15/- p.m. without taking bribes? Should he not be given enough to keep him above temptation? The remedy for this is that as far as possible we should be our own

*chaprasi*. But even so if we need them we must pay them enough for their requirements. In this way the big gulf that exists between Minister and *chaprasi* will be bridged.

It is another matter as to why the pay of the Ministers has been raised from Rs. 500/- to 1500/- p.m. But this is nothing as compared with, and does not solve, the main problem. With the solution of the latter it will *ipso facto* be solved.

- H., 21-4-'46, pp. 93-94

## CHAPTER 43

### MINISTERIAL SALARIES

I have to pay heavily for the caution with which I wrote the other day the paragraph in *Harijan* in regard to increase in ministerial salaries. I have to go through long letters bewailing my caution and arguing with me to revise my view. How can Ministers make large increases in their own original fat salaries when the poor *chaprasis* and clerks get an increase which hardly meets the occasion? I have re-read my note and I claim that the short note includes all that the various correspondents' desire. But, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, I expand my meaning.

I have been twitted for not referring to the Karachi Resolution. The lower scale of Ministers' salaries rests on much higher ground than the authority of a resolution. In any event, so far as I am aware, the Congress has never varied that resolution. It is as binding today as it was when it was passed.

I do not know that the increase in the salaries is justified. But I must not offhand condemn the increase without knowing the case of the Ministers. Critics should know that I have no authority over them or anyone else except myself. Nor am I present at all the meetings of the Working Committee. I attend only when required by the President. I can only give my opinion for what it is worth. And, if it is to have any weight, it must be well-conceived and based on ascertained facts.

The question of the hideous inequality between the rich and the poor and the lower services and the higher is a separate subject requiring drastic and well thought out method and could not be merely incidental to the lowering of the salaries of the few Ministers and their Secretaries. Both subjects require to be dealt with on merits. The question of salaries could be and should be easily disposed of by the Ministers concerned. The other is a much vaster subject requiring a thorough overhauling. I would any day agree that the Ministers should tackle the subject in their own provinces without delay and that the

lower ranks should before everything else have their salaries fully reconsidered and increased wherever necessary.

- *H.*, 9-6-'46, p. 176

## CHAPTER 44

### LEST WE COPY THE BRITISH

August 15 has come and gone. The people all over India celebrated the deliverance day with wild joy and enthusiasm. They had rightly thought that all the trials and tribulations that they had to undergo under the imperialist regime would become a relic of the bygone age. The sunken eyes of the lowliest *kisan* in the village flashed with joy for the first time. The depressed heart of the *mazdoor* in the city began to rise with hope on this occasion.

Every downtrodden man and woman in this subcontinent celebrated the day spontaneously, as at long last there came a glimmering of hope for the Indian underdog – a whisper of better times and lighter burdens.

But no sooner had the joy of this day died out, then came a communique from New Delhi announcing the salaries and emoluments fixed for the heads of the provinces. The public had fondly cherished the hope that along with imperialism will also go the top-heavy administration which was created to maintain the imperial hold on a slave country. Time and again in the past every political leader, every reputed economist, had criticized in unmistakable terms the fabulous salaries and emoluments paid to the heads of the administration. This topic formed the subject of several resolutions of the Indian National Congress. In the famous resolution passed at the Karachi session of the Congress, the target for the highest head of the Government was fixed at Rs. 500 per month. But perhaps all that is forgotten now and the salaries of Governors are fixed, at the high figure of Rs. 5,500 per month.

Let us first of all see as to what is the remuneration attached to the office of such high dignitaries in other countries. The richest State in the richest country in the world, viz. New York, pays its Governor \$ 10,000 a year, which works out at less than Rs. 3,000 per month. The salary of the Governor of Idaho, a State in the U. S. A., comes to less than Rs. 1,500 per month; that of Maryland, another State in the U.S.A., comes to a little over Rs. 1,000. The Governor of

Illinois, the population of which is equal to that of Orissa or Assam, gets a little over Rs. 3,000. The salaries of administrators of provinces in the Union of South Africa, who are the counterparts of Governors in India, range between Rs. 2,200 and Rs. 2,700 per month. The pay of the Governor of Queensland in Australia is a little over Rs. 3,000 per month. It is well known that Stalin used to be paid Rs. 350 per month. The salaries of the Cabinet Ministers of the United Kingdom cannot be compared with the salaries of Governors, as the former rule over the entire country of theirs. And yet the salary of a British Cabinet Minister is not more than that of the Indian Governor. It is instructive to note that none of<sup>1</sup> these salaries are free of income tax and other taxes of their respective countries. Hence, it can be safely remarked that the salary of an Indian Governor is the highest in the world.

Let us look at these facts from another angle. A Governor is servant No. 1 of his province and so let us compare the income of the servant with that of his masters. The annual per capita income of an Indian was computed at Rs. 65 per annum before this war. If we take the average income of an ordinary peasant or a labourer it will be much less than this. Prof. Kumarappa estimated it at the unenviable figure of Rs. 12 and Principal Agarwal fixes it at Rs. 18 per year. Taking these averages into consideration, we find that the income of an Indian Governor is 1,000 times more than that of his master. And if we take the annual average income of the lowest class who constitute the bulk of the population, the disparity of incomes between the servant and the masters, increases to 4,000 times. Even in the U. S. A. which is called the greatest capitalist country and the land where the greatest economic inequality prevails, the income of the Governor is not more than 20 times the average income of the American citizen.

Another comparison may throw further light on the problem. At the lowest rung of the ladder of the provincial administration stands the peon in Government Offices whose salary is Rs. 11 per month in the C. P. and may be a little more or less in other provinces. How can the entire administrative machine work as one man with enthusiasm towards the social and ameliorative legislation for



the benefit of the masses when there is such a colossal difference between the salary of the peon and that of the Governor? In short, whether one takes our lowest national income or the salary paid at the base to the peon or at the top to the Governor, India stands without a parallel throughout the world.

When such high sums are paid to the heads of the provinces, with what face can we think of reducing the salaries of the other highly paid Government servants? And if the reduction of the high salaries and the raising of the low salaries cannot be done, wherefrom is the provincial Financial Minister to have money for undertaking vast schemes of universal education or medical facilities etc.? Let us not be under the illusion that with the advent of freedom, the nation of the grinding poverty of yesterday will become a rich and prosperous nation in a short time, so that it can afford such high salaries for gubernatorial functions. The Soviet Union required three five-year plans to increase their national income. Even the optimistic framers of the Bombay Plan have envisaged a meagre income of Rs. 130 per annum at the end of fifteen years with a capital investment of Rs. 10,000 crores. Hence, sooner the rosy dreams of India becoming rich overnight are got rid of, the better for all of us. Reality is hard and we should squarely face it. We cannot afford to pay these fabulous sums.

— T. K. BANG

[Whilst I cannot vouch for the figures given by Prof. Bang, there is no hesitation in endorsing his remarks about the high salaries he refers to and the gross disparity between the highest and the lowest salaries paid to their servants by our Governments.

— M. K. G.]

- *H.*, 9-11-'47, pp. 397- 98

## SECTION IX: CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MINISTERS

## CHAPTER 45

### TO MINISTERS OF FREE INDIA

[On 15-8-'47, the Ministers of Bengal came to pay their respects to Gandhiji. To them he said as under.]

Today, you have worn on your head a crown of thorns. The seat of power is a nasty thing. You have to remain ever wakeful on that seat."You have to be more non-violent, more humble and more forbearing. You had been put to test during the British regime. But in a way it was no test at all. But now there will be no end to your being tested. Do not fall a prey to the lure of wealth. May God help you! You are there to serve the villages and the poor.

*The Miracle of Calcutta*, (1959), pp. 32-33

## CHAPTER 46

### DO'S AND DON'T'S FOR MINISTERS AND GOVERNORS

1. An Indian Minister or Governor should use as far as possible only Indian made goods. He and his family should wear nothing but khadi, so that India's poor can eke out a living. He should also ply the spinning wheel – the banner of non-violence.

2. He should learn both the scripts (Hindi and Urdu), and avoid talking with his colleagues in English, freely use his regional language instead.

Government communiques, orders and circulars should be issued, if possible, in Hindustani only, which would create a widespread' enthusiasm among the people to learn it and gradually, through such a natural process, it would become the national language.

3. He should be completely free from all prejudices against any caste or creed, and from any favouritism towards his own relatives and friends. To the Minister, his own son or brother should rank no higher than any other ordinary citizen, including the poorest artisan or labourer.
4. His private life should be so simple that it inspires respect, or even reverence. He should give one hour to productive physical labour as an incentive to the people. He should either spin for an hour or increase the agricultural output of the country by growing cereals or fruits and vegetables in his compound.
5. Bungalows and motor cars should be ruled out of course; if he has to go far or on an urgent business, he should certainly use a car; but its use should be, definitely, very limited. I see that a car may perhaps be quite necessary.
6. I wish that he live along with his colleagues in a compact colony, scj that a group feeling is established easily. His family, too, can thereby cultivate close personal relationship with those of other Ministers.

7. The other members of his family, including children, should do all the household work themselves. Servants should be used as sparingly as possible.
8. His rooms should not furnished with expensive foreign-made furniture such as sofas, cupboards and chairs, specially at present, when crores of his countrymen do not have a single cotton mattress to sit upon or even a piece of cloth to wear.
9. Finally, he should neither drink nor smoke.

*Biharni Komi Agman (Gujarati), pp. 227-28*

## CHAPTER 47

### A WORD TO THE MINISTERS

[Writing under the caption "Havoc in Orissa" Gandhiji had a few words of advice for die Ministers. They are reproduced below.]

A word, however, to the Ministers. Whatever donations they may receive will give only partial relief. They ought, therefore, to do two things: first, adopt means and measures to make people, who may be affected, learn the art of helping themselves by engaging in any productive occupation. Bihar took up spinning and the like. Orissa may take other occupations if people will not look at the spinning wheel. The chief thing is to learn the dignity of labour. Let the Ministers put off their *kurtas* for a little time daily, and work as common labourers, so as to give an impetus to others who may be in need of labour and what labour brings. Secondly, they should make a proper effort to harness engineering skill so as to guide into healthy channels the course of the rushing waters during the monsoon.

H., 25-9-'37, p. 269

## CHAPTER 48

### ADDRESSES AND HONOURS TO MINISTERS

This is the gist of the conversation of a visitor: "You may not know what Ministers have to go through just now. Congressmen, having abjured office for seventeen years, suddenly find that their own chosen representatives are in possession of powers which they had voluntarily surrendered before. They do not know what to do with these representatives. They smother them with addresses and entertainments and, as often as not, they demand interviews with them as a matter of right and present them with all kinds of suggestions and sometimes even ask for petty favours."

This is the best way to disable the Ministers from doing real service to the country. They are new to their work. A conscientious Minister has no time for receiving addresses and honours, or for making speeches in return for fulsome or deserved praise. Nor have they time for interviewers whom they do not invite, or who they think are not going to help them in their work. In theory, a leader of democracy holds himself at the beck and call of the public. It is but right that he should do so. But he dare not do so at the sacrifice of the duty imposed upon him by the public. Ministers will cut a sorry figure if they do not master, or are not allowed by the public to master, the work entrusted to them. An Education Minister has to have all his wits about him if he is to evolve a policy in keeping with the requirements of the country. An Excise Minister will prove a disastrous failure if he does not attend to the constructive side of prohibition. And so will a Finance Minister who, in spite of the handicap created for him by the India Act and in spite of the voluntary surrender of the Excise Revenue, will not balance his budget. It requires a juggler in figures to be able to do so. These are but illustrations. Every ministerial office requires almost the same vigilance, care and study as the three I have mentioned.

It would have been easy for them, if they had simply to read and sign papers put before them by the permanent service. But it is not easy to study every document and think out and originate new policies. Their gesture of simplicity, necessary as it was as a preliminary, will avail them nothing if they will not

show requisite industry, ability, integrity, impartiality and an infinite capacity for mastering details. It would be well, therefore, if the public will exercise self-restraint in the matter of giving addresses, seeking interviews or writing to them long epistles.

*H.*, 9-10-'37, p. 290



## CHAPTER 49

### ADDRESSES AND FLORAL TRIBUTES

Q. A correspondent complains: "In many of the provinces there are Congress ministries, and the public is proud of the fact. So when any Minister visits any place, the local bodies or local institutions show their respect by presenting addresses of value. In almost all the cases, these things become the property of the Minister. This practice, in my opinion, is not good. Either this system of receiving addresses must be stopped or 'the things presented should go, say, to the local Congress Committee. There should be some definite policy regarding the garlanding of the Ministers or the Congress leaders. I have seen several cases where these Ministers have been honoured with flowers costing not less than 300 to 400 rupees. This is mere waste of money."

A. The complaint is valid. No public servant should receive for his own use addresses of value or costly floral tributes. These things have become a nuisance, if they are not much worse. The argument is often trotted out that costly frames and flowers put money into the pockets of artisans. The latter are well able to take care of themselves without the aid of Ministers and the like. These gentlemen do not travel for pleasure. Theirs are business tours undertaken often for listening to what the people have to say. The addresses presented to them need not extol their virtues which are their own reward. They should express accurately local wants and grievances if any. In these times the Ministers and their secretaries have a hard task before them. Public adulation instead of being a help will become a hindrance.

H., 9-6-'46, p. 171

**CHAPTER 50****WARNING TO MINISTERS**

Many people came and talked to him and left literature with him to the effect that the popular Ministers were acting in an autocratic fashion like their British predecessors. He had not talked to the Ministers in this connection. But he was quite clear that nothing for which they had criticized the British Government should happen in the regime of responsible ministries. Under the British rule the Viceroy could issue ordinances for making laws and executing them. There was a hue and cry against the combination of judicial and executive functions. Nothing had happened since to warrant a change in the opinion. There should be no ordinance rule. Their legislative assemblies should be their only law-makers. Ministers were liable to be changed at will. Their acts should be subject to review by their courts. They should do all in their power to make justice cheap, expeditious and incorruptible. For that purpose Panchayat Raj had been suggested. It was not possible for a high court to reach lakhs and lakhs of people. Only extraordinary situations required emergency legislation. Legislative assemblies, even though the procedure might entail some delay, must not be superseded by the executive. He had no concrete example in mind. He had based his remarks upon the correspondence he had received from various provinces. Therefore, while he appealed to the people not to take the law into their own hands, he appealed to the Ministers to beware of lapsing into the old ways which they had condemned.

*H., 19-10-'47, pp. 377- 78*

**CHAPTER 51****POVERTY NO SHAME**

The difficulty to which Gandhiji's attention was drawn was that while the Congress had been in the wilderness it had set before the people the ideal of service, self-denial and simplicity. In those days it was difficult to collect even a lakh of rupees. Today, the Congress Government was in charge of crores of rupees and could raise as much as it liked. Were they to spend it as if there was no change from foreign rule to indigenous rule? Some people seemed to think that India's leaders and ambassadors must live and spend money in a style befitting their independent status and vie with independent America and England in stylishness. They thought that such expenditure was necessary in order to uphold India's prestige in foreign countries. Gandhiji did not think so. Independence was not synonymous with stylishness or pomp. We had not cut our cloak according to our cloth. There was no merit in hiding our poverty. India's status in the world depended upon her moral supremacy which her passive resistance had brought her. In this she had no rival as yet, for the other nations, great or small, were proud of their armaments and military valour. That was their capital. India possessed only her moral capital, which increased with the spending. On any other condition the Congress claims to revolutionize values, when they came into power, would be forfeited. People criticized the Ministers for accepting high salaries and not bringing the artificial British standard down to the natural Indian standard. These critics knew nothing of the private life of their Ministers. But the fashion was for Congressmen and others to expect high emoluments wholly out of keeping with what one was making out of office. One who managed to live on Rs. 150 per month would not hesitate to demand and expect Rs. 500. Such persons felt that they would not be appreciated unless they demanded high salaries and lived in the old Civil Service style and dressed up as such. That was not the way to serve India. They should not forget that a man's value did not depend upon the amount of money that he earned. The process of self-purification, which they all must share, demanded right thought and action.

*H.*, 1-2-'48, p. 12

## CHAPTER 52

### ADMINISTRATIVE WASTE AND LAVISH EXPENDITURE

Gandhiji continued to note with growing uneasiness the unchecked administrative waste and lavish expenditure, when millions were suffering untold hardships. Nothing escaped his watchful eye –the expenditure incurred by embassies abroad; furniture installed in the residence of Cabinet Ministers; the conduct of the nation's representatives in the capitals of foreign countries, and so on. From time to time he sounded a note of warning. "The accounts I receive about you" he wrote to one of our Ambassadors abroad, "show that you are not living the life that India would expect of you. Can it be?"

He was sure, he remarked to a friend at Delhi in the summer of 1947, that if all Ministers voluntarily adopted the ideal of simplicity, they would capture the imagination of the world and win the people's confidence which nothing and nobody would be able to shake or destroy. But instead, their Governors and Ministers needed palatial buildings, an imposing array of body-guards, and liveried khidmutgars. Dinner parties were regarded as an essential part of the gubernatorial ceremonial. "I fail to understand all this. What is more detrimental to the country's prestige – lack of food, clothing and shelter for the countless people of India, or living in a simple style in unostentatious small houses, instead of costly, imposing piles out of keeping with their surroundings, by our Ministers and Governors?"

If he had his way, he went on to say, he would immediately stop the practice of holding dinner parties in the Government House "when the people are experiencing acute food shortage". He would provide the Ministers with cosy, small, unostentatious houses but no armed bodyguards either to Congress Governors or to Ministers, "who are committed to non-violence as their policy. And if as a result some of them should get killed, I would not mind."

*Towards New Horizons, (1959), pp. 101-02*

## CHAPTER 53

### WILL MINISTERS TAKE THEIR RATIONS FROM COMMON RATION'S DEPOTS?

Q. Whilst the food policy was in the hands of the Advisors to the Provincial Governors, there was no effective method of checking them. Things under the responsible Provincial Governments are different. Should it not be a matter of conscience with Congress Ministers to get their rations from common rationing depots and take not a grain more from any other source? This will immediately have a far-reaching effect. Today all controlling centres for food grains or cloth have become public dens for thieving and corruption. Equipped with the moral force that the Ministers will gain by acting as suggested, they will be able to fight out the evil with success.

A. This question is a consolidation of many letters of complaints. I wholly agree with the suggestion made in the question. I fancy that the suggested practice is already being observed, not only by the Ministers but all other Government servants. I do not know of any other source, save the black market for getting supplies of foodstuffs. Of course, no exhortation can take the place of persons in authority, setting a good example. If they took their rations from the same stock as is given to the public, the keepers of stores will soon find that it would not pay to dole out rotten stuff to the public. The practice of the Ministers and other high-placed men in England, taking their things in common with the public is, I am told, the usual thing, as it should be.

H., 4-8-'46, p. 250

## CHAPTER 54

### ALL EYES ON MINISTERS

Soon after the new Ministers took office, Gandhiji received a note in which some English friends had expressed the fear that the lovely gardens of the houses, formerly occupied by the members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, would now suffer neglect. There would be no flowers, grass would be allowed to grow anyhow where there were velvety lawns and the compound would be untidy. Carpets, chairs and other furniture would probably be ruined by oil or grease stains, the lavatories would be dirty etc. Gandhiji said that having lived in England and South Africa and known Englishmen well, he could be witness to the fact that cultured English people do understand and observe the laws of sanitation and hygiene. English officials were living in palaces as kings. They kept a huge staff of servants to keep their houses and surroundings clean. The people's leaders had gone to the Interim Government as their servants. They were of the people and one with them. There was no need for them to depend on a large staff of servants. They would be untrue to their calling, if they did. But they could and should keep their houses and surroundings spotlessly clean by self-help. The women of their household would be their caretakers with themselves and Gandhiji knew that not one of the leaders would hesitate to clean their own lavatories. A lady doctor had told him years ago, that while the Viceroy's House was a palace and spotlessly clean, the quarters of his staff of Harijans etc. were a very different show. The people's leaders would make no such difference. One of Jawaharlalji's personal staff, — a Harijan—had been an M.L.A. They treated their servants as members of the family. Gandhiji would not be happy, unless the Ministers of the nation maintained the highest standards in every department of life and he was sure, they would not disappoint the nation.

H., 15-9-'46, pp. 314-15

## CHAPTER 55

### CONGRESS MINISTERS, NOT SAHIB LOG

A Congress worker asks,

"Should die Congress Ministers live in great state like their English predecessors? Will it be right for them to use Government cars for private work?"

From my point of view there can be only one reply to both the questions. If the Congress wants to continue as a people's organization, the Ministers cannot live as *sahib log* nor use for private work facilities provided by Government for official duties.

H., 29-9-'46, p. 333

## CHAPTER 56

### NATIONAL SERVICE AND MINISTERSHIP

Service means to do good to one's country. . . . National service has nowadays come to mean striving for a big name, according to many now, through which one gets a notice in the papers or is photographed—which is better—or secures a Ministership as a reward for going to jail. So everyone wants to grab power in order to rise to a Ministership in the end. But how can even good Ministers do any notable work without the people's support? The country does require among others, Ministers too. But a Minister can adorn his post only if he deserves it. It is *our* duty to help him so that he may shine in his job. If we can understand this, we shall accept the truth that even an illiterate woman can serve our country, if she bears in mind national interest.

*The Lonely Pilgrim*, (1964), pp. 92-93



## CHAPTER 57

### NO INTERFERENCE WITH LAW

Gandhiji then referred to another question. In some places authority had arrested several people who were implicated in rioting. Under the old regime people appealed to the Viceroy for clemency, who had to follow prescribed rules however faulty they were. Now they appealed to their Ministers. Were they to act according to their own sweet will? He thought not. The Ministers could not act capriciously. They were bound to let the law take its own course. Clemency of the State had a definite place and had to be exercised under due safeguard. The only way such cases could be withdrawn was by complainants appealing to the courts concerned to release the prisoners concerned. Heinous crimes did not admit of such easy discharges. In such cases, it was not enough for the complainants to abstain from giving evidence against the accused. The latter had to confess their crimes and ask for mercy. And if there was sincere cooperation from the complainants' free pardon was a possibility. What he wanted to stress was that no Minister had the right to interfere with the course of justice even for his dearest ones. It was the function of democracy to make justice cheap and expeditious and to ensure all possible purity in the administration. But for Ministers to dare to replace or influence courts of justice was the very negation of democracy and law.

*H.*, 2-11-'47, pp. 390- 91

## CHAPTER 58

### ADVICE OF EXPERIENCED MFN

Our Ministers are of the people, from the people. Let them not arrogate to themselves greater knowledge than those experienced men who do not happen to occupy ministerial chairs – but who hold the view strongly that the sooner the control is removed the better. A physician writes to say that the food control has made it impossible for those who depend upon rationed food to procure eatable cereals and pulses and therefore, he says, the people needlessly suffer from ailments caused by rotten stuff.

*H.*, 16-11-'47, p. 409

## SECTION X : CRITICISM OF MINISTERS

## CHAPTER 59

### A CRITICISM

A C. P. correspondent sends me a bitter letter criticizing the C.P. Ministry. I condense it below toning down the bitterest part.

"I have been wanting to write to you for some time but did not do so advisedly. I do so now as one interested in the good Government of my province, which I take it, is also your adopted home for the rest of your life. We were led to believe that Government by the representatives of the Congress would be so good as to escape calumny and be able to rule for all time merely by reason and by moral influence. But the main purpose of the Congress Ministry appears to us to be

- (a) to worship your idol in public and break it in secret;
- (b) to worship the symbols of Imperialism in secret and denounce them in-public;
- (c) to play the malefactor towards their opponents when they cannot conquer by truthful and legitimate methods;
- (d) to carry on a brisk traffic in legislation and public offices.

"The government of a people cannot be run, as the Congress Ministers in the C.P. seem to imagine, by the common argument of promised boons and by corrupting the electorate with hope. During the past ten months your Ministers have left no stone unturned to shake the moral foundation of good government of this province. The Ministry and its component parts are honey-combed with intrigues and corruption. To sum up, my conclusion, which I wish to convey to you, is that the Congress Party might have been deemed capable of governing had they never assumed power and responsibility. Next to assumption of power is the responsibility of relinquishing it. It is strange that your soul should not revolt against such a predatory Ministry for the creation of which the moral responsibility is entirely yours."

The Working Committee referred all the complaints against the Ministry to the Parliamentary Board which carried on an enquiry on the spot. Its report is public property. The Congress is a wholly democratic organization with the widest possible franchise. The Working Committee is its mouthpiece and has to work within the limits prescribed for it by the Congress Constitution. It was open to the C.P. Congress representatives to demand resignation from the

Ministers, but they did not. On the contrary they wanted the present Ministers to compose their differences and carry on the Government. The Parliamentary Board could not disregard the wishes of the representatives. It had no power to do so. But it did all it could to rid the Ministry of whatever shortcomings they had discovered. The Ministers, it must be admitted, offered no opposition to whatever the Board wanted to do. It now remains to be seen how the new arrangement works.

The point, however, that I wish to make is that the Working Committee does not hush up any evil that is found in the Congress organization. It is not afraid to impose discipline which is readily obeyed in most cases.

I wholly endorse the correspondent's proposition that the Congress can only rule "by reason and moral influence". He and critics like him may rest assured that the Congress will die a natural and deserved death if and when it substitutes reason and moral influence by *goondaism*.

H., 18-9-'38, p. 149

## CHAPTER 60

## A MINISTER'S WOE

Dr. Katju sends the following note:

"Owing to the comparative failure of winter crops in many parts of India, there is a widespread apprehension about serious food shortage in the country. In order to afford equal opportunity to the rich and the poor alike regarding food supplies, rationing has been introduced in many urban areas in the United Provinces. Rationing entails responsibility on the Government to feed the inhabitants in such areas. The apprehended scarcity is so severe that the U. P. rations have been cut down to the barest minimum viz., six *chhataks* of cereals. This includes 2 *chs.* of wheat, 2 *chs.* of rice and 2 *chs.* of mixed *atta*. Mixed *atta* is not generally liked by the people and any further reduction in rations is almost impossible. To feed the urban areas, continuous supplies from the villages is an evident necessity. The Government of India has suggested to the provincial governments that in order to ensure continuous supplies, it would be desirable to enforce compulsory levies on agricultural produce in surplus districts, i.e. in districts where it is expected that the produce exceeds the requirements of the rural area concerned. This question of a compulsory levy is greatly agitating the public mind. It is said that the control price fixed by the Government is too low and should be raised. The answer to that is, that the price structure is an all-India affair and it is not possible to raise the price in any particular province without affecting the structure as a whole. Furthermore, the control price in the United Provinces has been fixed at Rs. 10-4 per maund of 40 *seers* which is not really a low price. It is sufficiently remunerative and makes due allowance for the rise in costs of cultivation and general living. Formerly in pre-War days wheat used to sell at about 13 *seers* a rupee; the control price is 4 *seers*. Supplies being apprehended to be much less than the demand, there is bound to be a black market where selfish people can buy foodstuffs at higher prices to satisfy their individual needs. No compulsion would be necessary if cultivators realize that it is their social and patriotic duty to do their utmost to feed their brothers and sisters in urban areas, and also landless people living in the rural areas. The cultivator is in every sense of the word the *anna-data* and I ask you to appeal to him at this critical juncture not to hoard, not to sell in the black market but to supply in the greatest measure possible to the Government stores, so that food may be distributed equitably and equally to all people, rich and poor alike and hunger and destitution may be avoided. Your voice goes far and wide and I therefore appeal to you to

take up this work. Very many schemes have been considered for the purpose of ensuring adequate supplies in our urban areas, but whatever the proposals may be, the net result is that in every case the cultivator is asked to part with his grain. Unless the consumers in rural and urban areas are fed, there are bound to be disturbances of every kind. We are doing our very best to encourage the 'Grow More Food' and 'Grow More Vegetables' campaigns in the United Provinces. The various suggestions made by you have all been adopted. Instructions have been issued to plough all Government lands in Government buildings etc. Private owners have also been offered expert advice and are being given facilities by the supply of free seeds and free water from irrigation channels. Assistance in the digging of wells has also been given. After all is said and done, without public co-operation little progress can be made and co-operation must take the form of the *anna-data* giving the gift of food grains to the utmost of his capacity."

This note from Dr. Katju is worthy of close attention by the kisan and his guides as also the urban people. The impending calamity can be turned to good use. Then it will be a blessing in disguise. Otherwise, curse it is and curse it will remain.

Dr. Katju writes as a responsible Minister. Therefore, people can either make or mar him. They can remove him and replace him by a better. But so long as Ministers of the people's choice are in office as their servants, the people have to carry out their instructions. Every breach of law or instructions is not *satyagraha*. It can easily be *duragraha* rather than *satyagraha*.

H., 21-4-'46, p. 97

## CHAPTER 61

### CRITICISM OF MINISTERS

All Congress Ministers naturally come in for trenchant criticism from those who dislike Congress politics. Whatever is sound in such criticism must be accepted with gratefulness. There is criticism that springs from party motives. Even that has to be borne. But when Congressmen take up the same cry, it becomes embarrassing. They have their remedy. They can complain to their Provincial Committees, and failing redress they can go to the Working Committee and finally to the A.I.C.C. Surely there is no room for criticism if all these remedies fail. But my greatest complaint against these critics is that they are too hasty or too lazy to acquaint themselves with facts. There is no sin greater than ignorance. I see daily verification of this great saying.

H., 10-9-'38, p. 250



## CHAPTER 62

### CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT

A popular ministry is responsible to the legislatures and cannot do anything without their consent. Every elected member in a popular legislature is responsible to his voters. Therefore, the voter who represents the public should ponder well before embarking on any criticism of the government of his creation. Moreover, one bad habit of the people should be borne in mind. They do not like any tax whatsoever. Where there is good government, the tax-payer gets full return for his money, as for example, the water tax in cities. No tax-payer could get water on his own for the same payment. But even so, and in spite of the fact that the tax is levied by the popular will, tax-payers always resent even paying such taxes. It is, of course, true that one cannot prove the benefit of all taxes as easily as the one I have cited as an example. But as society grows in size and complexity and the field of service also grows, it is difficult to explain to the individual tax-payer, how he gets his return for any particular tax. This much, however, is clear that taxes as a whole should stand for the general benefit of society. If this were not so, the argument that taxes were levied by popular will would not hold.

H., 8-9-'46, p. 293

## CHAPTER 63

### MINISTERS SHOULD NOT BE SENSITIVE

I have before me quite a number of letters fiercely criticizing what they consider to be their luxurious life. They accuse them too of favouritism, even nepotism. I know that much criticism comes from ignorance. Ministers should not be sensitive. They would take in good part even carping criticism. They would be surprised if I were to send them the letters I receive; probably, they receive worse. Be that as it may, the moral I draw from them is that the critics expect much more from these chosen servants of the people than from others in the way of simplicity, courage, honesty and industry. In this matter we cannot imitate the English rulers of the past, except perhaps in industry and discipline. The whole purpose of this note will be served if on the one hand the Ministers profit by valid criticism and the critics learn to be sober and precise about their facts. Inaccuracy or exaggeration spoils a good case.

H., 21-9-'47, p. 325

## CHAPTER 64

### THREATS—THE ORDINARY LOT OF MINISTERS

Let me inform the public that the Ministers are trying their best, in spite of threats, to remove every kind of injustice. In these days of the growing violence of the mind, threats must be regarded as the ordinary lot of Ministers elected under the extensive democratic franchise. They may not be deterred even at the cost of their offices or lives from doing what they hold to be their duty, nor can they afford to be angry and refuse to do justice because as in the case under consideration the petition for justice ends by issuing an ugly threat.

H., 15-7-'39, p. 198

## CHAPTER 65

### DON'T WEAKEN THE GOVERNMENT

The Government had arrested some people and there was an agitation against the arrests. The Government had a right to do so. Our Government could never arrest innocent people deliberately. But human beings were apt to err and it was possible that some innocent people might suffer by mistake. It was for the Government to rectify such error. People in a democracy should be satisfied with drawing the Government's attention to mistakes, if any. They could remove the Government if they wished to. But they should not obstruct them by agitating against them. Ours was not a foreign Government having a mighty army and navy to support them. They had to derive their strength from the people.

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### Look to Your Own Faults

How could real peace be established? They might feel pleased that peace appeared to have returned to Delhi. He could not share the satisfaction. The Hindus and the Muslims had become estranged from one another. They used to fight in the past too. But it lasted a day or two and then everybody forgot all about it. Today, they had become so embittered that they felt as if they had been old enemies. He called this feeling weakness. They must shed it. Then alone could they become a great power. They had two choices before them. They could become a great military power or if they followed his way, they could become a great non-violent and invincible power. In either case the first condition was the shedding of all fear.

The only way to get near each other was that each must forget the mistakes of the other party and magnify its own. He recommended it to the Muslims as he did to the Hindus and the Sikhs with all the force at his command. Enemies of yesterday could become friends of today, provided they made a clean breast of their guilt. The policy of tit for tat was not conducive to friendship. If they would act up to his advice wholeheartedly, he would be able to leave Delhi and follow his mission in Pakistan.

H., 26-10-'46, p. 382

## CHAPTER 66

### MINISTERS AND PEOPLE

Addressing a meeting of businessmen at Hardinge Library, (New Delhi on 28-12-47) Gandhiji said that he agreed that control of prices was unsuitable for India, whatever might be the case elsewhere, least on food or cloth. The Ministers were their servants. They could do nothing against the express wishes of the people. They would not stay in office a day longer than the people wished.

H., 4-1-'48, p. 495

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He also heard destructive criticism of the Government by people who could not themselves wield the power that had come to the nation, and would not let those wield it who could. The Ministers on the other hand should be real servants of the people from whom they derive their power, free from nepotism and corruption, meting out even justice to all.

If all the three – the zamindars, the ryots and the Government – in Bihar did their duty, concluded Gandhiji, Bihar would give a noble example to the whole of India.

H., 1-6-'47, p. 176

## SECTION XI: MINISTERS AND NON-VIOLENCE

## CHAPTER 67

### OUR FAILURE

The communal riots in Allahabad – the headquarters of the Congress, and the necessity of summoning the assistance of the police and even the military show that the Congress has not yet become fit to substitute the British authority. It is best to face this naked truth however unpleasant it may be. . . .

The riots and certain other things I can mention should make us pause and ask ourselves whether the Congress is really growing from strength to strength. . . .

It has been suggested that when we have our independence riots and the like will not occur. This seems to me to be an empty hope, if in the course of the struggle for freedom we do not understand and use the technique of non-violent action in every conceivable circumstance. *To the extent that the Congress Ministers have been obliged to make use of the police and the military, to that extent, in my opinion, we must admit our failure.* That the Ministers could not have done otherwise is unfortunately only too true. I should like every Congressmen, I should like the Working Committee, to ask themselves why we have failed, if they think with me that we have.

H., 26-3-'38, p. 54

## CHAPTER 68

### AN APPEAL FOR SELF-EXAMINATION

The riots in U.P. affected me deeply. I discussed them with Maulana Azad and the Bose Brothers in terms of non-violence. I felt that we were getting not nearer towards our goal but further away from it. Haripura gave me reason to hope that we were growing in strength, and that in spite of our shortcomings we should be able to see Swaraj in my lifetime. I had thought that we should, in the course of the year, acquire that strength. But the riots in Allahabad and elsewhere came as a rude shock. We were, to our shame, compelled to seek the aid of the police and the military. . . .

H., 2-4-'38, p. 65

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My remarks arising out of the recent riots in U.P. have attracted much attention. Friends have sent me cuttings from the Press. This is some of the criticism printed or spoken : . . . .

(2) I wrote without sufficient data . . .

2. All the data required were that there were riots, no matter on how small a scale, that Congressmen were not able to deal with them non-violently, and that the aid of the police and the military had to be summoned. There was no dispute about these three broad facts. They were enough to enable me to draw the conclusions I did. In this there was no reflection on the Ministers. I have admitted that they could not have acted otherwise. The fact, however remains that the Congress non-violence was not able to cope with the emergency.

H., 9-4-'38, p. 72

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I feel ashamed that our Ministers had to call to their aid the police and the military. I am ashamed that they had to use the language that they did in reply to the opposition speeches. . . . Why does our non-violence fail on such



occasion? Is it the nonviolence of the weak? Even the *goondas* should not move us from our faith and make us say: 'We will send them to the gallows or shoot them down if necessary.' They too are our countrymen. If they will kill us, we must allow them to do so. You cannot pit against organized violence the non-violence of the weak, but the non-violence which the bravest alone can exercise.

*H., 2-4-'38, p. 64*

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We have thousands of members on the Congress register. . . . Do they know the implications of the forms they sign when they become Congress members ? . . . Where the members are genuine, were they called by the Congress Committee of the province to do their part in quelling the riots? Why don't we call upon them? And if and when we call them, how many thousands out of ten thousand will respond? If even five, nay even one, thousand respond, and go forward to stand between the fighting camps, the heads of some of them will be broken, but they will be the last. No more heads will be broken. But the implications of the creed must be recognized.

A true Congressman should be incapable of seeking the aid of the police and the military on these occasions. But if we must, if our non-violence is the non-violence of the weak and not of the strong, it would be far better to change our creed than allow the world to believe that we are non-violent in thought, word and deed.

*H., 16-4-'38, p. 81*

## CHAPTER 69

### CIVIL LIBERTY

Civil Liberty is not criminal liberty. When law and order are under popular control, the Ministers in charge of the department cannot hold the portfolio for a day, if they act against the popular will. It is true that the Assemblies are not sufficiently representative of the whole people. Nevertheless the suffrage is wide enough to make it representative of the Nation in matters of Law and Order. In seven Provinces the Congress rules. It seems to be assumed by some persons that, in these Provinces at least, individuals can say and do what they like. But so far as I know the Congress mind, it will not tolerate any such license. Civil Liberty means the fullest liberty to say and do what one likes within the ordinary law of the land. The word 'ordinary' has been purposely used here. The Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, not to speak of the Special Powers Legislation, contain provisions which the foreign rulers have enacted for their safety. These provisions can be easily identified, and must be ruled out of operation. The real test, however, is the interpretation by the Working Committee of the power of the Ministers of Law and Order. Subject, therefore, to the general instructions laid down by the Working Committee for the guidance of Congress Ministers, the Statutory Powers limited in the manner indicated by me, must be exercised by the Ministers against those who, in the name of Civil Liberty, preach lawlessness in the popular sense of the term.

It has been suggested that Congress Ministers who are pledged to non-violence cannot resort to legal processes involving punishments. Such is not my view of the non-violence accepted by the Congress. I have, personally, not found a way out of punishments and punitive restrictions in all conceivable cases. No doubt punishments have to be non-violent, if such an expression is permissible in this connection. Just as violence has its own technique, known by the military science, which has invented means of destruction unheard of before, non-violence has its own science and technique. Non-violence in politics is a new weapon in the process of evolution. Its vast possibilities are yet unexplored.

The exploration can take place only if it is practised on a big scale and in various fields. Congress Ministers, if they have faith in non-violence, will undertake the explorations. But whilst they are doing this, or whether they do so or not, there is no doubt that they cannot ignore incitements to violence and manifestly violent speech, even though they may themselves run the risk of being styled violent. When they are not wanted, the public will only have to signify its disapproval through its representatives. In the absence of definite instructions from the Congress, it would be proper for the Ministers to report, what they consider is violent behaviour of any member of the public to their own Provincial Congress Committee, or the Working Committee, and seek instructions. If the superior authority does not approve of their recommendations, they may prefer to resign. They may not allow things to drift so far as to have to summon the aid of the military, in my opinion, it would amount to political bankruptcy, when any Minister is obliged to fall back on the military, which does not belong to the people, and which, in any scheme of non-violence, must be ruled out of court for the observance of internal peace.

One interpretation I put upon the India Act is that it is an unconscious challenge to Congressmen to demonstrate the virtue of non-violence and the sincerity of their conviction about it. If the Congress can give such a demonstration, most of the safeguards fall into desuetude, and the Congress can achieve its goal without a violent struggle, and also without civil disobedience. If the Congress has not impregnated the people with the non-violent spirit, it has to become a minority, and remain in opposition, unless it will alter its creed.

*H., 23-10-'37, p. 308*

## CHAPTER 70

### STORM SIGNALS

The Sholapur affair and the labour unrest in Cawnpore and Ahmedabad show how uncertain is the Congress control over forces of disorder. Tribes called criminal cannot be dealt with radically differently from the past practice without ascertaining how they will behave. One difference can certainly be made at once. They may not be treated as criminals to be dreaded and shunned, but efforts should be made to brother them and bring them under the national influence. It is said that the red flag men (communists) have been at work among the men in the Sholapur settlement. Are they Congressmen ? If they are, why are they not found by the side of the Congressmen who are Ministers at the wish of the Congress ? If they are not Congressmen, do they seek to destroy the Congress influence and prestige? If they are not Congressmen and do seek to destroy the Congress prestige, why have Congressmen been unable to reach these tribes and make them proof against the blandishments of those who would exploit their traditional violent tendencies, so called or real?

Why are we living in Ahmedabad and Cawnpore in perpetual dread of lightning or unauthorized strikes ? Is the Congress unable to influence organized labour in the right direction? We may not distrust Government notices issued in the provinces administered by Congress Ministers. It will not do to belittle their notices as we used to treat the irresponsible Government's notices. If we distrust Congress Ministers or are dissatisfied with them, they can be dismissed without ceremony. But while they are permitted to remain in office, their notices and appeals should receive the full-hearted support of all Congressmen.

On no other condition can the holding of offices by Congressmen be justified. If in spite of honest efforts by Congressmen, forces of disorder cannot be brought under control without the assistance of the police and the military, in my opinion, acceptance by the Congress of the burden of office loses all force and meaning, and the sooner the Ministers are withdrawn, the better it would be for the Congress and its struggle to achieve complete independence.

My hope is that the outbreak in the Sholapur settlement and the labour unrest in Ahmedabad and Cawnpore are symptoms of the exaggerated expectations of radical betterment of the condition of labour and even of the so-called criminal tribes. Then the Congress should have no difficulty in checking disorders. If, on the contrary, they are signs of weakness of Congress control, the whole situation arising out of acceptance of office by Congressmen requires reviewing.

One thing is certain. The Congress organization needs strengthening and purging. On the Congress register there should be, not merely a few lacs of men and women, but every adult male or female above the age of 18, no matter to what faith they belong. And these should be on the register in order to receive a proper training or education in the practice of truth and non-violence in terms of the national struggle. I have always conceived the Congress to be the greatest school of political education for the whole nation. But the Congress is far off from the realization of the ideal. One hears of manipulations of Congress registers, and of bogus names being put in for the purpose of showing numbers. When the registers have been honestly prepared there is no attempt to keep in close touch with the voters.

The question naturally arises: Do we really believe in truth and non-violence, in sustained work and discipline, in the efficacy of the fourfold constructive programme? If we do, sufficient has been achieved to show, during the working of the Congress ministries for the past few months, that complete independence is much nearer than when offices were accepted. If, however, we are not sure of our own chosen aims, we need not wonder, if one fine morning we discover that we had committed a grave blunder in embarking upon office acceptance. My conscience as A or THE prime mover in the direction of office acceptance, is quite clear. I advised it on the supposition that the Congressmen as a whole were sound not only on the goal but also on the truthful and non-violent means. If we lack that political faith in the means, office acceptance may prove to be a trap.

*H., 20-11-'37, p. 340*

## CHAPTER 71

### STUDENTS AND STRIKES

A college student of Bangalore writes:

"I have read your article in *Harijan* and I request you to let me know your opinion on students taking part in strikes like Andamans Day, Abattoir Day, etc."

Whilst I have pleaded for the removal of restrictions on the speech and movements of students, I am not able to support political strikes or demonstrations. Students should have the greatest freedom of expression and of opinion. They may openly sympathize with any political party they like. But in my opinion, they may not have freedom of action whilst they are studying. A student cannot be an active politician and pursue his studies at the same time. It is difficult to draw hard and fast lines at the time of big national upheavals. Then they do not strike or, if the word 'strike' can be used in such circumstances, it is a wholesale strike; it is a suspension of studies. Thus what may appear to be an exception is not one in reality.

As a matter of fact the question such as the correspondent has raised should not arise in the Congress Provinces. For there can be no curb which the best mind of the students will not willingly accept. The majority of them are, must be, Congress-minded. They may not do anything that would embarrass the Ministries. If they struck, they would do so because the Ministers wanted them to. But I cannot conceive of Congress Ministers wanting them to strike except when the Congress is no longer in office, and when the Congress declares, may be, a non-violent active war against the government of the day. And even then, I should think that to invite students in the first instance to suspend their studies for strikes would be tantamount to a declaration of bankruptcy. If the people in general are with the Congress for any demonstration in the nature of strikes, students, will be left alone, except as a last resort. During the last war

the students were not the first to be called out but they were the last, so far as I recollect, and then only college students.

I would like the correspondent to read or re-read my note on a schoolmaster's letter in the *Harijan* of the 18th September. He will find therein my position regarding the political liberty of students and schoolmasters.

But another correspondent writes in connection with it:

"If we allow paid State officials, teachers and others to participate in politics, it would become a hell. No Government could be carried on, if their policies are subjected to debates among Government or other State officials who have to carry them out. Your desire that national hopes, desires and ideas of patriotism should have free play is of course proper. But I fear your article is likely to be misunderstood unless you make your position quite clear."

I had thought my position was quite clear. Where there is a national Government, there is rarely any friction between it and its officials or the students. My note guards against all indiscipline. What the schoolmaster resents, and rightly, is espionage and suppression of free thought which has been the rule of the day hitherto. Congress Ministers themselves are of the people and from the people. They have no secrets. They are expected to be in personal touch with every public activity including the student mind. They have at their disposal the whole of the Congress machinery which, as the interpreter of the popular will, is surely more than the law, the police and the military. Those who have not that machinery to back them are spent bullets. For those Ministers who have the Congress at their back, the law, the police and the military may be said to be a useless appendage. And the Congress is nothing if it is not an embodiment of discipline. Therefore, with the Congress in power there should be voluntary, not forced, discipline everywhere.

H., 2-10-'37, p. 280

## CHAPTER 72

## IS IT PICKETING?

A complaint is that, in the name of peaceful picketing, picketers are resorting to methods bordering on violence, such as making a living wall beyond which no one can pass without being hurt or hurting those who make the wall. As the author of peaceful picketing I cannot recall a single instance in which I had encouraged such picketing. A friend has quoted Dharasana against me. I had suggested the occupation of salt works. But that is wholly inapplicable to the case under consideration. In Dharasana the objective was the salt works of which possession had to be taken and maintained as against the Government. The action could hardly be called picketing. But to prevent workers' from going to their work by standing in front of them is pure violence and must be given tip. The owners of mills or other factories would be fully justified in invoking the assistance of the police, and a Congress Government would be bound to provide it if the Congressmen concerned would not desist.

H., 13-8-'38, p. 216

The (other) inconsistency imputed to me has reference to my advice to factory-owners to invoke the assistance of the police to defend themselves against what I have described as violent picketing. Having condemned the Ministries for calling in the aid of the police and even the military for suppressing riots, how could I advise employers of labour to ask for, and Ministers to supply, police assistance, ask my critics.

This is what I wrote in the *Harijan* about the ministerial action in U.P.:

"It has been suggested that when we have our independence riots and the like will not occur. This seems to me to be an empty hope, if in the course of the struggle for freedom we do not understand and use the technique of non-violent action in every conceivable circumstance. To the extent that the Congress Ministers have been obliged to make use of the police and the



military, to that extent, in my opinion, we must admit our failure. That the Ministers could not have done otherwise is unfortunately too true. I should like every Congressman, I should like the Working Committee, to ask themselves why we have failed, if they think with me that we have."

Surely, here there is no condemnation of the Ministers' action. I have deplored the necessity for it as I would deplore such necessity in the matter of picketing. But till the Congress has developed a peaceful method of dealing with violent crimes, its Ministers must use the police and, I fear, even the military, if they are to undertake the administration of the affairs of the country in the present stage of its career. But it will bode ill for them and the country if they do not devise methods of dispensing-with the use both of the police and the military or at least of visibly reducing their use to such an extent that he who runs may notice the reduction.

H., 27-8-'38, p. 234

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And the picketing? It is insufferable that youngsters or even grown-up people should assail homes and offices and howl unmentionable imprecations against those who are shouldering their burden amid the greatest difficulty. Until we found the correct remedy in terms of satyagraha, the Ministers must be permitted to deal with such offences in the manner they consider best. If they are not, the freedom that is possible under Congress Raj will soon degenerate into *goondaism*, pure and undefiled. That is the way not to salvation but it is the easiest road to perdition. And the Minister who is worth his salt will resolutely refuse to be a cause of the country's perdition.

H., 10-9-'38, p. 251

## CHAPTER 73

### MINISTRY AND MILITARY

Provincial Autonomy, such as it is, has been won by civil resistance however inferior it may have been. But is it not realized that it is likely to break down if Congress Ministers cannot carry on without the aid of the police and the military? If the partial autonomy was won by non-violent means, it must be held also by such means and no other. From recent experiences it seems clear that the country is not ready to hold power through non-violent means. Though for the past twenty years — the period of the greatest mass awakening — the people have been taught to abjure the use of arms including brickbats and the lathi, and to rely upon non-violence pure and simple, we know that Congress Ministries have been obliged to resort to violence to suppress popular violence real or imaginary. . . . Was our non-violence that of the weak ?

H., 1-4-'39, p. 72

## CHAPTER 74

### CONGRESS MINISTERS AND NON-VIOLENCE

Shri Shankarrao Dev writes:

"Many people do not understand why those who call themselves satyagrahis, resort to the use of the military and the police, the moment they become Ministers of Government. The people feel that this is a breach of both the creed and the policy of *ahimsa*. This popular belief seems to be consistent with reason. The inconsistency between belief and action of the Congress Ministers and the exploitation of the same by their opponents, both Congress and non- Congress, makes it hard for our workers to stand up to the criticism.

"Generally speaking, Congress *ahimsa* has been the *ahimsa* of the weak. It was bound to be so in the present development of the country and this fact is well known to you. You claim that there is a special fire in the *ahimsa* of the strong. At the same time you accepted leadership of weak, in order to make them strong through the use of the *ahimsa*. And, in spite- of their weakness, governmental power has today come into their hands. It is impossible for them today to put down disturbances without the use of the police and the military, and if they tried to do so, they would not only not succeed, but they would not get the co-operation of the people either.

"I did once ask you, whether a satyagrahi should take high office if it came his way and if he did, how should he promote non-violence ? I hold that the person who has made non-violence his creed, should not take office and he will never be happy there. But there can be no such difficulty for those who have accepted *ahimsa* only as a policy. Many Congressmen have accepted office and you have permitted them to do so. The question arises as to whether you can expect those who believe in *ahimsa*, to act up to it, at least in their personal capacity, during disturbances. Further, having acquired strength through non-violence, how should it be used, in order to bring in a State where there is need for the least government? If you cannot lighten our path towards the desired goal, satyagraha will not be considered a full-fledged weapon."

From my point of view the answer is easy. I have been saying for some time, that the words "truth and non-violence" should be removed from the Congress constitution. But whether they are actually removed or not, let us assume that they are and then we shall be able to come to an independent judgement on the Tightness or wrongness of any action. I am convinced that so long as we

have to rely on the use of the military and even the police for preserving internal order, we shall continue to remain the slaves of either Britain or some other foreign power. It matters little then, whether the Government is in the hands of Congress-or non-Congressmen. Let us assume that Congress Ministers are not pledged to non-violence. Let us further assume that Hindus, Mussalmans and others want military and police protection. If they do, they will continue to receive it. Those Ministers who are wedded to non-violence, must resign, since they would object to the use of the military and the police. The significance of it all is that so long as our people have not the wisdom to come to a mutual understanding, so long will *goondaism* continue and we shall not be able to generate the true strength of *ahimsa* within us.

Now, as to how this non-violent strength can be created. I gave the answer to this question in the *Harijan* of August 4th, in replying to [a letter from Ahmedabad. So long as we have not cultivated the strength to die with courage and love in our hearts, we cannot hope to develop the *ahimsa* of the strong.

There remains the question as to whether in an ideal society, there should be any or no government. I do not think, we need worry ourselves about this at the moment. .If we continue to work for such a society, it will slowly come into being to an extent, such that the people can benefit by it. Euclid's line is one without breadth but no one has so far been able to draw it and never will. All the same it is only by keeping the ideal line in mind that we have made progress in geometry. What is true here is true of every ideal.

It must be remembered that nowhere in the world, does a State without government exist. If at all it could ever come into being, it would be in India; for, ours is the only country where the attempt has, at any rate, been made. We have not yet been able to show that bravery to the degree which is necessary and for the attainment of which there is only one way. Those who have faith in the latter, have to demonstrate it. In order to do so, the fear of death has to be completely shed, just as we have shed the fear of prisons.

H., 15-9-'46, p. 309

## CHAPTER 75

## FALLEN FROM GRACE

Ahmedabad, the pride of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, where he had rendered yeoman service to the Municipality has fallen from grace. Hindus and Muslims had lived always together in peace there. But madness seems to have seized its inhabitants of late. It has distressed Gandhiji beyond measure. "Hindus and Muslims of Ahmedabad seem to be dehumanized," he observed in one of his prayer addresses. All the deaths in Ahmedabad were not the result of stabbing and the like. It was a shame that they should have to take the help of the police and the military to prevent them from flying at each other's throats. If one side ceased to retaliate, the riots would not go on. What did it matter if even a few lakhs were killed in the right manner out of the 40 crores of India? If they could learn the lesson of dying without killing, India, which was celebrated in legend and history as *karmabhoomi*—the land of duty—would become a virtual Eden — the image of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

He had told Shri Morarji Desai, the Home Minister, who had seen him before proceeding to Ahmedabad that he must go to meet the flames under the sole protection of God, not that of the police or the military. If need be, he must perish in the flames in the attempt to quell them as the late Shri Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi had done. Shri Morarji had invited the representatives of Muslims, Hindus and others to a joint conference at Ahmedabad and had told them that he was prepared to withdraw the police and the military if they so desired. But the latter had unanimously replied that they were not prepared to take the risk. The result was that the police and the military remained there. "The disturbances have been arrested," remarked Gandhiji in agony, "but the peace that is seen in Ahmedabad today is the peace of the grave. It is not something of which one can be proud. How I wish that both the Hindus and the Muslims would combine and dispense with the help of the police and the military for purposes of keeping them from mutual fight." He warned them that so long as they depended upon the help of the police and the military for maintaining law and order, real independence must remain mere idle talk.

H., 14-7-'46, p.219

## SECTION XII : MISCELLANEOUS

## CHAPTER 76

### WHO SHOULD BE PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS?

The following is a free translation of Principal Sreeman Narain Aggarwal's letter in Hindustani from Wardha:

"In the Constitution that is being framed by the Constituent Assembly, there is to be provision for the election of provincial Governors by the majority of voters under the adult franchise system. From this one is entitled to infer that as a rule, the nominees of the Congress Parliamentary Board will be elected. The Chief Minister of the province will also be of the Congress Party. Commonsense dictates that the provincial Governor must be above the party politics of the province concerned, or above being unduly influenced by the Chief Minister or above friction between himself and his Chief Minister.

"In my opinion there is no necessity for a Governor. The Chief Minister should be able to take his place and people's money to the tune of Rs. 5,500 per month for the sinecure of the Governor will be saved. Nevertheless, no provincial Governor should belong to his own province.

"Moreover, in this way the expense and worry of an election by the majority of the adult population will be saved. Will it not be proper and better for the President of the Union to select Governors satisfying the reasonable test above suggested ? Such Governors will surely raise the tone of the public life of the provinces governed by them. It is worth} of note that the present Governors have been appointed by the Central Cabinet of the Union on the above basis and, therefore, their influence on their provinces has been wholesome. I fear that if the Governors are elected as threatened under the forthcoming Constitution, their influence is likely to be unwholesome.

"Further, the Constitution as foreshadowed makes no mention of the village *panchayats* being the foundation of the progressive decentralization in the place of the old hunger for centralization. There are other such defects which one can profitably point out, but I have no right or desire to enter into an elaborate criticism of our seasoned leaders. I have but ventured to draw your attention to the defects which have appeared to me and demand your guidance."

There is much to be said in favour of the argument advanced by Principal Aggarwal about the appointment of provincial Governors. I must confess that I have not been able to follow the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly. I do

not know the context in which the proposal under discussion has been made. But, examined in isolation, the criticism appears irresistible, with the exception that much as I would like to spare every pice of the public treasury, it would be bad economy to do away with provincial Governors and regard Chief Ministers as a perfect equivalent. Whilst I would resent much power of interference to be given to Governors, I do not think that they should be mere figure-heads. They should have enough power enabling them to influence ministerial policy for the better. In their detached position they would be able to see things in their proper perspective and thus prevent mistakes by their Cabinets.

Theirs must be an all-pervasive moral influence in their provinces.

Principal Aggarwal says that there is no mention or direction about village *panchayats* and decentralisation in the foreshadowed Constitution. It is certainly an omission calling for immediate attention if our independence is to reflect the people's voice. The greater the power of the *panchayats*, the better for the people. Moreover, *panchayats* to be effective and efficient, the level of people's education has to be considerably raised. I do not conceive the increase in the power of the people in military, but in moral terms. Naturally, I swear by *Nayee Talim* in this connection.

H., 21-12-'47, p. 473



## CHAPTER 77

### AN INDIAN GOVERNOR

1. An Indian Governor should, in his own person and in his surroundings, be a teetotalter. Without this, prohibition of the fiery liquid is well-nigh inconceivable.
2. He and his surroundings should represent hand-spinning as a visible token of identification with the dumb millions of India, a token of the necessity of bread labour' and organized non-violence as against organized violence on which the society of today seems to be based.
3. He must dwell in a cottage accessible to all, though easily shielded from gaze, if he is to do efficient work. The British Governor naturally represented British might. For him and his was erected a fortified residence—a palace to be occupied by him and his numerous vassals who sustained his Empire. The Indian prototype may keep somewhat pretentious buildings for receiving princes and ambassadors of the world. For these, being guests of the Governor should constitute an education in what "Even Unto This Last" — equality of all — should mean in concrete terms. For him no expensive furniture, foreign or indigenous. Plain living and high thinking must be his motto, not to adorn his entrance but to be exemplified in daily life.
4. For him there can be no untouchability in any form whatsoever, no caste or creed or colour distinction. He must represent the best of all religions and all things Eastern or Western. Being a citizen of India, he must be a citizen of the world. Thus simply, one reads, did the Khalif Omar, with millions of treasure at his feet, live; thus lived Janaka of ancient times; thus lived, as I saw him, the Master of Eton in his residence in the midst of, and surrounded by, the sons of the Lords and Nabobs of the British Isles. Will the Governors of India of the famished millions do less?
5. He will speak the language of the province of which he is the Governor and Hindustani, the lingua franca of India written in the Nagari or Urdu script.

This is neither Sanskritized Hindi nor Persianized Urdu. Hindustani is emphatically the language which is spoken by the millions north of the Vindhya Range.

This does not pretend to be an exhaustive list of the virtues that an Indian Governor should represent. It is merely illustrative.

*H.*, 24-8-'47, p. 289

## CHAPTER 78

### GOVERNORS AND MINISTERS

The Governors' duty and right are to advise their Ministers on the question of broad policy and warn them of danger in their exercise of certain powers, but having done so to leave their Ministers free to exercise their unfettered judgment. If such were not the case, the responsibility would become a perfectly meaningless term, and the Ministers responsible to their electors would have as their share nothing but odium and disgrace, if their responsibility had to be shared with Governors in the daily administration of affairs by law entrusted to them.

*H.*, 26-2-'38, p. 21

## CHAPTER 79

### KISAN PREMIER

Gandhiji then spoke about peasants. If he had his say, our Governor-General and our Premier would be drawn from the *kisans*. In his childhood he had learnt in the school books that the *kisans* were heirs to the kingdom of the earth. This applied to those who laboured on the land and ate from what they produced. Such *kisans* to be worthy of high offices might be illiterate provided they had robust common sense, great personal bravery, unimpeachable integrity and patriotism above suspicion. As real producers of wealth, they were verily the masters while we had enslaved them. It had been suggested to Gandhiji that the higher secretariat posts should also be manned by *kisans*. He would endorse this suggestion provided they were suitable and had knowledge of the work expected of them. When *kisans* of this type were forthcoming, he would publicly ask Ministers and others to make room for them.

H., 8-2-'48, p. 21

## CHAPTER 80

### PRIME MINISTER'S NOBLE GESTURE

Referring to the sufferings of the Hindu and Sikh refugees Gandhiji said that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was doing all that was possible in order to bring them speedy relief. His heart bled for them. He was a man who would offer his own bedding to one in distress and pace up and down the whole night in order to keep himself warm. His house was full. Being the Prime Minister of India he had to accommodate guests, both Indians and foreigners. Still he had expressed a wish to offer one or two rooms in his house to lodge refugees. He expected other Ministers, officials and men of means to do likewise. He (Gandhiji) was convinced that this act of self-sacrifice on the part of India's foremost leader would be appreciated all the world over and put a speedy end to the sufferings of the homeless refugees. It should gladden their hearts to note that this beautiful land of theirs had produced such great men, endowed with such a wonderful spirit of service and self-sacrifice. Jawahar was a real *jawahar* (gem) and there were others, only not so lustrous perhaps. If their leaders were doing all this for the people, it behoved them not to hurt their Muslim brethren. To hurt them was to hurt their leaders.

*H., 1-2-'48, p. 10*

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### Pandit Nehru's Example

Gandhiji then went on to say that a friend had written to him that although Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other Ministers and the officials might lodge some refugees in their houses, that would not even touch the fringe of the refugee problem. Gandhiji agreed that the Ministers and the officials together could not house more than a few thousands at the most. The virtue of the offer consisted not in the number so to be accommodated but in the fact that the example of the leaders doing the act was proving infectious. The British people appreciated the least act of self-denial on the part of the king for the sake of

the people. All civilized people would appreciate and value such acts of leaders of men. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had set an example before the whole country. That this was so was proved from the fact that more refugees were being attracted to Delhi. They felt evidently that they would be best treated in Delhi. While it was proof of the popularity of Panditji's example, it was proof also that we had not learnt the art of self-restraint.

*H., 1-2-'48, p. 12*

## CHAPTER 81

### SPEAKER

A speaker who knowingly gives an interpretation contrary to the plain meaning of a text, renders himself unfit for the high office and discredits the Congress cause. He must, at all cost, preserve the Congress credit for honesty and integrity. What, however, I have meant is that where a section is manifestly capable of two meanings or more, he is bound to give that which favours the national cause. And when a section bears only one meaning which is manifestly restrictive of the people's liberty, he must unhesitatingly give that meaning. I have no doubt that such impartiality on the part of a speaker will enhance his reputation and to that extent increase the moral prestige of the Congress. Having discarded violence, the strength of the Congress depends wholly upon the moral fibre and fearlessness of individual congressmen.

*H., 13-8-'38, p. 216*

## CHAPTER 82

### THE SERVICES

It seems to me that if the provinces are all to make equal progress in all directions, the services should be largely confined to the inhabitants of the province concerned for the sake of India as a whole. No province and no tribe or clan can be kept backward if India is to stand up erect before the world. It will never do so through its arms of which the world is sick. It must shine through its innate culture expressed in every citizen's life and in the socialism I have recently described. . . . That means elimination of all force for the sake of popularizing one's doctrines or schemes. A thing which is truly popular rarely, if ever, requires force save that of public opinion to make itself acceptable to all. Therefore, the ugly scenes of violence by individuals witnessed in Bihar and Orissa and Assam should never have been. Popular governments are functioning to redress any irregularity or encroachment by persons from other provinces. The provincial governments are bound to give full protection to all the comers from outside their provinces. "Use what you consider yours so as not to injure others", is a famous maxim of equity. It is also a grand moral code of conduct. How apposite today ?

"Live in Rome as the Romans do", is a sound commonsense maxim so long as it does not apply to Roman vices. The process of progressive blending must be one of rejecting the bad and absorbing the good.

*H., 21-9-'47, pp. 332- 33*

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So far as employment in the government departments is concerned, I think it will be fatal to good government, if we introduce there the communal spirit. For administration to be efficient, it must always be in the hands of the fittest. There should be certainly no favouritism. But if we want five engineers we must not take one from each community but we must take the fittest five even if they were all Musalmans or all Parsis. The lowest posts must, if need be, be



filled by examination by an impartial board consisting of men belonging to different communities. But distribution of posts should never be according to the proportion of the numbers of each community. The educationally backward communities will have a right to receive favoured treatment in the matter of education at the hands of the National Government. This can be secured in an effective manner. But those who aspire to occupy responsible posts in the government of the country, can only do so if they pass the required test.

Y.I., 29-5-'24, p. 182

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### Salaries and the Civil Service

Gandhiji had received complaints about the high salaries of the civil servants. The Civil Service could not be done away with all of a sudden. Their numbers had already been reduced, with the result that those remaining had to work harder. The Sardar had, therefore, congratulated them for their work. He (Gandhiji) did not grudge credit where it was deserved, but he could not help noting that they drew salaries which before independence the Congress had considered too much. The real Civil Service were the people. After all, Congressmen had been working without any salaries in the past. If a Congressman becomes a parliamentary secretary today, why should he be paid a high salary? He did not know that parliamentary secretaries were needed. The Congress party must be chary of imposing more paid secretaries on the Government. It would be wrong to tone down the high standard the Congress had set before the country. Greater care was necessary in that they had now crores at their disposal. It would be imprudent to let the expenditure go up when the income remained stationary. Every business firm had to see that the credit side was larger than the debit side. Could they run the business of free India by ignoring this basic fact? They had some money today and they could squander it in any way they liked. But it would not last long unless they acted like wise businessmen.

H., 28-12-'47, p. 486

## Duties of Civil Servants

For a democracy or democratic Government it is essential to study what the man in the street says, and it cannot be conducted from the Viceregal palace or any other magnificent building. We are a poor people, and would not be using an automobile for the work that may be done by going on foot. If some one offers a car for the work, we shall wish him well with his car and go to the office walking only. One living in a palace or moving in a car cannot run a Government, for such a man finds it difficult to learn the reactions of the mass of men. If he goes about walking and lives amidst the people, he can obtain true information.

"Now to go to the next thing. I have received complaints saying that Government has now been intervening in trade and commerce also. For example, Rajendrababu looks after food supply and Rajaji is in charge of the cloth industry. People have not been getting necessary cloth or food, though the best of our men handle the trade of such chief necessities of life. The reason is said to be the great proportion of bribery and corruption among the Government officials. I am not in a position to say how far this is true. But if Government servants are so, the Ministers of respective Departments have got to make a proper inquiry. It should be shameful of us if the alleged facts are proved, viz. men in the good graces of Government people or commanding influence with them or happening to be related to them can, and do, get jobs immediately and obtain twice or thrice their quota of rations. Now there is no foreign Government ruling over us. Nor is there any one now to issue to petty servants of Government the type of orders customary in British times. It, therefore, behoves both the small and the great, one and all, to serve the country loyally and faithfully. We should root out the former mentality, according to which the be-all and end-all of service was to earn money and feed fat. Popular Government begins from today, and may I respectfully suggest to the Civil Service men that their responsibility now becomes tenfold greater. The more loyally you serve, the quicker will be the attainment of peace, happiness and prosperity under self-government."

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### Races and Civil Service

The following is the substance of a Gujarati letter published in the *Harijanbandhu*:

"During the rainy season races take place in Poona. Three specials per day run to Poona and back. This is possible when there is scarcity of accommodation, such that businessmen have to go in crowded cars. Passengers are often seen hanging on foot-boards at times resulting in avoidable fatal accidents. Add to this the fact that when there is not enough petrol, extra cars also run to Poona. Do not these passengers draw their usual rations in Bombay? Do they not get refreshments in the specials and on the race course?

"This reflection leads me to examine the Civil Service. Are not the men whose mismanagement we used to condemn before, running the State today? What are we coming to? We are without enough food and enough clothing. And we find ourselves indulging in costly amusements." I have often written about the evils of racing. But mine was then a voice in the wilderness. The alien rulers liked the vice and clothed it with some kind of virtue. Surely, there is no reason for now clinging to the vice. Or shall we retain the vices of the rule and will its virtues quit with it?

There is much truth in what the correspondent says about the Civil Service. It is a soulless corporation. It acts after its master's manners. Therefore, if our representatives are watchful, if we insist on their doing their duty, much may be done through the Civil Service. Criticism is food for any democratic government. But it has to be constructive and wise. The original purity which marked the Congress in the beginning of the mass movement is the hope of the masses and must return if we are to live.

H., 17-8-'47, p. 284

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### Civil Services

The Civil Service was used to carrying on work from their offices. The red tape and the files controlled their activity. They had never come in contact with the peasants. They did not know them. Gandhiji wished they would be humble

enough to recognize the change that had come over the people. Their initiative should not be strangled by the controls. They should be allowed to be self-reliant. Democracy should not result in making them helpless. Supposing that the worst fears were realized and removal of controls made the situation worse, there was nothing to prevent them from reverting to them. Personally he believed that it would greatly ease the situation. The people would begin to exert themselves to solve the problems and have little time to quarrel among themselves.

H., 26-10-'47, p. 386

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### Expectations from Civil Services

The Civil Services, the Police and the Military including Britishers were now in India as servants of the people. The days when they behaved as masters, being in the pay of foreign rulers, were gone. They had to be loyal servants of the *Panchayat Raj*. They had to take orders from the Ministers. They were to be above corruption and partiality. The people on the other hand were expected to give full co-operation to the administration. If the services failed in their duty, they would be guilty of breach of faith and proper steps would have to be taken to rectify the situation. The people had every right to ventilate their grievances against corrupt members of the services.

H., 26-10-'47, p. 383

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Members of the Civil Service should be taught from now to accommodate themselves to the regime. They may not be partisans taking sides. The slightest trace of communalism among them should be severely dealt with. The English element in it should know that they owe loyalty to the new regime rather than to the old and, therefore, to Great Britain. The habit of regarding themselves as rulers and, therefore, superiors must give place to the spirit of true service of the people.

B.P.D., pp. 394-95

## CHAPTER 83

### RE-INSTATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT SERVANTS

Several letters have been lying on my file from Congressmen who non-co-operated during the non-co-operative days. Among those were those also who resigned Government services. Some of these are now agitating for re-instatement. They quote in support my appeal to the public including Government servants to non-co-operate. Among the sufferers who have, to my knowledge, not agitated for restoration are the resisters who were fined, the relatives who lost their bread-winners, the lawyers who gave up their practice and were reduced to penury, and the students who gave up their studies and consequent prospects. They think the suffering voluntarily undergone was its own reward and demands no further compensation.

If all these were to claim restoration from the Congress Ministers, the latter's lot would be truly unenviable and they would have little work to do save that of adjudging claims. They would also have to raise money for discharging claims that must amount to several crores. Moreover it would be difficult for the discharged Government servants who gave up their jobs whether compulsorily or voluntarily to show that the cases of other sufferers were less hard than theirs.

In my opinion these ex-Government servants as a class were least sufferers. And if they have been without work all these years, they can hardly become efficient servants of the State. Government service for Congressmen is not an avenue to material advancement; it should be an avenue to service. Therefore, only those Congressmen may enter Government service whose market value is higher than what they can get from the Government. They can be employed only when they are wanted. There should be no such thing as Congress patronage.

- H., 3-12-'38, p. 364

## CHAPTER 84

### ARMY MEN

Thus writes an army officer to a friend:

"... And what a pity it is that, in all democratic countries, politicians are so ignorant of and uninterested in the army. The army could teach them much. Is it not at least worthy of deep thought as to why it is, that the army has held the loyalty and affection of the man serving in it to a far greater degree than any other Government service? And held it moreover under conditions of danger and discomfort and trial far exceeding those of any other service. You have a fine army and it will be finer still when your best men come forth in large numbers to officer it. Find the right officers and you need have no fears about it. It will be second to none. But put in the wrong officers or get it mixed up with politics and you will have a heavy bill to Pay. India is bound to have many troubled years ahead, but I am convinced that the one thing which can pull you through them most quickly and with the minimum bloodshed is your present army, provided you find officers for it and keep politics and religious differences out of it."

It is not a matter for pity if it is true that in all democratic countries politicians are uninterested in the army. The pity of it is that they are wrongly interested in it. The democracies regard army men as their saviours. They bring wealth and subjugate other countries and sustain authority in times of civil disturbance. What is, therefore, to be wished is that democracy to be true, should cease to rely upon the army for anything whatsoever.

What has the army done for India? It is for that army that the writer pleads. I fear that in no sense has it served India's interest. It has kept millions of inoffensive and disarmed people under subjection. It has impoverished them. It is an army of which the sooner the British part is sent away and better employed, the better for both India and England, and the world. The sooner the Indian part is turned away from its destructive purpose and its talent employed for constructive purposes, the better it will be for democracy in India. It will be a poor democracy that depends for its existence on military assistance. Military force interfiles with the free growth of the mind. It smothers the soul of man. Thanks to years of foreign domination brought about

by the "highly efficient" army, India, in spite of the efforts of the Mission, might have to pull through a long or short civil war which, I shall hope, will bring to an end all infatuation for armed forces. They are a brutalizing process after you have isolated discipline which should be common for any social order. If Free India has to sustain the present military expenditure, it will bring no relief to the famishing millions.

H., 9-6-'46, p. 169

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If Swaraj is round the bend, we can now look upon the military as ours and need have no hesitation in taking all the constructive work we can from them. Up till now they have only been employed in indiscriminate firing on us. Today they must plough the land, dig wells, clean latrines and do every other constructive work that they can, and thus turn the people's hatred of them into love.

H., 21-4-'46, p. 96

## CHAPTER 85

## QUALITY OF DISCIPLINE

Commenting on the quality of discipline required in a free people Gandhiji instanced that of the English people. He related the well-known story of Queen Victoria when at the age of seventeen she was awakened one night to be told that she was the Queen of England. The young girl was naturally agitated and overawed at the terrible responsibility thrown on her by God. The old Prime Minister as he knelt before the Queen consoled her. She merely said that she would be good. It was the disciplined people of England who helped her to govern. Today he wanted them to realize that independence was at their door. The Viceroy was only the nominal head of the Cabinet. They would help him by expecting no help from him in the Government of the country. Their uncrowned king was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He was working, slaving for them, not as a king but as their first servant. It was his desire through the service of India to serve the world. Jawaharlal was an international figure and he had friendly relations with all the foreign ambassadors who were now in India. But it was not possible for Jawaharlal alone to govern if the people by their indiscipline spoiled the work. He could not, as did the former autocrats, resort to the rule of the sword. That would be neither *Panchayat Raj* nor *Jawahar Raj*. (There was play upon the word *jawahar* meaning jewel). It was the duty of everyone to make the task of the Ministers easy and not force their hands in any way.

Then the speaker reminded the audience how a year ago he (Panditji) had gone to Kashmir when he was badly needed in Delhi and how at the bidding of the Maulana Saheb, the then President of the Congress, he had returned to Delhi. Today Panditji was talking of wanting to go to Kashmir again. His heart was sore because the leader of the Kashmiris, Sheikh Abdulla Saheb, was still in prison. But Gandhiji felt that Panditji's presence here was more necessary and offered to go in his place. There were many things to be considered before he was permitted by Jawaharlalji to go. If he went, he would even from there serve Bihar and Bengal as if he was bodily in one of the provinces.

H., 8-6-'47, p. 183



## CHAPTER 86

### MINISTERS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Now the country has to be led in a different direction, creating a good band of workers for it specially. The duty of these workers would be to mix with the people, form an idea of their true hardships, and inculcate in them the lesson that it is an insult to the people themselves rather than to the Ministers to put up demonstrations against them in the country, which now belongs to us and where we have Ministers of our choice through elections. Yes, of course, if the Minister has been doing injustice to the people, the workers might explain, the people can catch him by the ear and dethrone him – replace him. Now is the time to cultivate that power. Men holding office as Ministers do so not as masters, but as servants, of the people. I have been suggesting the same to the Socialists also. But men like ... do not get persuaded though I do hope I shall succeed in doing it. Forgetting now how the Congress undertook the task of fighting the British authority, the Congress should now campaign for this political education of the nation.

B.P.D., p. 428

## CHAPTER 87

### SALT TAX

I have a different matter to touch today. We embarked on the Dandhi March to get the Salt Tax repealed. The tax was of course abolished, but salt is dear nowadays. If this is a fact it is shameful of our merchants. It is deplorable that merchants should think of making profits from salt on which the poor subsist. One might do without sugar, but without salt the poor cannot eat their loaves of grain. I appeal to the Government to remain alert in this matter. Government should undertake the production of salt so that the poor get it at cost price only. The people should be able to enjoy the benefit of the abolition of the salt tax. If people so desire they can produce salt in their homes in cities and in villages, the process being very simple. No one is there to prevent doing it. If only we cast off our sloth such home industries can develop and our economic and moral state improve. If people should themselves arrange to produce and distribute salt giving up the temptation to make any profit from it, salt can be available at a nominal price. However, selfishness and corruption are rampant in the land. How can the idea of Ramarajya be realised in these circumstances? If the Government in Pakistan or in India, saddled in its glorious power, should levy a tax on salt, it will doubtless be a shameful and oppressive act, though I do hope it will not so happen. Today we have been proving untrue to our salt — proving disloyal to the poor man whose labour supports us.

B.P.D., p. 397

## CHAPTER 88

### CRIMES AND JAILS

In Independent India of the non-violent type, there will be crime but no criminals. They will not be punished. Crime is a disease like any other malady and is a product of the prevalent social system. Therefore, all crime including murder will be treated as a disease. Whether such an India will ever come into being is another question.

H., 5-5-'46, p. 124

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What should our jails be like in free India? All criminals should be treated as patients and the jails should be hospitals admitting this class of patients for treatment and cure. No one commits crime for the fun of it. It is a sign of a diseased mind. The causes of a particular disease should be investigated and removed. They need not have palatial buildings when their jails become hospitals. No country can afford that, much less can a poor country like India. But the outlook of the jail staff should be that of physicians and nurses in a hospital. The prisoners should feel that the officials are their friends. They are there to help them regain their mental health and not to harass them in any way. The popular governments have to issue necessary orders, but meanwhile the jail staff can do not a little to humanize their administration.

H., 2-9-'47, pp. 395-96

## SOURCES

[Note:

1. *B.P.D.* stands for *Bihar Pachhi Delhi* (Gujarati) by Manubehn Gandhi,
2. *D.D.* for *Delhi Diary* (1948),
3. *H.* for *Harijan*,
4. *Y.I.* for *Young India*,
5. *Natesan* for *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (4th edition),  
Natesan, Madras.]